

Valley Business FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
BUSINESS JOURNAL**
ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION
FREE • ISSUE 124 • JANUARY 2019

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Gym Etiquette

Tyler Holman,
Anytime Fitness

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WELCOME to the FRONT

Happy New Year, FRONTfolks, patrons, readers, advertisers, stakeholders, staff, accidental-I-just-happened-to-pick-this-copy-up-at-the-coffee-shop-random-consumer!

What is in store for us in 2019? We predict more interesting stories of business and enterprise and ventures, and the individuals behind them. That's pretty much it. That's what we do.

In the past 30 years, we've brought you stories from the neuroscientist to the moonshiner. From the big company CEO's corner office to the entrepreneur's garage. The very new and the very old product or service. A diversification that demonstrates our region of Virginia as anything but singularly focused or static. Maybe it doesn't (or shouldn't) matter—but our readers can see a sliver of subjectivity underneath our stories: we like it here. We believe we have it good here—even as we know we have plenty of areas to improve. Thank you for joining our mission to support the business community (and in turn our community at large) here in Southwest Virginia and Virginia's Blue Ridge.



Tom Field



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DEPARTMENTS



Behavioral Fitness for Physical Fitness



The VR Center 17

Harmonia 26

Sharon Casale, 28
Private Eye

Western Ways 34

PERSPECTIVES

Professional Development 14

Financial Figures 15

Legal 22

Business Operations 30

A Little Insight 31

Good Work 44

REVIEWS & OPINIONS

On Tap from the Pub 46

Reviews 48

FRONTLINES

FRONT'n About 50

Career FRONT 56

FRONT Notes 58

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“I’ve been threatened
13 times — Page 28



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JANUARY



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Editorial Advisory Board

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



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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 60.

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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 most popular new habit my clients have appreciated is using a paper planner — Page 30

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Behavioral Fitness for Physical Fitness



Workout Etiquette >

Executive Summary:

When exercising with others, don't forget to exercise common sense...and courtesy.

Special Report

What's more difficult than trying to bench-press a weight heavier than you've ever tried before? Asking the manager at Anytime Fitness to share issues folks might have when working out together.

"We just want our members to have a better experience," says Zach Bishop, regional manager for Anytime Fitness / New River Valley, which includes the centers at Blacksburg, Radford, and Salem.

Zach was reluctant to share anything negative about the behavior of people who work out together in a "gym" because the experience at his facilities are overwhelmingly positive. But like a good trainer would do, crouching down to "instruct" you as you attempt to lift that heavy weight—we pressed on. This is just for tips and helpful reminders, we assured Zach. It is January after all... that all too familiar spike in new and renewed gym memberships with everyone making resolutions or working off that holiday "spirit of Christmas blob."

So, Zach spoke in general terms. The etiquette for all of us at the gym applies to facilities anywhere. And it's probably not a bad idea to bring them up—as fitness memberships are on the rise and more busy professionals than ever are signing up.

In its latest report, global fitness association IHRSA showed an over \$85 billion industry, with 200,000 clubs, and 162 million members. The revenue growth rate in the U.S. has jumped from 2% to over 7% in the past few years.

With more people working out at public and private clubs, maybe more etiquette awareness is needed.

To be fair, we reached out to members as well as gym staff. Everyone mentioned the same areas. So, lace up your sneakers (no one calls them that anymore) and let's take a stroll into the gym and see what's shaking



Pet Peeves at the Gym

Taking equipment out of its regular area and leaving it for someone else to return
Jennifer L.

Toxic chemicals that are used in the gym and the air freshener sprays
Danyell R.

Not wiping off the equipment after use
[multiple replies on this one!]

People who "claim" equipment they aren't using at the moment so that other people are unable to use it
Emily M.

All the TVs are on the news channels! Ugh.
Lisa K.

When I walk in the men's locker room and see much older men bare naked, straddling the benches... they could at least put on some underwear first or sit on their towel.
Nick V.

Getting on the treadmill next to someone with cell phone and earphones talking loudly... despite multiple signs saying cell phones to be used in lobby only. She talked the entire time!
Jennifer L.

Some people really stink... I mean I guess it doesn't make a lot of sense to shower before coming to the gym, but they smell gross.
Bob H.

We have this one guy who uses so many machines the wrong way.
Larry E.

Loud grunTERS.
Nicole W.

When people interrupt me in the middle of my workout.
Charlotte S.

(ok, so the hardbodies don't really want to see shaking either).

"Being sanitary."

That's item number one for a lot of folks, and it's what Zach suggests first.

"Just cleaning up your sweat," he says. "We clean multiple times throughout the day, using hospital-grade supplies and fogging..." It's mission-critical to keep the entire facility sanitary, Zach says, as any kind of breakout would kill the business.

For the staff, Zach says re-racking weights is a big headache. From there on, the infractions on common courtesy move to noises and improper use of the machines and equipment.

"In the industry, we call it 'activating your vocal chords,'" Zach says. He's referring to the "grunts" some people make when lifting; but even those are tolerable at reasonable levels, he says. Annoying noises also include slamming weights ("aggressively slamming") and playing music outside of head phones.



COVER STORY

The condition and use of restrooms and locker rooms are major concerns at all facilities, and Anytime Fitness is particularly cognizant as it offers private restrooms/showers for its members. Zack cites a pretty easy rule and way to think of them:

"Treat the restrooms like you would if you were staying at a friend's house," he says. Don't leave a mess or big puddles of water all over the floor.

Zach also shares ways to deal with other individuals that newer members may not be aware of.

"Just ask," he says. "When learning how to 'work in' with others, just ask before you do something." That's all it takes to maintain a positive environment in most cases, Zach says. A lot of newer members, for example, don't know that it's actually perfectly acceptable for one member to ask if he can do a quick set on a machine that's being held up by another member. And for this time of year, just "be patient with new members."

Zach also cautions against "saving" a machine for someone, and trying to do circuit training (going from one machine to the next and back again multiple



times) during peak times. Responsible use and time on machines and equipment is a top concern we heard from just about everyone who works out with others at a fitness facility.

What if you do have a problem or altercation with another person at the gym? Zach offers one of the most helpful tips of all:

"You don't have to confront them," he says. "Approach the staff. Let us be the 'bad guy' if you're having an issue with another member."

The three Anytime Fitness centers in Salem, Blacksburg, and Radford are part of the Self Esteem Brands franchise, a top tier franchisee listed in INC, Forbes, and Entrepreneur magazines as well as other media and trade groups tracking franchise business opportunities.

"Yes!" says Tom Peck, the local franchise owner, when asked whether we should publish this brief report on gym etiquette. "That's an excellent idea."

Tom and Zach both dwell on the "member experience" and providing a "small community" environment that






Say Hi to Tyler

Tyler Holman, our FRONTcover model, holds the all-too-familiar cleaning spray bottle that sits beside nearly every piece of equipment at Anytime Fitness. "Other people are here to enjoy the gym too," he says. "It's a great place to make connections."

they say is unique to their fitness centers, but particularly in the case of one that's also a global franchise.

"We're not like a big box," Zach elaborates. "We really are focused on customer service and the personal experience. We've created a 'club culture' and help people make positive changes in their lives."

That's good.

But above everything else, just make sure you wipe your sweat off. 





Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

Executive Summary:

Perhaps there's a better way to accomplish goals than to list what you want to do.

Reverse resolutions >

Very few people I know make New Year's Resolutions and then stick to them the entire year, let alone the month of January. Yes, they're admirable. Yes, they help us take stock of where we are and where we want to be. But they are difficult to honor for a long stretch of time.

