

# Valley Business FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE  
BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION

FREE • ISSUE 129 • JUNE 2019

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## My First Job

Marj Easterling,  
Big Lick Screen Printing

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# WELCOME to the FRONT

My first job was an apprentice for a mass murderer.

When I assigned this FRONTcover story to my pal and former, founding editor, I knew I harbored a secret. Like all our subjects, I had a first job story, too. Mine, however, included an ugly twist. I hesitated whether to share it. Maybe there's a lesson? More than likely, just an observation. Kind of like the way Alfred Hitchcock movies work—except my script was real.

I was fifteen years old. I got the fever of having a little change in my pocket from odd jobs for neighbors around the little ten acre spot where I lived up on the hill above Peters Creek Road and Melrose Avenue in Roanoke. I was asked to have Mrs. Thomas's goat bred (a task I had no idea how to manage, but thanks to my Uncle Joe for helping me earn my first non-allowance "commission.") We had a few goats on the property, and I guess I learned how to increase inventory that spring. I did some pretty tough lot cleaning for Mrs. Donaldson that summer, watching the many snakes slither away from the head of my mattock. And in the fall, I stuffed incalculable number of bags with leaves from Mrs. Doran's forest (it was just her back yard, but reminiscent of a great timber woodland to my estimation).

But even in my early teen years, I possessed a desire for something a little different than malodorous goats, obstreperous brambles, and discommodious leaves. I had a passion for the arts (and bigger than necessary, important sounding words). My mother was more than aware of my calling (scribblings and music saturating our house); so she found someone in graphic production that could indeed, facilitate some help around his shop.

*[continued on Page 46]*

*"Love begins in a moment,  
grows over time,  
and lasts an eternity."*

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Websites should  
market first. — Page 37





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## Meet the team.

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Monica Monday, Scott Sexton, Greg Haley.

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# Valley Business FRONT

JUNE

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Dan Smith

## 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



Tom Field



Keith Finch



Mike Leigh



Nanette Levin



Nicholas Vaassen

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

## 2019 Members

**Nancy Agee** Carilion (Wellness)  
**Laura Bradford** Claire V (Retail)  
**Nicholas C. Conte** Carilion (Legal)  
**Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Finance)  
**John Garland** Garland Properties (Development)  
**Nancy Gray** Hollins University (Education)  
**Nanci Hardwick** Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)  
**George Kegley** Retired (Seniors)  
**John D. Long** National D-Day Memorial (Culture)  
**Nancy May** LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)  
**Stuart Mease** Virginia Tech (Education)  
**Mary Miller** ACI (Tech/Industry)  
**Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)

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

““

The axiom 'hire for the heart and train for the brain' is true now more than ever.

— Page 22

““

That's like getting the gold medal in the Olympics.

— Page 41

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# First Jobs

## All about that first job >

Whether it was babysitting, working McDonald's counter, unstopping sewers, clerking in a country store or a variety of other opportunities, executives took their first jobs seriously.

By Dan Smith

Our first job—like the first kiss, first car, first touchdown, first prom, first marriage, first college acceptance letter, first baby, first invitation to join AARP—stays with us, sometimes for a lifetime.

It may be a small job in a fast-food restaurant or sweeping out a hardware store, but when we are young, everything we do in that first adult adventure is outsized and often lasting. For those who become executives or business owners, the first job often has particular significance, even though it is almost never in the field that is ultimately pursued, generally after college.

We asked a group of this region's business executives and leaders about their first jobs and their diverse answers were quite telling. Here's some of what they said.

**John Garland**, who has 30 or so individual real estate LLCs and owns a consulting engineering firm in Roanoke, says he has "worked all my life, since the time I was able to pull my red wagon around the neighborhood. ... My first real job was a submarine sandwich maker at the New Yorker Delicatessen when it was at the corner of Williamson and Liberty Road. I was 15 and it was quite the

John Garland



Dan Smith





Annette Patterson

learning experience in how not to run a business. I cut the deli meat on a slicer and put the meat and cheese on the sub rolls that were then put in the cooler and finished when ordered.

"It was the first and only job I was ever fired from. Since they are still active and have been very successful, it makes it a little awkward to talk about, but it had to do with not getting paid for the hours I worked and having to approach ownership for my fair pay. They eventually knew they could not take advantage of me and let me go.

"I have many lasting memories of having worked at the New Yorker. One is the scar on the end of my finger from the meat slicer. Unfortunately, a piece of my finger ended up on one of the subs.

"Not paying your employees fairly or equitably, not paying your local taxes and cutting corners will eventually find you out and will tend to be your legacy. Life is too short to have a legacy of cutting corners and being a cheapskate, as opposed to a legacy of respecting employees and treating them fairly and going the extra mile to do things correctly. Although they are a restaurant survivor and I still eat there occasionally because I love their torpedoes, I forever have stories to tell about my first real job."