So this year I'm going to do the opposite. I am going to make a (short) list of things I am going to stop doing. I figure you have to let go of something old to make room for something new! To decide what goes on my Reverse Resolutions list, I will reflect on the following:

1. What was I most disappointed in during 2018?
(example: packing to move and not making a list of items that ended up in storage. I don't know what is where. Did I sell that? Store it? Give it away?)
2. What drains me or stresses me out?
(example: the growing pile of unread magazines by my bed)
3. What do I consider my biggest "time wasters" of 2018?
(example: Grey's Anatomy reruns)
4. What did I say "yes" to and then regretted?
(example: a high ropes course)
5. What did I say "no" to and then regretted?
(example: buying something of high quality because of the cost, to buy something of lower quality)
6. Where do I wish I could have a do-over?
(example: renting a 585 square foot apartment)

I'll take that list of questions, come up with multiple answers, and look for patterns. From there I can commit to removing a few things from my life. There is still a level of commitment in this process, but I'm hoping it will be easier to take some things away instead of piling on resolutions to do more. Maybe I'll find I have room in my life to dust off some 2018 resolutions and see if I can make a go of them this year. What can you commit to stop doing in 2019 and how will that serve you?

Now, if I could just figure out Reverse Aging! 🍷

“Come up with multiple answers...
look for patterns

There's more than you think to Social Security >

The insolvency of Social Security has been a hot topic in recent years, going on decades now. This year's annual Trustees of Social Security's report puts the yikes year at 2034.

What does this mean?

In short, 15 years from now, at least with what's being projected today, the reserves will run out. Of course, Roosevelt didn't designate a set-aside fund for contributions when he created Social Security. Who would have figured so many people would live past the age of 65 then? Today, though, we have a Social Security Trust Fund (actually two) where surplus is stored.

Come 2034, monies coming from contributing wage earners, including the self-employed, will still cover 77% of projected benefits, but there's not a good plan in place to cover the rest. We won't get into issues concerning the government borrowing from the fund.

Why is this happening?

Blame the Baby Boomers. Actually, Roosevelt and subsequent administrations are more culpable. They raided monies most figured would only need to pay out a tiny fraction of what was collected. But today, people are living longer into retirement than what the working population contributing to the system can support.

What started as a plan to help a relatively tiny population percentage of elderly poor live their last few years in dignity has become a major source of retirement income for many. That means you, Baby Boomers.

Social Security comprises over 50% of monthly income for at least 61% of retired workers. Unmarried elderly individuals depend on it more, with 71% of the population using it for majority earnings. For approximately one in five, Social Security represents 90% of income.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) reported as of



Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:
There is little disagreement that Social Security is not sustainable in its current form; better make plans.



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The Social Security Administration (SSA) reported as of February 2017 that the average retired worker was bringing home \$1,363.66 each month, or \$16,363.92 yearly. The poverty level was \$15,060 for an individual during the same time period.

February 2017 that the average retired worker was bringing home \$1,363.66 each month, or \$16,363.92 yearly. The poverty level was \$15,060 for an individual during the same time period. Ouch.

Boston College's retirement research determined 60% of seniors are taking benefits before full retirement age, currently 66 years and two months for people born in 1955. That means more than 24 million of the current 41.51 million retired workers are getting less than they should. That's a lot of older citizens likely living below the poverty level.

The SSA created a calculator to help you project retirement payments at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/estimator.html>. That's today without solid guarantees for tomorrow.

More than 40% of the population in the Roanoke area is over 50. That's a lot of local residents facing retirement age before that 2034 date. Now's the time to start planning for a comfortable retirement. If you're smart, you'll do so in a way that includes more than what Social Security might provide in your golden years. A good financial planner can help you figure out how. 

FROM MAJOR STROKE TO MAKING MUSIC

"Playing handbells in my church choir has always been one of my favorite activities. When I had a stroke at just 51 years old, I didn't know if I'd be able to play music again. The LifeWorks Rehab 7-day-a-week custom therapy program helped me get back home and making music again fast."
— Martha Parrott

MARTHA
PARROTT
stroke
recovery



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A blueprint for gaming >

Executive Summary:
The VR Center is family entertainment... at the mall... for 'cool' people.

By Obinna Morton

A couple meanders into The VR Center, a shop in Roanoke's Valley View Mall. What surrounds the couple is a 3,000 square-foot menagerie of traditional arcade games such as *Pac Man* and *Street Fighter*, and modern-day virtual reality experiences.

Race car simulators and multidirectional treadmills, to the latest VR headsets HTC Vive, Oculus Rift and Sony PlayStation VR.

Todd Flood, Owner and Manager of

The VR Center, greets the couple. "Hi. Need any help?"

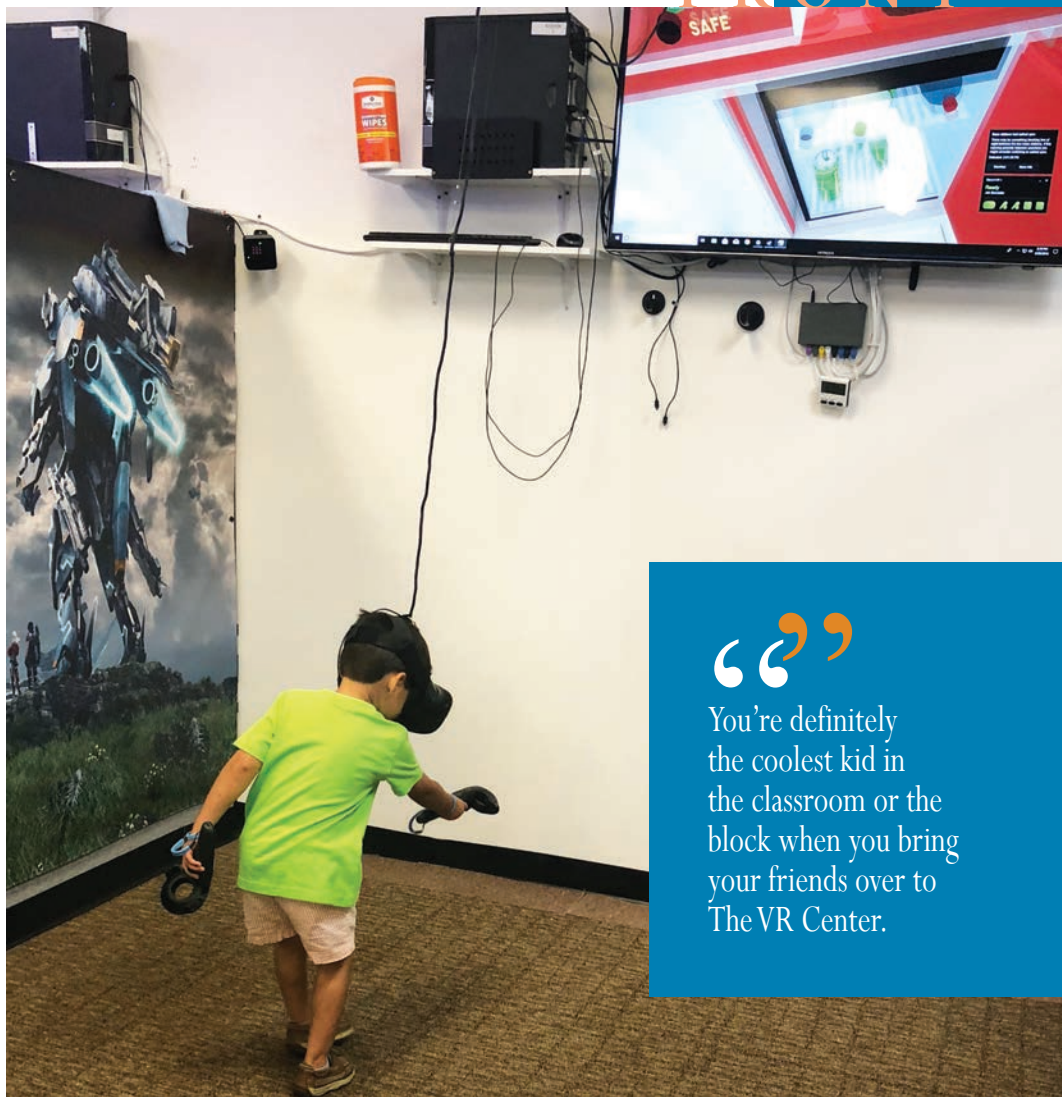
"No, just looking," says the woman. "I saw 'VR Center,' and I kind of wanted to see what it's about. I'm the gamer," she quips beside her significant other.