**Annette Patterson**, founding president of the Advancement Foundation in Vinton, was a McDonald's baby. "My first official job was at McDonald's where I learned a ton about customer service and process. One of my favorite memories was watching the training



Submitted photo

#### Roland Lazenby

tape from Ray Kroc called 'Green and Growing.' It's stuck with me my whole life. Essentially, he encourages you to always seek to learn so that you are continually growing regardless of your age.

"I loved the challenges of getting the drive-through moving faster and even cleaning the fry bin. We had a great team. I was promoted to a work crew trainer position where I learned a lot about how very different people are and how to motivate others.

"It was a great first job!"

**Roland Lazenby**, author of more than 60 books including *Michael Jordan: The Life* and *Showboat: The Life of Kobe Bryant*, "My first job was unstopping sewers and working on water leaks for the Town of Wytheville (Virginia) sewer and water crew in the summer of 1967," he says.

"I was 15. I learned to drive and operate a backhoe, dump truck, jackhammer and a front-end loader, but my main weapons were pick and shovel. I dug lots of ditches, dug down on lots of water leaks and clogged sewer lines. The water leaks were often refreshing on hot summer days. The stopped-up sewers were invariably nasty.

"I discovered I had an outstanding work ethic, made \$1.30 an hour, as did all the older gentlemen working with me, mostly African-American and working-class whites.

"They were all mentors to me. And they didn't just educate





# COVER STORY

me in the ways and means of the crew. They also told me how to take down most of a bottle of Tokay, cheap, fortified liquor store wine, in one long gulp. They taught me how to take a good drink of wine, then to lie down in the shallows of a cool creek on a hot day to enjoy the simple pleasure.

"They were philosophers and debaters, practiced at leaning on shovels and discussing events of the day. They especially enjoyed me because I had a high energy level, didn't mind digging the ditches, which allowed them extended breaks, which they sometimes used to slip off to the liquor store for one of the aforementioned bottles of Tokay. They dispatched these quickly before the supervisor could stop by the job site and catch them.

"Many afternoons I would be the only one left working while they snored peacefully in the nearby weeds. I learned so much about life and culture, I consider the experience as the equal, perhaps even greater, than any of my college semesters.

"I think of those days often. Those ol' birds were my mentors, and I gained immense respect for them, for the difficulties of their lives. I learned respect and empathy, two of life's most valuable lessons."

**Trish White-Boyd**, owner/director of Blue Ridge Senior Services and a member of Roanoke City Council, got a lesson in Old South reality when she went to apply for what would have been her first job. The owner of the local pharmacy in Chipley, Florida, her hometown, said the pharmacy wasn't hiring. Chipley is in the panhandle, close to Alabama. "It was so small, I couldn't get a job," she says. "Little black girls couldn't work."



Dan Smith

**Trish White-Boyd**



White-Boyd was a popular teenager, a cheerleader and track star at her high school, and was surprised at the response from the pharmacist. She was even more surprised when a few days later she discovered that a white girl—a friend of hers—had been hired for the job she wanted.

Following graduation, she moved to Miami to attend Miami Dade Community College and went to work for a woman who owned a sizeable marketing firm as a receptionist with a wide variety of duties (none of them modeling. "All the models were blonde girls," laughs White-Boyd today).

"My first job at the firm," she says, "was to call all the models and see which one had stolen a \$300 brush owned by [the owner of the firm]. It was not an easy job."

The harsh memories remain, she says. "They molded and shaped me." The sunny disposition, however, remains, as well.



Submitted photo

Ray Pethtel

**Ray Pethtel**, Virginia Department of Transportation Commissioner, of Christiansburg, "enlisted in the Army immediately after graduation from high school ... Frankly, I intended to make my career in the Army but my Penn State admission was only after the Army offered to send me to college." He declined that offer because it meant three years of Army for every year of college.

The Army sent him to Alaska, which he liked, and "at 17, I felt I was doing something important short of being a gung-ho rifleman. I had secondary training as a CB radio operator so I could communicate from those remote sites to relay stations in Nome."

Earlier, he was "trained in construction, at my choice, to be prepared to follow my dad if I eventually decided to take over his business. I decided not to do that but to re-enlist if I found the Army to my liking." What he found to his liking was college.



Submitted photo



William Fralin

**William Fralin**, president and CEO of Medical Facilities of America in Roanoke and a former General Assembly representative for Roanoke, sees a little irony in his first job, one working for the City of Roanoke. He's a Republican, he points out, a party that tends to hold government work in disfavor.

Still, he became part of a crew for Fannie Boone's Parks and Recreation Department, lining baseball fields, picking up trash, fixing fences, doing a lot of general labor. It was, he says, "a reality check."