The couple browses for a few minutes more and leaves. A happenstance

Todd Flood







You're definitely the coolest kid in the classroom or the block when you bring your friends over to The VR Center.

interaction that belies the interest that the space generates just by its existence.

VR, short for "virtual reality," refers to an artificial environment simulated through high-quality headsets and software. The VR Center provides gaming entertainment primarily to this end.

The VR Center is open seven days a week, Monday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Services include non-VR games, full-immersion VR experiences metered in 15-minute increments, and pod rides with more than 120 settings.

From racing to flying to shooting airplanes, zombies, dragons, dinosaurs, and riding

roller coasters. The pods move, vibrate and blow air that simulates a real-life experience, says Flood.

The VR Center has a broad range of visitors, from child to adult, ages of 3 to 103. Flood refers to the space as a "family entertainment center," for "the whole family to come out and enjoy themselves."

Featured are single-serve and multiplayer games and rides. The VR Center also hosts Esport tournaments, birthday parties, social and corporate events. "You're definitely the coolest kid in the classroom or the block when you bring your friends over to The VR Center to have a birthday party," Flood says.





Events can be on-site or mobile. Mobile events require the use of a self-contained 26-foot mobile trailer to transport VR pods and interactive rides to different locations.

Since opening in 2016, The VR Center has amassed a steady following of visitors who also compete in regular gaming tournaments for money or in-game currency. Flood hosts one to two tournaments per month, sometimes streaming the tournament on Twitch, a social streaming platform. Last year tournaments were hosted for the trending game *Fortnite*, *NBA 2K*, *Madden* and *Omniverse* Esport games.

Much of the staff are gaming enthusiasts with technical backgrounds. We're a team that can fix, repair or replace the equipment to get it back up and running, says Flood.

Flood started The VR Center in 2016, first as a kiosk in Valley View Mall before opening a storefront location in 2017. "I wanted to start small with incremental changes to see what the feedback was, and then move forward with a bigger plan, a bigger business venture," says Flood.


Prior to starting The VR Center, Flood worked in engineering for 20 years at Metalsa in Roanoke, making customized truck frames for major tractor trailer

companies such as Peterbilt, Mack, Volvo and Kenworth. Over the course of his career, Flood also developed an interest in new technology such as smart homes, drones, 3-D printing and virtual reality. The VR Center was a natural progression of Flood's varying interests.

There was nothing like that here in Roanoke, and I wanted to be on the leading edge in trying to bring something new to the Roanoke Valley and surrounding counties, Flood says.

Since its inception, The VR Center has been approached by individuals from other states including North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Customers come from the Roanoke Valley region to outlying areas such as Danville, Martinsville, Virginia Beach and West Virginia.

Flood sees expansion in The VR Center's future. "Once we get all the wrinkles worked out, we'll try to expand to other locations," says Flood.

Gone are the days of gaming when Atari, Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis ruled the pixelated screen. The VR Center serves as a blueprint for gaming in the new millennium, and the possibilities that exist at the intersection of entertainment and virtual reality. 



Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
Most oral agreements are legally valid; but some types of agreements are required to be in writing.

Not worth the paper it's not printed on >

It was a hot day in June and our client was angry. "This graduate student breached his lease!" he said. "He said he would stay in my house for four years, but he's leaving after just seventeen months. I need you to sue him!"

Our client owns a couple of houses that he rents out to college students. He's a bit old-fashioned and often does business on a handshake basis, with a friendly smile. I'd never seen him this upset before.

"You know how the rental market for student housing works, don't you?" he said.

"Sure," I said. "You do your best to get all your leases signed in January, and the leases start in August."

"That's right," he said. "Some students procrastinate until later in the year, like April or May, but they don't make good tenants. The best tenants are the ones who plan ahead and who sign their leases in January. But it's practically impossible to find tenants in the summer. So by leaving now, in the middle of June, this graduate student has put me into a real jam."

"I suppose you have his security deposit?" I said. "You could apply that to his rent."

"Yes, but it's only one month's rent," he said. "I probably won't be able to rent this house out until next January, and then that lease won't even start until next August! This guy is going to cost me thirteen months' lost rent!"

"Well, if he signed a four-year lease then he should be responsible for paying the rent until you find a replacement tenant," I said. "Let's take a look at the lease."

"Well, that's the thing," he said. "I don't have a lease."

"You left it at home?" I said.

"No, we never signed one," he said. "All of my leases are oral. We just shake on it. Isn't that enough?"

"Unfortunately, no," I said. "If you do an oral lease for one year or less, then it's valid. But an oral four-year lease isn't valid."

"I thought oral contracts were legally enforceable," he said.

"Usually they are," I said. "Most of the time, an oral

agreement is legally binding. Of course it's better to have any agreement in writing so that later there won't be any arguments about what you agreed. But yes, most oral agreements are just as valid as written agreements."

"So can I sue this guy for thirteen months' rent?" he said.

"No, because certain types of agreements are required to be in writing," I said, "and this type of agreement is one of them. It's because of a rule called the 'Statute of Frauds' that dates from England in the 1600s."

"We still follow English law?" he said. "Why did we fight the American Revolution, then?"

"Well, I heard that that war was mostly about protecting the rich folks," I said. "At any rate, the Statute of Frauds is still part of Virginia law, with some changes. Basically it says that if someone promises (1) to sell real estate, (2) to do something that is agreed to take longer than a year, (3) to guarantee someone else's debt, (4) to lend someone more than \$25,000, (5) to lease property for more than a year, or (6) to do some other sorts of things, then that promise has to be in writing and the person has to sign it. Otherwise there is no contract."

"But he agreed to rent the house for four years!" he said. "So he doesn't have to do that?"

"No," I said. "That agreement did not form a valid contract."

"No contract at all?" he said. "So he didn't even have to pay me rent for the time he was there?"

"I'd say that you and he probably would be considered to have entered into a month-to-month lease," I said.



An agreement must be in a signed writing if someone promises (1) to sell real estate, (2) to do something that is agreed to take longer than a year, (3) to guarantee someone else's debt, (4) to lend someone more than \$25,000, (5) to lease property for more than a year, or (6) to do some other sorts of things.

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Up to a year, you can have a valid oral lease. But if you try to do an oral lease for a year and a day, then you've got nothing.

"Either of you could have terminated it at any time with one month's notice. And now it looks like that's what he did."

"So I can do oral leases up to a year, but no longer?" he said.

"Up to a year, you can have a valid oral lease," I said. "But if you try to do an oral lease for a year and a day, then you've got nothing."

In the end, our client was able to find a replacement tenant after searching for five months. After that, he was always sure to get his leases in writing, using a simple form lease that we prepared for him. He still does business with a handshake and a smile, though. 

Keith can be reached at keith@creekmorelaw.com

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before deciding whether a particular oral agreement is enforceable, before preparing a written lease, etc.*

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Mike Bame

Advancing with drag and drop >

Executive Summary:

Primarily serving government and military agencies with IT programming for non-coders, but power-users, Harmonia helps computers communicate for select applications.

By Michael Abraham

Harmonia is one of the region's fastest growing companies, appearing on Inc. magazine's list of 5000 fastest growing private companies for the last ten years. Harmonia pours millions of dollars in wages into the local economy. Their core business is development and implementation of software solutions that helps various computers talk to each other. Additionally, they develop tools that allow non-programmers to build their own programs.

"Harmonia was founded by Marc Abrams, a Virginia Tech computer science professor, in 1999," said Mike Bame, Chief Financial

Officer and VP of contracts at his office in the Corporate Research Center.

"It was originally founded to develop a different computer language that would make things easier for non-programmers, the subject matter experts, to create the interfaces and screens that people see.

"The original software that Marc developed was called 'LiquidApps.' We've morphed into a company that sells IT (information technology) services and cutting edge software development for the military and other governmental agencies.

"We have an office in Charlottesville, two in Northern Virginia, one in Kansas City, one in San Diego, and the original office in Blacksburg. But we also have staff on various locations in government facilities."

Harmonia has taken advantage of many Small Business Innovation Research grants through the Federal Government that filter monies into small businesses for specific product and service research. Abrams had developed a way to allow people who are experts in their fields, but not programmers, to create computer screens and interfaces without knowing anything about coding.

Bame explained, "The expert could drag and drop functions onto his interfaces with the coding done by the software in the background. An example is defense contractor Raytheon which used Harmonia tools to develop interfaces deployed on the Navy's most recent destroyers. All the screens on the ships were developed using software that Abrams originated, but developed by sailors."

The company doesn't have a traditional sales force. Bame explained, "Most of our proposals are to US Government agencies. We work for most of the major agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, Energy, Homeland Security, and many others. Everything is proposal driven. We have proposal staff that devise and submit the proposals, and then project managers who manage the projects. We have a number of people who are connected to the various agencies. They stay on top of what's coming up. We may already be working with an agency and they'll tell us of a new need and the requests for proposals they'll be releasing."

"We base our pricing on the cost of the staff who will be working on the project, plus benefits and other compensation, overhead, and then profit. Some contracts have set fees that are built in the contract. Others are based on time and materials or cost-plus."

"We are a privately held company, so we don't release sales figures. We have around 260 full time employees. We hire mostly programmers who typically have computer science degrees. Other employees are




testers who ensure the programs work as designed. They have lower degree requirements.

"We have teams typically of four to eight that work together on assignments. They meet each day to review the workload and commitments, and then meet every couple of weeks to fully come up to speed with their overall progress. Our projects run from six months to five years, depending on the complexity of the contract."

Some contracts are for critical defense tasks such as navigation and weaponry control. Others are as mundane as keeping track of charges in a ship's mess hall.

"We pay our degreed programmers well, especially for our area."

"We are profit driven like every other company. But we roll lots of our funds back to the employees. We have a robust benefits package. We reimburse employees for extra training. We have Tech football tickets for Blacksburg employees. We really try to take care of our people." 



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Dan Smith

Sharon Casale: "Cabbage-Patch investigator"

Stay-home mom to Private Eye >

Executive Summary:

Sharon Casale has always had an interest in solving crimes, so when her son was all grown up, she became a PI.

By Dan Smith

Sharon Casale spent 17 years as an at-home mother, so when the time came to get into the workforce "I kept hearing that I didn't have any experience." It is a common refrain: No experience, no job. No job, no experience.

She went back to school, following a long-held interest in crime. Casale took a 60-hour course for prospective private investigators. The class had 14 people in it, "mostly retired cops and paralegals. I sat in the back and watched everybody." Ultimately, "I was the only one of the group who was hired" after the class ended. She is 46 now and has been working steadily for eight years.

She has worked primarily for lawyers in

the Roanoke Valley and more recently a large insurance company. The work is not full-time (she is a bar tender when she's not sleuthing), but it is certainly unusual. "There used to be another [woman] PI in the Roanoke Valley—a retired police officer—but I don't think she's still working it, so I may well be the only one left. She was a bad ass."

Casale is not solving murders or any exotic TV series or mystery novel cases, but mostly working the more mundane—though sometimes dangerous—inquiries. "I've been threatened [with violence] 13 times," she says, matter-of-factly. She has responded to those threats, she says, with a casual answer ("I understand how you feel") and believes her "chubby cheeks" and the fact that she's a woman leave the upset targets of investigations off balance. "I'm kind of the Cabbage Patch investigator and they don't expect that," she laughs. "People are not afraid of me."

Casale's cases often involve reconstructing accidents, people being hit by trains ("I get a lot of those"), dog bites—"the biggest litigation money-makers." She examines business property for insurance companies, making sure liability is limited, and she looks closely at automobile repossession

lots to be certain they are in compliance with Virginia law.


She does not carry a weapon. "Nobody I work for will allow it," she says, so she hasn't even been certified with a firearm. She must always truthfully announce who she is when interviewing a subject.

Casale occasionally takes photos on stakeouts ("I was once in a dumpster" on a stakeout) and generally uses her phone for photography. "I can't use the recorder," though, because—inexplicably—it isn't permitted.

Her work, she says, has been good enough over the years that "I have never had to go to court." She concentrates on the "just the facts, ma'am" philosophy of gathering evidence. "There is no need for my opinion, so I don't give it," she says.

"I was once asked to do some bounty hunting," she says, but she refused. "I knew a woman who did it [bounty hunting]. She was a third degree black belt." The work, she says, "can be dangerous" and she carries mace.

The job, Casale insists, "can be very stressful. It is often threatening." But because "I'm curious by nature," there is the call to investigate. "I think women are probably better [PIs] than men because we cross the Ts and dot the Is. We are detailed." Investigation, she says, "boils down to 50 percent in the field and 50 percent narrative writing," something she excels at, she says.

Her short-term goal? "I would like to do worker's compensation," she says, "because I can be devious and manipulative." She smiles broadly. 

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Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

In the digital economy, the best technology isn't always that latest app.

Paper please >

I admit it. I use a paper planner.

In a world of Google calendars, One Note, and numerous apps to help with productivity, I still use paper and pen for keeping track of my appointments, setting goals, and managing my business. In the eyes of some, I'm a dinosaur.

You might think I'm anti-technology, but you would be wrong. I use my smart phone regularly for navigation and texting (not at the same time!), conduct video meetings over the internet, and stream most of my TV watching. Yet despite all the technology to help us plan and prioritize our lives, doesn't it seem like our days are more hectic than ever before?

The problem is this... the more we are "connected" to the information around us, the less we are "connected" to that which is most important to us. We are inundated by digital media and can't focus on our critical tasks. This is where the paper planner comes in.


I use my planner to keep my calendar, write down my goals, keep track of my tasks, take down notes, plan my communications, and manage my important lists. The advantages of doing this (and confirmed by recent studies) are:

- Focus – Digital tools are rife with distractions (notifications, Facebook, texts, etc.) Paper provides distraction-free clarity of thought.
- Productivity – Within seconds I can review my appointments, find my notes, and review my task list, and do so much faster than others using digital methods.
- Memory – Studies have proven that the act of writing on paper helps you internalize and remember the information you are recording much better than typing it.

Over the past several years, I have helped hundreds of professionals improve their productivity by developing new habits to manage email, handle interruptions, and delegate tasks. But the most popular new habit (by far) my clients have appreciated is using a paper planner. And surprisingly, young leaders, who grew up in the digital age, love them for all the reasons above.

Don't believe me? The paper planner industry is growing (10% annually a few years ago). A search of an online retailer brings up 60,000 paper planners! A study of college students showed 92% prefer printed materials because it provides better concentration without distractions from digital platforms.

Paper planners may not be for everyone, and there are some disadvantages. But as I've stated a few times in past articles, just because you can use technology for a process doesn't mean you should!

Still don't want to try a planner? Who's the dinosaur now? 

Renewal time, you bet >

Painful News²Hear

It was late in January – four years ago – when my adopted hometown got news that was about as bad as people could imagine. It was a real gut punch to hear the railroad – Norfolk Southern – was leaving Roanoke and in its wake an empty ten-story building in the heart of our blossoming downtown. After all, the railroad had built the economy of our hip, small city.

People were obviously scared. It was devastating news and the local reporters beat on about all the people who would be leaving, the lost jobs for our area, and how bad things were going to be for our city when all of this happened.

The way things had always been was clearly not going to continue. The time had come to adapt.


A New Way to Look at Things⁴Your Business

A group of local business leaders decided to band together to rebound from the bad news. They bought the building and retrofit it so a handful of companies could share the beautiful space and take advantage of a great downtown Roanoke address. Instead of relying on one corporate giant, these ingenious and daring new owners split things up and in a matter of a few short years they've continued work to fill the space.

It was the same shell of a building, but inside everything was different.