His is an old, wealthy Roanoke family (his father, Heywood Fralin recently gave \$50 million to the Virginia Tech/Carilion Medical School) who attended high school at the exclusive Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg. For the city job, though, "I had to apply like everybody else." What did he learn? "I learned about FICA [Social Security withholding], hierarchy, being on time, which didn't take well and enjoying the people I worked with."







Aaron Ewert

**Aaron Ewert**, project manager at The Bridges in Roanoke, was a soccer coach and the Mill Mountain Zoo bear in his early teens before landing a real job at Wirtz Country Store on Roanoke City Market. "I rode my bike at 6 a.m. to help open the store on Saturday mornings," he says. He worked until 2 p.m. and earned \$35.

Working at the iconic Market store "was my first experience with customer service," he says. "There was no hiding [from the work]. I walked around with a wad of cash in my apron, making change, selling country hams. It was a fast pace and I was multi-tasking."

**Nancy Agee**, president/CEO of Carilion, one of the region's largest employer, hasn't always been in health care, although she was a Candy Striper as a teenager. Her first job was during her 14th and 15th summers "in an auto parts place over in Shenandoah Ave (don't remember the name)," she recalls. Her uncle Snooks worked there at the time. "A friend and I did inventory.

"Who knew there were so many little screws and washers and other gizmos? The work was boring, dirty and the men weren't sure how to address us two girls. We got paid about \$5 for each bin we completed."



Dan Smith



# Want fries with that?

Marj Easterling, our FRONTcover model jumps on the Ronald McDonald Playland before you can even make up your mind which Happy Meal you want. For the record, she does NOT work for the fast food restaurant today; rather, she runs her own graphics production shop, Big Lick Screen Printing (and in fact, made her own McD's shirt for this story). She didn't have "flashbacks" to her teenage job when we stepped into the restaurant, but like all our profiles, those first and early jobs taught valuable life lessons. "Service with a smile" seems to have stuck. —TF

Her legendary efficiency may well have begun at that parts shop and she learned some lessons she holds close: "First make friends with the folks around you. How? We made them homemade chocolate chip cookies. It worked. They were nicer.

"Second, teamwork improves productivity and income. My friend and I quickly figured out if we worked together on each bin, we were a lot quicker and the boredom decreased. And the faster we were, the more bins we did and the more money we made! Our boss wasn't sure we were taking it seriously until they saw the results.

"And the most important lesson" Go to school and get into a career that you are passionate about. Life's too short otherwise."







Submitted photo

Joyce Waugh

**Joyce Waugh**, president of Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, says, "My very first paid job was filling water pails at a flower farm in south Florida where my mom worked. I was around four years old and would often go with mom to work. I have no doubt that my \$1 and change came from my mother's pay."

She was a neighborhood babysitter until "my first summer job as a teenager, [working] 40 hours a week at a childcare center for \$1 an hour. Responsibilities were everything from helping the children get where they needed to be, help with feeding, straightening up after they left, cleaning tables, restrooms, etc. I enjoyed working with children yet learned that that wasn't what I wanted to do in the future. Job options were limited to where I could walk or ride my bike.

"[A job] I loved and learned so much from was working at Central Florida School Supply part time while going to Valencia Community College and full time during the summer while at Florida State University. I stocked shelves, helped customers, cashiered, did some office/invoicing work, priced items and occasionally helped in the warehouse. I made around \$3.25 an hour. My first mentor, the owner and manager of the business, taught me everything from co-worker interactions, how the bid process worked and offered advice to me. She truly shaped my work and world view. We became close friends and stayed in touch until she passed away last year."

Charlie Overstreet

**Charlie Overstreet**, owner of 9 ½ Northwest Hardware stores in Roanoke, Ridgeway, Dublin and Christiansburg, has never worked anywhere else. He started at 14 in his father's company (founded following service in World



Dan Smith



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War II, in 1947) with money he saved while serving. "When he died, he gave the store to me," says Overstreet. Since then, Northwest Hardware has grown quite a bit and there are plans to open one in Blacksburg in the near future.

Overstreet's father, Floyd Overstreet, was "energetic. He loved people," says Charlie, whose first paycheck was for \$104 for two weeks' work and "I was in heaven. I went to Charter Federal and put it all in the bank." That was to be his routine for years. "I had no expenses, living at home."