How many times are we hit with devastating news in business or life only to quickly figure out it's actually a new opportunity for us? Now, we're forced to find a new way to do things. Instead of feeling sorry about a major loss, these investors took a risk, found a new path, and fueled some of the continued growth here in town.

It was impressive work. And is a good reminder for us.

There is a new way to accomplish your mission and it starts with taking a fresh look at the situation. Maybe you can try that the next time seemingly bad news crosses your desk. 



It starts with taking a fresh look at the situation



A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan

Executive Summary:

Be ready to adapt—whether proactively or retroactively, it's an essential survival skill.





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All photos: FRONT

Our cowboy appears to guard his collection of boots, but he'll let you pass.



Western Ways outlet in Forest houses everything from serious tack and gear for the working farm to recreational apparel and accessories for the outdoor enthusiast.

Giddy-up getup >

Executive Summary:

Retail outlets Western Ways, Pet Craze, Ladies Lovin' Life, and the new Anytime Outfitters offer just about anything for the active "outdoorsy" type—with online prices but local touch.

By Bonnie Cranmer

It's cold outside and we all want to arm ourselves against the elements. In this region of the country, if you work or play outside in the winter, the need for protection is essential, and one place to get that protection in Roanoke is Anyday Outfitters.

Anyday Outfitters is a recent addition to the Towers Mall shops on Colonial Avenue. The location is bright and the staff is inviting. Browse an exceptional selection of western



Veronica Brooks is ready to check you in or out at the Western Ways outlet in Forest.



This wall of boots? That's only one of many in the outlet in Forest.

wear, work and casual denim, boots for children, men and women, accessories and a much needed variety of work boots and apparel. FR gear is necessary protective clothing for some professions and Anyday Outfitters has that in stock.

There's a colorful diversity of cowboy and cowgirl boots available from brands like Ariat, which Jake Hobson shared "was named after Secretariat." Jake is the son of Diana Hobson, owner of three stores, including Anyday Outfitters. "It's a tag-

team effort," he said about how he and Diana share the management of the stores.

Anyday Outfitters is the newest addition to the family of businesses owned by Hobson. What began as a tack shop back in 1972 in Forest, Virginia has evolved in a big way.

"I'm amazed at how big it is!" said Veronica Brooks, Marketing Coordinator at the main location, Western Ways in Forest. Veronica had heard about the store before she began



And why wouldn't an outdoor retailer be anything but pet-friendly?



A boot for every style: subtle, dapper, utility, basic, exotic, extravagant.



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And more.



Not a real horse... of course. One of many icons to embellish the ambience at Western Ways.



Jake and Diana Hobson greet customers at new Anytime Outdoors shop at Roanoke's Towers Mall.

working there. She was pleasantly overwhelmed after she was hired and got the opportunity to experience Western Ways herself.

The store was created to serve the horse community with tack and gear that was hard to get locally. It grew into a popular destination, and expanded into the newer location on Vista Centre Drive in 2010, adding 15,000 square feet to the retail

and inventory space, now close to 18,000. The selection grew into popular clothing, accessories and jewelry in addition to the already wide variety of horse related items.

Another expansion in 2008 included Pet Craze, the second shop of the three, specifically for the dog and cat lovers in the region. There's plenty of food, treats and toys along with the specialty gifts passionate pet people adore. Daycare




Just a partial selection of belts at Western Ways; and yes, there are plenty of belt buckles available, too.



A wide assortment of shirts awaits in the "Man Cave" for the gentleman with the western flair.

and boarding are available for 50+ animals with outdoor space and loads of loving care. The location on Forest Road has expanded in the past several years to meet the demand for pet products and services in the Forest / Lynchburg / Smith Mountain Lake area.

Jake Hobson says "We're a little bit of everything." He's happy that Western Ways and Anyday Outfitters has the selection and price to match online shopping plus the added benefit "to try it on first" in the stores. All three stores add up to a family legacy that will continue to grow. 



With pricing similar to online shopping, the brick-and-mortar shop offers a big advantage: you can try everything on to ensure it fits or check out the quality.



Coming together, in the garden >

The word “germination” is commonly used in two contexts: having to do with seeds and having to do with ideas. Just outside Blacksburg, there is a prime example of just exactly what happens in both cases when germination is enriched by collaboration – on multiple levels: individual, community, academic, and organizational.

Having hosted community gardens since the 1970s, the YMCA at Virginia Tech was faced with a dilemma in 2010 when the land used for the gardens was repurposed. Enter Arlean Lambert, a native of Blacksburg who donated sufficient acreage the land she purchased from her family estate. The years that followed brought a flurry of ideas, projects, successes and more ideas.

Good Work

By Rachael Garrity

Executive Summary:
*YMCA at Virginia Tech
Community Garden
attracts a lot of green
thumbs to its mission.*

Among the 70 gardeners who sign up each year, as many as 75 percent come from outside the country, according to Jenny Schwanke, the garden coordinator hired in 2009 using USDA grant funds awarded to a project designed to create a Civic Agriculture and Food Systems minor at VT and headed by VT faculty member, Dr. Susan Clark.

Keenly aware that having succeeded is not enough and carrying forward is crucial, Lambert has welcomed multi-talented individuals and both corporate and community organizations to be part of the effort. Retired physics professor David Roper is responsible for the solar greenhouse. A community member donated the solar-powered system that pumps water from an on-site pond to a storage tank for part of the garden. A pavilion for classes, meetings, and picnicking arose from a collaboration between Blue Ridge Timberwrights and the Blacksburg Rotary Club. Four years ago, Bowers Barn Builders added a tool shed.

Current gardeners include individuals from Nepal,



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China, Cambodia, Thailand and Columbia. They pay as little as \$10 per season for use of the land. Community volunteers account for more than 1,000 hours of labor annually. Others donate money to the YMCA earmarked for garden support.

None of this is a surprise to people who know Lambert and Schwanke. "Indefatigable" is the word that comes to mind. A retired librarian, Lambert at one point in her career raised \$10,000, one penny at a time to buy wooden bookshelves for the school library in New Jersey where she was employed. Schwanke began and continues to operate a weekly meeting for women from other countries living in the New River Valley while they or their spouses complete educational or research projects. "It's pretty amazing," insists Lambert. "Were it not for this opportunity, many of these women would have felt totally isolated."

Obviously Vince Lombardi was right when he said: "Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work. 

“ Just outside Blacksburg, there is a prime example of just exactly what happens in both cases when germination is enriched by collaboration – on multiple levels: individual, community, academic, and organizational.



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On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*FRONT publisher
reminisces about
interviewee subjects
and folks in general.*

The six most interesting people in the world >

With the close of year 2018, I celebrated a milestone. Thirty years of business journal publishing. Three decades. The original Blue Ridge Regional Business Journal (eventually shortened to Blue Ridge Business Journal) was founded in 1988. When conducting the feasibility study for the startup, I got a resounding "maybe" from our local business community when queried whether they would support such a venture. We started it anyway, and lo and behold—it worked. In 2008, I transitioned in a slightly newer model and founded Valley Business FRONT; so we also celebrate that ten-year milestone with the close of 2018.

I can't even begin to estimate the number of people we've interviewed in those three decades. Three-hundred sixty months of publications (including a good stretch of about two decades where we published bi-weekly) with a range of six to twelve feature articles per magazine, yields a minimum of 6,000 direct interviews, not counting our follow up to incoming releases and other development of sources, the news entries, compilation covers and specialty publications.

We've chatted with over 10,000 individuals, mostly in the Roanoke Region, New River Valley, and the 16 counties that comprise our part of Southwest Virginia. And our interviews were a little more involved than "chatting" in comparison to today's social-digital vernacular.

All the folks we talked to were interesting. Some more than others. It only took me three decades, but I think I know why that is. My most interesting subjects come from six places:

1. People who have succeeded—or failed

This one's easy. We're a business journal after all. We all want to know what someone did to be successful in business, how they did it, who they did it with, when, where, and why. And the failures, as we all know, are perhaps even more revealing. A person describing this kind of story—is interesting. It's that simple.