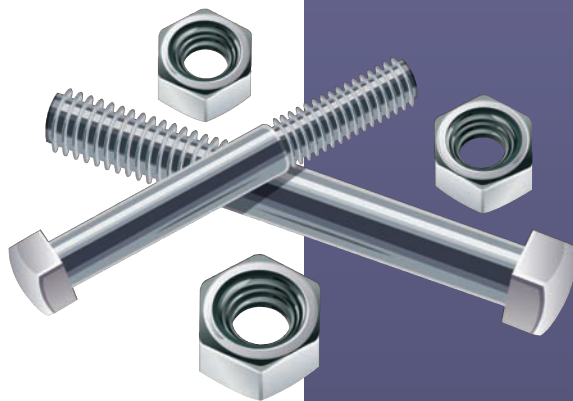
What did he learn? "I observed my father's actions. He went to work every day except Sunday. Dad had the attitude that we should put ourselves in the customers' shoes."

**Alan Ronk**, president and CEO of the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia in Roanoke, came from a family of carpenters who put him to work at \$2 an hour building homes and furniture when he was a teenager. "I was over the moon making that much money," he says. "I lived at home and saved it all."

Eventually, he bought a 1975 Monte Carlo "that had one of the first 8-track players in it."

"I was working with my family and I dedicated myself to listen and learning life lessons," says Ronk. "If I messed up, I fixed it; didn't linger. I measured twice, cut once. I had to recognize I was on my own and had to figure out ways to make it work. I put on a whole roof by myself, tiled a bathroom, relied on my own talent. It was a good lesson."

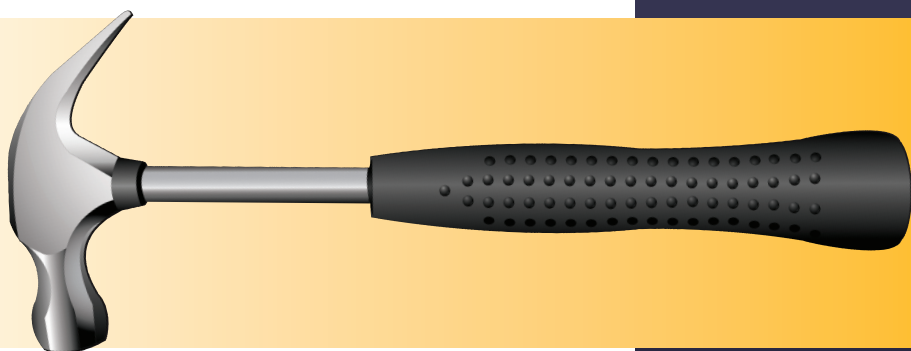
"As much as anything else, my grandfather imparted the role of a sense of humor in getting him through his work day. That's one of the things I learned: to work and have fun. I also learned I didn't want to come home with a head full of sawdust, four fingers on one hand and three on the other, like my grandfather."



Submitted photo



Alan Ronk



Submitted photo



**Ginger Mumpower**

**Ginger Mumpower**, long-time owner of Ginger's Jewelry in Roanoke, began her working life at 14 babysitting and serving ice cream at Taste Freeze in Grundy. But it wasn't until she was at Radford University some years later that she got her first real taste of business, working in a Radford jewelry store and as a waitress at the Golden Corral (where she made more money). She paid for her college by working and upon graduation bought the jewelry store.



Mumpower was a journalism major at Radford, but found she "just loved" working in jewelry at Brian Huddle Jewelry. Brian died and left the store to his wife, Jesse, who was less in love with the business than Mumpower was from her first day. Ginger learned the business, including watch-making from Brian and "I looked at it as a god thing" when she was offered the opportunity to buy the store at 22. "My parents thought I was crazy," she says now.

As a young teenager, "I was proud to make my own money and to feel independent. I learned the importance of making customers happy and serving them well," she says. "I learned respect for the schedule and time management, balancing my time."



Dan Smith

**Neil Wilkin**

**Neil Wilkin**, president/CEO of Optical Cable Corporation in Roanoke County, says the very suggestion of first jobs "reminded me that I cannot think of many times I wasn't working—starting in high school and continuing through college.

"My first real job—aside from the lawn mowing business I started with my parent's 1950 Economy tractor when I was 14 years old (1978)—was at the then Naval Surface Weapons Center (White Oak) in Silver Spring, Maryland, where I was a summer intern after my junior year of high school. Interesting to me now given my current job, I worked in the Electro-Optics group at NSWC, helping engineers with experiments and working with TTL [logic] chips on circuit 'breadboards.'

"For my lawn mowing business, I clearly recall that I charged customers \$3.50 per acre. I cannot recall my hourly wage at NSWC but I think it was around \$3.35 per hour.

"Key lessons from my early job experiences (and my parents) include: You can accomplish almost anything with determination, hard work and faith; and, everyone is important—no matter their title or job—so treat everyone the way you would want to be treated, and listen and learn from everyone you meet. My parents would regularly say 'the ground is level at the bottom of the Cross.'"

# COVER STORY

Submitted photo

**Mike Maxey**, Roanoke College president, started early. "My first job was in my father's 5 and 10 Cent store in Bassett. The store was Reed's and the tagline was 'Shop at Reed's for All Your Needs.' I was seven years old and was the layaway boy, running up and down stairs to store and retrieve gifts for customers who wanted to pay over time. I also assembled toys and weighed candy behind the candy case.

"It was another era, but the connection between the customers and our work was timeless. We were part of their lives and they were part of ours. I learned to always be courteous and helpful to everyone. I learned to care about customers and their lives and families. I learned basic lessons in economics.

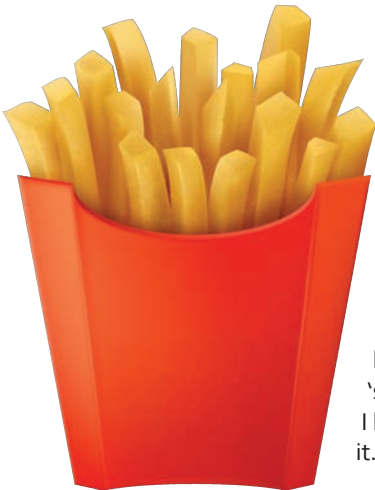
"I learned not to eat too much candy as I weighed it out for sale. And I got patted on the head a lot." He was paid the princely sum of 25 cents an hour.



**Mike Maxey**

**Marj Easterling**, owner of Big Lick Screen Printing (she says her title is variously "Rainmaker" and "Fairy Goth Mother"), was one of those zillions of teenagers who began their working lives at McDonald's. "I worked there for a hot minute," she says, admitting it was actually a year. She earned \$3.15 to start and wound up at \$3.35 before quitting because of a schedule change.

She had been doing OK, until she was assigned to work at 5 a.m. the day after high school graduation. She showed up Sunday at 6 a.m. after a night of post graduation partying, "all Stevie Nixed-out [beneath her uniform] in a lace shirt and shorts and about half drunk" and heard her supervisor say, "'You're supposed to be working!' I took off my uniform and threw it at him."



An ignominious ending 'to a decent gig, actually. "McDonald's has a great system," she says, looking back. "Even an idiot teenager can work it. You don't need experience and you can learn how to operate it. To this day, it is systemized, consistent across the board. I even learned 'suggestive selling' before I knew there was a term for it. Want fries with that?"



Submitted photo

**Marj Easterling**





**John Williamson**

**John Williamson**, retired chairman, president, CEO of RGC Resources who sits on the boards of 14 companies and was a Botetourt County Supervisor and former county administrator, went to work early. "I started shoveling coal and mowing grass for widows at age 11," he says. "I was working a little retail at a country store at age 14 and shift work at a truck stop at 17 and utility construction at 18, earning about \$1 hour.

"Other than mowing neighbors' yards and light farm work, my first job was at Hartigans Country Store in Bedford County, at age 14. I started stocking shelves and sweeping floors but graduated to customer service and running the cash register after a couple of weeks.

"It was great experience handling money and dealing with a diverse public. The next regular job was working the third shift at The Atlantic Truck Stop also in Bedford County. I pumped gas and diesel, handled the cash register and did a little light service work, although putting a spare tire on a tractor trailer was not all that light for a 17-year-old skinny kid.

"It was great work for developing independence and learning to make decisions because there was no management around on the third shift. After working through the summer, I tried to keep the job during my senior year of high school by working every other night, but it got to be too exhausting after a few months."

**Mary Miller**, president/founder of IDD Inc. in Blacksburg, Director Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program (RAMP), ex-president Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, may have broken a glass ceiling as a kid.

"I had a Roanoke Times paper route before the RT would let girls have paper routes," she says. "My brother started the route but wanted to give it up. I tried to get it but The Roanoke Times said no, they only hired paper boys. At that time, paper routes were managed by district managers, and he was the representative in charge. He held meetings on Saturdays and carriers would turn in their money, pick



# COVER STORY

up rubber bands and pay stamps that helped you keep up with subscriptions.

"When I learned that I didn't qualify to have a route, I offered to pay my brother to front for me, and he agreed. So, when I was 13 and 14, I paid my older brother a dollar a week to show up at the Lincoln Hotel in Marion on Saturday afternoons, to turn in my money and pick up my 'pay stamps.' To my knowledge the RT never knew the difference. I think my route had about 50-60 papers and I made \$7 a week but cleared \$6, which was a lot of money for a kid.

"I loved the rhythm of the route. I rode my bike and walked. There was song, 'The Ash Grove,' that I remember singing as I rode my bike home at the end of my route. I was happy and I especially loved the summer mornings when it was cool with a light fog.

"I had six brothers and sisters and looking back I may have enjoyed the quiet, as well as the responsibility that was all mine. My father would impress on me that it was fully my responsibility, but often on rainy days, he would offer to drive me around, and I remember being very grateful that my father had a soft side (which didn't always show when you are managing seven kids.)