2. People who are talented—or insightful

Originally, I included the modifier "artistically" talented or insightful. Because I can't help but find artists interesting. Or anyone who appreciates beauty, creativity, and the spirit of inventiveness. Talent extends throughout all professions, occupations, and activities, of course; but many of us gravitate toward the artist, author, musician and on to the inventor, scientist, engineer, etc. If you create something, you're interesting. And if it inspires or motivates a response, all the better.

3. People who have survived—or are surviving

Who can turn away from a story of perseverance? If you are a person who struggles, you may not even know how

many people celebrate, admire, and cheer for you. Overcoming challenges create the best stories and generate the highest interest. Survivors inspire us, and often challenge us to pick up whatever armor we can find or develop, and take on the battle.

4. People who love—or have loved


Does this classification really belong in a business journal? Absolutely. Passionate people are always interesting. Root around in the story for any amount of time or even the shallowest depth, and you're going to find the "L" word. People do what they do—for love. And that's not just a song lyric. And yes, I'm not just speaking of love in the generic sense... but love for—well... a loved one. So many of our most interesting stories happen because one person loves another.

5. People who confirm the spiritual

Now, I've surely crossed the line. There's no room for religion or reason to call it out in a business journal, right? Not so at all. People who believe in God or god or practice their faith, whether publicly or privately, are not just interesting; they often give us a whole separate level of motivation. The atheist and nonreligious can be interesting too, of course, but I can't help but feel a tinge of sadness for the angry anti-religious zealot who is intolerant of the faith-seeking or faith-practicing crowd. I see no real compelling reason to dismiss the "spiritual believers" even if one sees such demonstration as false hope. Shutting down such experience is the ultimate form of proselytizing; it hardly celebrates the interesting soul who has shared something with a higher power, whether you believe it or not.

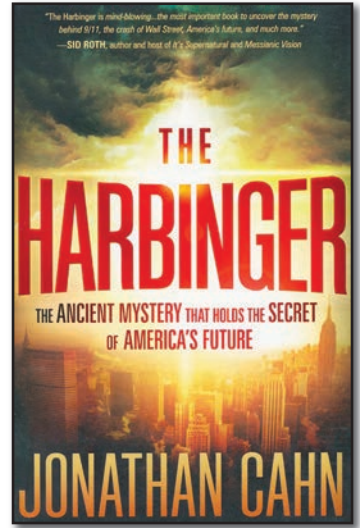
6. People who care about you

It's a funny thing. As interviewers, we ask the questions. As humans, we talk and we listen. But when someone genuinely asks you a question or engages you because they care (for whatever reason) or want to know about you, watch what happens. The interest soars. In both directions. It's rather ironic that in our elevated stage of ever growing and evolving "social media," the concentration on "social" has diverted the attention from "personal." Can we advance our social standing while retreating from our personal standing at the same time? I not only believe that's possible, I believe that's what is happening. The social network might be interesting, but it hardly compares to the personal relationship. Social gets together, but personal gets real.

Are you a most interesting person? Am I? I don't believe you exist if you can't find yourself in at least one of those six places above. If you don't see yourself in any of them... well... I've GOT to meet you. An anomaly is ALWAYS interesting. 

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



Ancient wake-up call

Have you visited St. Paul's chapel at Ground Zero and wonder why it came through the September 11, 2001, attack unscathed? Do you know what the underlying cause was of the September 11th attack and the 2008-2009 economic crash? No, it's not what we've been told by the politicians, journalists, and financial analysts. You may be surprised to learn that both events were connected, and that our nation's politicians may have unwittingly and ignorantly affected the fate of the United States by the very words they spoke in their proclamations after September 11.

In Jonathan Cahn's *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Harbinger* (Lake Mary, Florida: FrontLine, 2011), the reader joins journalist Nouriel as his conversations with a mysterious stranger who always seems to show up out of nowhere lead him on an investigative trail of clues in New York City and Washington, D.C., where Nouriel uncovers the truths of these two connected events. In this explosive story, Cahn's detailed, documented facts link ancient Israel to the United States of America, making *The Harbinger* an astonishing, page-turning read. It's a timely wake-up call for those who are smart enough to take it seriously.

—Christine Liana

The conscious capitalist

Futurist Joe Tankersley helped establish the first Strategic Foresight Group for Walt Disney Imagineering's elite Blue Sky Studio where he

trained hundreds of Disney cast members to use narrative to explore possible futures and developed visions for the future of socially responsible corporations, creative communities, and digitally empowered workforces. In 2014, Tankersley founded Unique Visions, as a vehicle to share the power of story with those who were already working to create better tomorrows. He is most passionate about projects relating to conscious capitalism, the environment, connected communities, sustainable tourism, and aging.

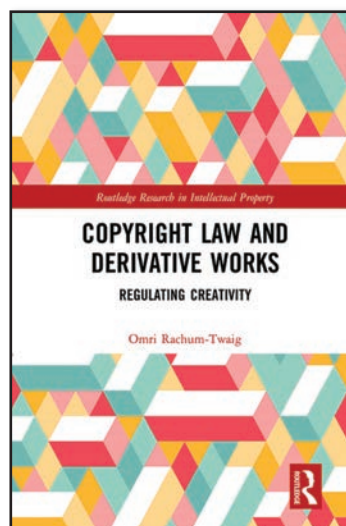
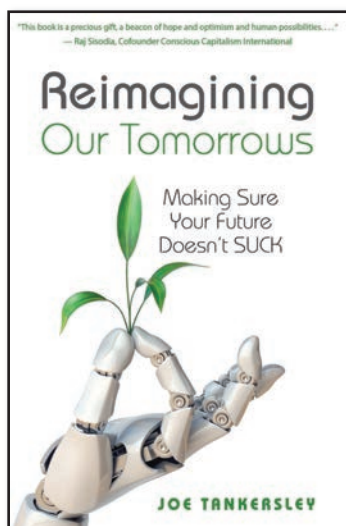
"Yes, we face serious threats to our future in terms of climate change, pollution, and rising inequality," says Tankersley. "But we have at our disposal new tools that can help us address these issues and create a more positive future."

Tankersley fervently believes that people can change the future for the better. In *Reimagining Our Tomorrows: Making Sure Your Future Doesn't SUCK* (Unique Visions; 2018) he shows ways that we can create a future that is sustainable; why people should be hopeful in the face of robots and automation taking their jobs; and how we are living in a moment when an individual's power to shape his/her future has never been greater.

—Emma Boyer

Not that nutsy

I admit it. The squirrel on the cover caught my attention; made me pick up this book. That image alone assures I'm going to have a fun read, right? Well...



Ellie Kemper's *My Squirrel Days* (Scribner; 2018) is a memoir like that wine that's going to be fantastic—but only after it has aged properly. To be fair, our celebrity from the television sitcom *The Office* doesn't promise an insightful look at a full life well lived. She's young and this is simply a surface-account of her salad... err... squirrel days. If we accept that, we're fine with this "back story," so don't expect any depth or revealing truths. It's an account written much like a situation comedy, anyway. And frankly, it matches her character. Sometimes, lightness is just ok.

Our girl next door shares her best when she talks about her gig with others on set. There are some funny moments. We're not going to get much more about her life, certainly no depth-of-soul, until we know her better than from afar (or the girl next door).

There are some people who are great and wonderful to be around. They exude a cheerfulness we can all use. She doesn't even hate squirrels; good for Ellie K.

—Tom Field

Rethinking creative rights

Copyright law regulates creativity. It affects the way people create works of authorship *ex-ante* and affects the status of works of authorship significantly *ex-post*. But does copyright law really understand creativity? Should legal theories alone inform our regulation of the creative process?