"When I started carrying the paper, a weekly subscription was .45 a week. One of my customers would leave a 50-cent piece out on the stoop each Friday night for me to pick up on Saturday. They left me a nickel tip each week, which I thought was very generous. However, when the weekly subscription went to 50 cents a week, I was sad that I had lost my tip. I was sure that I had lost my tip. I can still close my eyes and see the porch on that first Saturday that the new price was in effect. There on the stoop was a 50-cent piece with a nickel on top. I have never forgotten the impact of generosity and that little story has always stood to remind me that even small bits of generosity matter.

"I learned a lot. I learned how to keep books, set goals and take care of my responsibilities. Looking back, I often think about how small I was, and I can't believe that I carried the paper year-round, even before school, but I honestly have no bad memories of the job, even with paying my brother.

"We moved across town, and I had to give up my route, so I began babysitting for .35 an hour." 📰

Submitted photo



Mary Miller





## The value of soft skills >

We often say, “What gets measured gets done.” It’s easy to measure technical skills (coding, quality control, web analytics, project management). What’s more challenging is measuring soft skills and figuring out how they impact the company.


Soft skills are a set of skills that make someone a good employee, good natured, and a positive contributor to workplace culture. Surprisingly, they can be just as important as technical skills when measuring job performance.

Some examples of soft skills that are frequently cited as the most important include problem solving, emotion control, adaptability, self-motivation, teamwork, organization, work ethic, attitude, and respectful listening.

How do you measure soft skills and why are they important? With current employees you can measure soft skills at the personal level using evaluations that indicate emotional intelligence or with soft skill rubrics that the team develops together. At the team level, factors like communication and teamwork can be measured in 360-degree assessments where peers are given anonymous surveys or performance checklists can be developed. At the organizational level, soft skills are measured via turnover and employee engagement.

With your current team, be assured that soft skills can be developed. Mentoring, stretch assignments, providing seminars and programs, encouraging eLearning, hosting team building exercises and retreats are all good ways to begin.

Why are we still hiring for technical skills instead of soft skills? The axiom “hire for the heart and train the brain” is true now more than ever. With technology and automation rapidly developing, you can’t predict the future hard skills your organization will need. Interviewing with a focus on soft skills can make for better hires. Carefully crafted interview questions that are behavioral in nature or contain hypothetical scenarios are a great place to start to determine if a candidate has strong soft skills. More compelling reasons to hire for attitude are that most candidates will not have all the desired skills for a given position, and more candidates are available when you hire for attitude versus technical skills.

It’s not if your employees have the right skills, it’s if they can learn new ones. 

## Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

**Executive Summary:**  
*Employees with both technical and soft skills are important to the company’s objectives, but one may be easier to develop down the line than the other.*



## Taking advantage of a loss >

It's not always a bad thing to lose money. Smart investors try to be strategic about how they do it, though.


The IRS lets you offset up to \$3000 of your income annually with capital gains losses. This can be applied to future years too. Just look at last year's tax return to see what you carried forward. While losing money on an investment isn't much fun, you may find you have more come tax time if you plan right.

Think about this — if your joint return in 2018 showed \$77,401 in capital gains, you jumped from owing 12% to a whopping 22% on short term gains for that \$1 over \$77,400. That's for all your gains, not just the money over the threshold amount as is the case with income taxes now. In a situation like this, selling off some of your holdings for a loss could mean you keep a lot more money, provided you do it right.

Loans might be good places to take losses. Know, though, that income for typical borrowing is calculated on the bottom line of your tax return, so if you're thinking of buying a house soon or borrowing money for another major purchase, take care of how you reduce income for the tax man. Losses carried year-over-year can make it difficult to get traditional financing. It doesn't matter that these figures have nothing to do with your current income.

Sometimes booking a gain makes sense. Selling off an asset that has depreciated may be a lot cheaper in taxes for you than your beneficiaries. Loss benefits do not pass to heirs when you die. The IRS will get less if you can take losses, when possible, during your lifetime. Laws get complicated here so it makes sense to engage a professional for help.

Health insurance subsidies are something to consider too when claiming losses. Virginia doesn't offer any for those who qualify for Medicaid support, whether you're on it or not. Sometimes a little extra income can make a big difference in Marketplace offsets.

Taking advantage of losses and gains requires planning ahead. It's too late to move money around once the year is gone. IRAs and some other areas are the exception, but it almost always pays to plan income and expense strategies prior to year-end. If your tax preparer and financial advisor aren't working together, their advice may be costing you far more than their fees. 



## Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

### Executive Summary:

*You can take advantage of your financial losses if you understand the rules or have a savvy tax preparer or financial advisor working on your behalf.*



All photos provided by Hannah Curtis; Carilion

**Exercise classes have changed a bit in the past 30 years or so**

## “RAC’n” up 40 years >

### Executive Summary:

*Carilion Wellness fitness facilities hit a 40 year milestone this year; and it all started with the RAC.*

**By Nanette Levin**

Even though people are still calling it the RAC (or is that rack?) there’s a lot more that’s changed than the name of the facility. The Roanoke Athletic Club opened in 1979 as a facility focused exclusively on racquet ball. Carilion took over the property in 1983. The initial 25,000 square foot facility has been transformed over the years into a 79,000 square foot wellness center. It was renamed Carilion Wellness Roanoke in 2014.

While two racquet ball courts remain that host competitions periodically, the bulk of the facility has been converted to large

spaces housing exercise equipment, therapy space, pools, offices and even a track for running on the upper level. Programs have morphed too.

Gone are the step platforms, pin-adjusted weight machines, and short shorts. Instead, a greater focus has been put on total wellness, which includes a number of programs designed for specific health challenges. These include Take Control Rx, for those with an active cancer diagnosis or other issues such as Parkinson’s and MS; Recovery Rx, focused on people with chronic issues; and Fit Rx, which prescribes exercise to help people get fit and lose weight. All Rx programs require a physician referral.

## Getting better with Rx fitness support

Ruth Combs was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in March of 2016. She enrolled in the Take Control Rx program in January of 2017. “I never would have believed that exercise



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would make such a difference in my quality of life," she says. Before she was diagnosed, there were days she couldn't get out of bed. After being diagnosed, she walked with a cane.

Combs has dived deep into the program. She exercises five days a week for an hour and 15 minutes. She's taken up boxing classes, plays pickle ball and attends a cycling class on Fridays. "All these classes have folks in them with Parkinson's and MS," she explains. "The Take Control Rx Program is an opportunity for my teammates and I to contribute to others by encouraging and supporting one another. A victory for one of us is a victory for all of us," she says.

"It's been a great help with my personal needs," states Combs. "I am single and it's important for me to live as independently as possible." She's no longer using a cane. Her balance has improved. "The problem with

balance is getting in and out of the shower and having the fear of falling. I don't have that fear anymore," she says. Hand strength has improved. Combs admits she used to drop things frequently and struggled opening a beverage bottle. Now she's proud to be able to open pickle jars. She also indicates her level of pain has decreased.

Combs, 64, recently started taking guitar lessons for the first time. Plans for the future include taking a cruise to Canada. "I think the program is correctly named, because you have to take control of the management of your Parkinson's disease and your overall personal health," she says. "My greatest help is God."

## Carilion Wellness regionally

There are five health club facilities throughout the greater Roanoke area

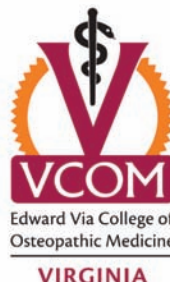
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Weight equipment at the RAC in 1990




A group exercise class at the RAC in the early 90s



Lifting weights in 1995

under the Carilion Wellness umbrella. These offer a combined 250 group exercise classes a week and support 150 cardiac patients. They include Carilion Wellness Roanoke, Carilion Wellness West Lake (Smith Mountain Lake), Carilion Wellness Downtown (free to Carilion employees), Carilion Wellness Botetourt and Carilion Wellness CRC at the Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg.

"The thing that keeps me in this is changing people's lives," says Bud Grey, Senior Vice President, Wellness, Carilion Clinic. He's been at the Roanoke facility for close to four decades. "The patient focused programming has reenergized me. That's not something that I expected to have such a profound impact on that we're able to do in small periods of time. We're seeing members' kids come back to be members." 

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**ENTRÉ**

## Share the wealth >

"I want to give stock to my employees," our client said.  
"Can you prepare the documents for that?"

Our client ran a successful restaurant. He owned the restaurant through a corporation we had set up for him several years before.

"Sure, we can do that," I said, "but first let's make sure that it's really something you want to do. Why do you want to give stock to your employees?"

"I've got good people, and I want to keep them," he said.  
"I want them to share in the success of the business, and to receive some of our profits. Also, since I may sell the restaurant in a few years, I'd want for them to receive some of the profits from the sale, too."

"OK, employee retention and commitment are great reasons for offering employees a share of the profits," I said.  
"But from a legal perspective, giving stock to employees can make your life a lot more complicated, and the tax rules are tricky. How about just promising to give each employee a share of the profits, without giving them any actual stock?"

"I think a sense of real ownership is important," he said.  
"I think my employees already are proud to be a part of our business, but I think that each of them would be even more proud to be able to tell people, 'I'm one of the owners.' So I want to give them all stock."