Copyright Law and Derivative Works: Regulating Creativity (Routledge; 2018) by Omri Rachum-Twaig views copyright law as a law of creativity. It asks whether copyright law understands authorship as other creativity studies fields do. It considers whether copyright law should incorporate non-legal theories, and if so, how it should be adjusted in their light. For this purpose, the book focuses on one of the many rights that copyright law regulates – the right to make a derivative work. A work is considered derivative when it is based on one or more preexisting works. Today, the owner of a work of authorship has the exclusive right to make derivative works based on her original work or to allow others to do so. The book suggests a new way to think about both the right, the tension, and copyright law at large. It proposes relying on non-legal fields like cognitive psychology and genre theories and offers new legal-theoretical justifications for the right to make derivative works.

As the first book to consider the intersection between copyright law, creativity and derivative works, this will be a valuable resource for students, scholars, and practitioners interested in intellectual property and copyright law.

—Taylor & Francis

The reviewers: **Christine Liana** is a local businesswoman and former news editor of FRONT; **Emma Boyer** is a publicist with Smith Publicity of Cherry Hill, NJ; **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher; **Taylor & Francis** is a scholarly journals, books, ebooks, and reference works publisher.



Room at *this* Inn >

The 2018 **Fashions for Evergreens** tradition at Hotel Roanoke, featured decorated Christmas and holiday trees by nonprofits and various service organizations; this year's event (18th year) included about three dozen displays in the competition which also raises funds.

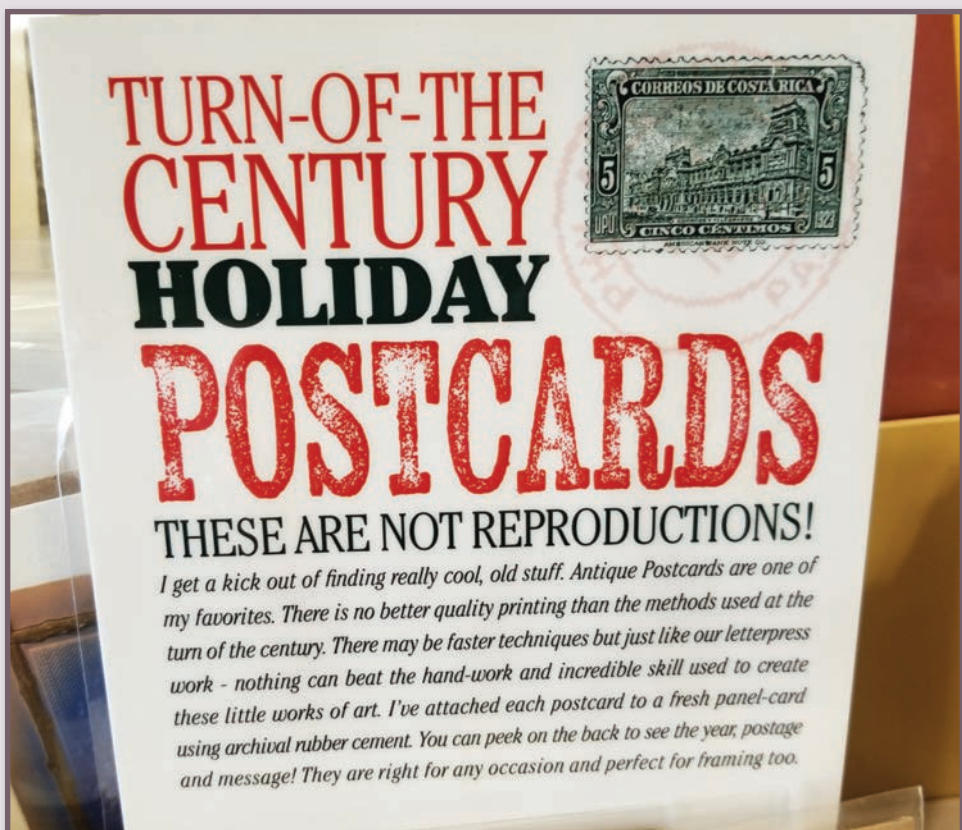
FRONT 'N ABOUT



FRONT

Winter taverns >

There's something about stopping by a "tavern" on cold winter nights; and local businesses, like **Whitebarrel Winery** in Christiansburg and **Buffalo Mountain Brewery / McDaniel's Tavern** in Floyd offered just the respite around the holiday season.



In the cards >

Appalachian Press got into the holiday spirit with its card collection that included a special collection of actual vintage postcards, as seen in this retail display at downtown Roanoke's Bread Craft bakery.

FRONT'N ABOUT

FRONT



Coming along >

Virginia Western Community College campus in Roanoke bustles with new construction, including buildings, parking areas, and the two new "mini" roundabouts that have already helped with traffic flow even though they're still being built.

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



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FRONT 'N ABOUT



FRONT

What the dickens? >


Downtown Roanoke's annual **Dickens of a Christmas** festivities was held Dec. 7, 14, and 21, featuring holiday activities, music, food, merchandise to large crowds.



Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer


Religious conversion >

First Baptist Church of Roanoke purchased the iconic **WSLS 10** television station downtown that was sold by Graham Media Group pending the station's relocation to 5th Street, NE; Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer managed the \$1.2 million sale.



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 Tristina Pagans, LMT
at Somatic Harmony



Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Vaught

Ashley Vaught has been appointed vice president, regional manager for MemberOne Federal Credit Union Blue Ridge Region.



Mitchell

Priscilla Mitchell has joined as financial specialist at Pinnacle Financial Partners Roanoke office.

Jean Hopstetter has been promoted to senior executive

vice president, and **Tim Rowe** has been promoted to executive vice president and chief administrative officer at MemberOne Federal Credit Union.

Ashley Nader has been named senior registered client service associate for UBS Financial Services downtown Roanoke office.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Monahan

Kelsey Monahan has joined as senior product field sales representative at Mythics, Inc.

Eric Thompson has been promoted to director, sales and engineering at



Thompson

Advanced Logic Industries.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Jay Dickens has been named president of The Lester Group.

Steve Brant has been promoted to vice president of finance and corporate treasurer; **Brian Myers** has been promoted to vice president of finance for income properties; **Craig Koller** has joined as vice president of finance for income properties; **Cheryl Fulghum** has been promoted to corporate controller; **Katelyn Willis** has been promoted to controller with HHHunt Homes;

Ashley Payne has been promoted to assistant controller at HHHunt Corp.

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Donna Wardell has been named client services manager at Anstey Hodge Advertising Group.

EDUCATION FRONT



Pleasant

R. Scott Pleasant has been named the C.R. Roberts Professor of Clinical Veterinary Medicine; **Michael Nappier** has earned the Excellence in Teaching Award from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL);



YOU DESERVE THE BEST

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.



Goyne



Oberoi



Thorpe

Keith Goyne has been appointed associate dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment; **Allie Oberoi** has been named assistant director for global safety and risk management in the



Hulver

Global Education Office; **Chevon Thorpe** has been named director of inclusion, diversity, and equity in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; and **Matthew Hulver** has been named assistant dean of health sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech.

Daniel Harrington was appointed interim dean of Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.



Harrington

CULTURE FRONT



Dunbar-Mator

Christina Dunbar-Mator, DO, MPH of Carilion Clinic, has been named chair of the American Heart

Association's 2019 Roanoke Heart Ball.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS



O'Donnell

Daniel O'Donnell has been appointed administrator of Roanoke County.

David Radford has been appointed to fill the vacancy in the Windsor Hills Magisterial District on the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors.

Compiled by Tom Field

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FRONT Notes

22nd restaurant opens

Macado's has opened its newest restaurant in Vinton (a renovation of the former library beside Vinton War Memorial).

Counting another

Brown Edwards certified public accountants firm announced that Harrisonburg-based Yancey & Bowman has merged with the company.

Birds flock to new name

Harmony at Roanoke is the new name of independent and assistant living and memory care facilities formerly called The Village on Pheasant Ridge, The Crossings at Pheasant Ridge, and Pheasant Ridge Memory Center.

\$50M booster shot

Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC is the new name of Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute that received a \$50 million gift from Roanoke's

Heywood and Cynthia Fralin and the Horace G. Fralin Charitable Trust, announced on Dec. 6; the gift to be used to advance recruiting and attracting top-ranked scientists and speed up economic gains for Roanoke and the region.

Troopers upgrade

Virginia State Police is getting a new headquarters for Division Six in Salem; tearing down the old outdated building off West Main Street and constructing a new one in 2020 off I-81, exit 141 at Rte 419.

Cyber approval

The Virginia Research Investment Committee (VRIC) recently accepted the blueprint for the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative (CCI) — a network of cyber research, innovation, and learning created by connecting Virginia's public universities, community colleges, and businesses, to position Virginia as a national leader in science and

technology research, development, and commercialization.

Name that shopping center

The former **Marketplace Shopping Center** in Christiansburg has been purchased by Bromont Investments with a planned redevelopment and \$53 million project to include new restaurants and retail; a "Rename Marketplace" naming contest is also underway.

More Vinton revival

Vinyard Station redevelopment project has been announced in the Town of Vinton involving re-use of the former Vinton Motor Co.; a taproom restaurant with outdoor pavilion build-out by local Wilkinson Group is planned.

Heart surgery

Heartwood Artisan Gateway in Abingdon has closed for renovation of facilities and programs

and to develop a "renewed image focus on telling the unique story of Southwest Virginia's culture and heritage." The center is scheduled to reopen in March.

Curls, waves, and blowouts

Embellish Hair Studio has opened on Kirk Avenue in downtown Roanoke.

Tap throttled

Oregon-based **Deschutes Brewery** laid off about ten percent of its workforce and has delayed (or possibly rescinded) the building of its planned East Coast facility in Roanoke.

Salem's dining and lodging

El Jefe Taqueria restaurant has opened in the back of the former **West Salem Body Shop** on W. Main Street in Salem; the building renovation includes AirBnB apartments and



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a second restaurant opening (barbecue) in first quarter. The former **Salem Theatre** building on Main Street (across from the courthouse) is also under renovation, with a planned upscale restaurant and boutique hotel to open in the spring.

Ama-zing

The Virginia Chamber Foundation commissioned Chmura Economics to study the economic impact of the decision by **Amazon** to locate its major corporate headquarters in Arlington. The report found that the project will create 59,308

jobs with an economic impact of \$14.2 billion in 2030 and beyond. The Commonwealth of Virginia has the potential to collect \$346.7 million in annual state tax revenue from the project with tax benefits continuing for the state beyond 2030.

7 seed

Virginia Tech Foundation and Carilion Clinic have partnered to create the **VTC Seed Fund**, a \$7 million venture capital fund, to facilitate additional pathways for innovative products and technologies to be commercialized.

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.

No longer Roanoke—or—Virginia

Norfolk Southern Corp. is relocating the company headquarters from Norfolk to Atlanta; the move (already underway) expected to take a few years to complete.

Also out of Roanoke

Advance Auto Parts

has officially announced its company headquarters relocation from Roanoke to Raleigh, NC; although most of the executives had already moved more than a year ago, along with the company's acquisition of Carquest.

Rescue record

Roanoke Rescue Mission hit a milestone



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Michael Shelton specializes in working with Roanoke and Lynchburg area residents age 55+ who want to ensure they won't run out of money before they die. He currently holds

his Series 6, 63 & 65 licenses and received the prestigious Chartered Financial Retirement Counselor designation. He's an Iraqi Freedom War Veteran. As owner of both 360 Tax Solutions and 360 Financial Solutions, he takes client satisfaction seriously and makes himself available to every client and prospect of his firms. Tune into Fox radio for his weekly Small Business Figures show. [michael@discover360financial.com]

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Having succeeded is not enough...
carrying forward is crucial — Page 44

in 2018 by surpassing more than 400 people transitioned from the homeless shelter into housing (more than doubling the previous year).

Danville calling

PRA Group a debt-purchase collection agency is renovating a facility in Danville's Airside Industrial Park for a new call center and projecting 500 new jobs; a \$15 million investment.

Southside packing a punch

Essel Propack, a manufacturer of laminates and specialty packaging, is expanding its plant in Danville, a \$31.2 million investment and around 45 new jobs.

City back in

The Berglund Center (formerly Roanoke Civic Center) has transitioned back to management by Roanoke City, following the expiration of its

contract with Spectra at the end of 2018.

Plant packing more

McAirlaid's Inc. in Franklin County, a textile packing and filtration company, is adding about 25 new positions.

Soak them doggies

The Salt Foot Factory, a foot-soaking (and head, neck, shoulder massage) spa service, complete with local made carts

and tubs, has opened at Hotel Roanoke, managed by Tour Roanoke; see SpaRoanokeVA.com.

Revoking the revocation

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam has announced a plan to end the practice of suspending drivers' licenses for unpaid court fines and fees; a change pending General Assembly approval.

Compiled by Tom Field

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AAF / Roanoke	55 & 59	Freedom First Credit Union	2
Ameriprise Financial	55	Garland Properties /	
Anytime Fitness	53	16 West Marketplace	4
Bank of Botetourt	45	Ginger's Jewelry	3
B2C	61	MemberOne Federal Credit Union ..	BC
Beliveau Estate	55	Penworthy / Rachael Garrity	55
Berryfield	55	Proofing Prof	55
Book No Further	55	Raleigh Court Health &	
Carter Bank & Trust	56-57	Rehabilitation Center	16
Citizens	58	RBTC	27
Community Foundation		Ride Solutions	29
Serving Western Virginia	44	Roanoke CoLab	55
Creekmore Law Firm	62	Somatic Harmony Massage Therapy /	
Davis H. Elliot Company	55	Tristina Pagans	55
Dr. Pepper Park at the Bridges ...	25	Suggestion Mailbox	15
Entre Computer Center	23	VCOM	24
		Virginia Business Systems	63



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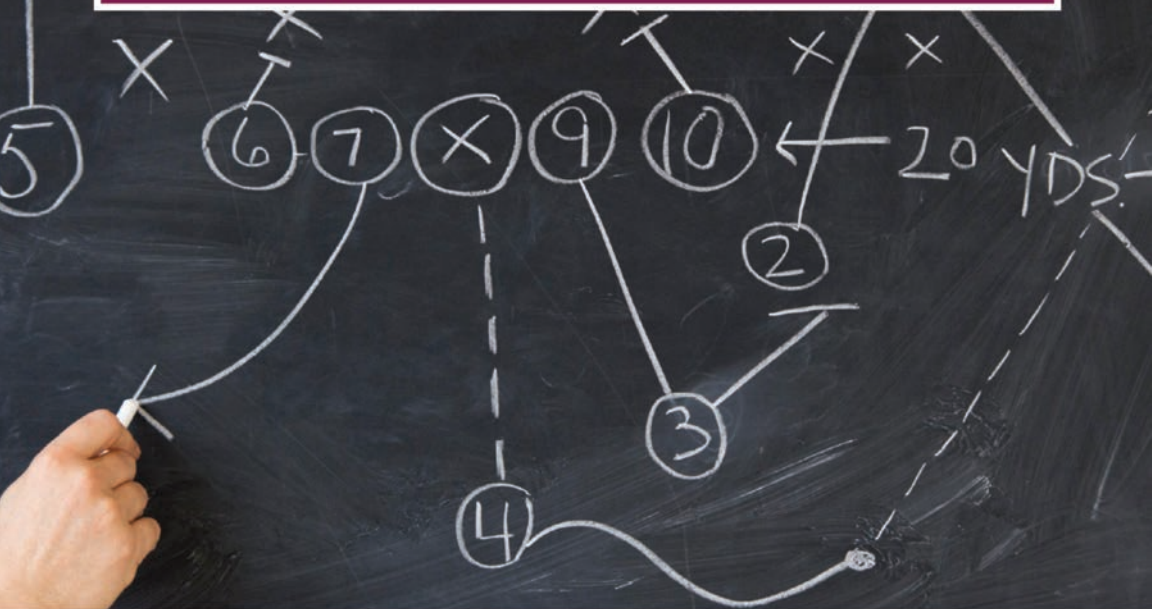


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