"Well like I said, we can do that, but it's complicated," I said.  
"Let's go over some of the sticking points. I assume that each employee will receive those shares of stock free of charge?"

"Yes," he said.

"OK, then the IRS will treat those shares as taxable income in the year they are received," I said. "It'll be just like salary income, so you'll have to withhold Social Security and Medicare deductions. Then the employees will have to put the value of the shares on their Form 1040s."

"But a share in a corporation isn't money," he said. "How can I deduct Social Security and Medicare from a share of stock?"

"You can't," I said. "So you'll have to hold back some of each employee's salary to pay the Social Security and Medicare."

"So when an employee receives shares, that employee's paycheck takes a hit?" he said. "Well then, let's just say that each share is worth only one dollar. That will minimize the amount of taxable income, and it also would mean that we'd hardly have to deduct anything extra from their paychecks for Social Security and Medicare."



## Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

**Executive Summary:**  
*Making your employees co-owners of your company can be a lot more trouble than it's worth.*



When you give shares of stock to employees, the IRS treats the shares as taxable income. It's just like salary income, so you have to withhold Social Security and Medicare deductions. Then the employees have to put the value of the shares on their Form 1040s.



You can't just slap any value you want on the shares you give to employees. Instead, you have to hire an independent company to do a valuation, so that you'll know how much the shares are worth when you give them to your employees.

"The IRS already is wise to that move," I said. "You can't just slap any value you want on the shares. Instead, you have to hire an independent company to do a valuation, so that you'll know how much the shares are worth when you give them to your employees. This lets the employees know how much income to put on their tax returns, and it also lets you know how much to deduct for Social Security and Medicare."

"Is that expensive?" he said.

"It's a highly competitive market, so you probably could use the internet to find a valuation company with a fee of just a few thousand dollars," I said.

"Damn," he said, and then he looked at me. "Is that all?"

"Not by a long shot," I said. "I seem to recall that you're taxed as an S-Corporation?"

"Yes," he said. "The corporation's profits and losses go straight through to my own Form 1040."

"And when you do have a profit, you re-invest that profit into the business?" I said.

"Of course," he said, "except for my own compensation."

"OK then, suppose that you give stock to your employees, and then next year you make \$100,000 in profit and re-invest it all into the business," I said. "Since you're taxed as an S-Corporation, that profit will all go straight through to the tax returns of all the owners — including your employees."

"I think I see where this is going," he said. "They'll get taxed on that profit, won't they?"

"Yes they will," I said. "But if you're re-investing all the profit into the business, then you won't actually be paying your employee shareholders any of that profit. They'll be receiving 'phantom income,' which means they'll be taxed on money that they never see."

"So they'd have to pay the taxes using their regular salary," he said.

"And that would further reduce their take-home pay," I said.

"Is that everything?" he said. "Or does it get even more complicated?"

"Oh, I'm just getting started," I said. "You'd need to file new Articles of Incorporation with the State Corporation Commission. You'd need to notify the employees every time you have a shareholders' meeting. You'd have to give them basic information about the company's finances. And if an




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

employee ever left the company, you'd need to have money on hand to buy back their shares.... Are you still sure you want to do this?"

"Uh, not really, no," he said.

In the end, our client decided that instead of actually giving stock to his employees, he would just enter into a contract with each employee in which he promised to give the employee a share of the company's annual profits plus a portion of the sales price if the company ever got bought out. The employees were delighted, actually, and best of all our client was able to get back to running his business instead of worrying about legal mumbo-jumbo.

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

**Note:** *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before granting stock to your employees, deciding how your company should be taxed, entering into profit-sharing agreements with your employees, etc.* 



If you're re-investing all the profit into the business, then you won't actually be paying your employee shareholders any of that profit. They'll be receiving 'phantom income,' which means they'll be taxed on money that they never see.

## Focused on the *future*



### Richfield Living Breaks Ground On New Senior Living Options

On May 1st, Richfield Living broke ground on an expansion of independent living options and a new "household model" skilled nursing facility. Part of **Vision 2020: Project Home**, the 25,000 square foot Town Center and 140 new villas and apartments, offering amenities open to residents and the public, will include multiple dining options, a new wellness and education center, and a new integrated chapel.

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All photos provided by Debbie Custer

People shop in the open space that houses the Innovation Mill

## Get on or get out >

**Executive Summary:**  
*Vinton's Innovation Mill  
focuses on scalable companies.*

**By Nanette Levin**

Glance across the street from the Vinton Library and you might spot the Innovation Mill. It's in a non-descript, two-story brick building adjacent to a pawn shop and bordered by West Jackson Avenue. The initiative was launched last November for companies in emerging high growth industries.

Once you walk inside the building, located at 301 S. Pollard Street, you'll see a variety of businesses sharing what seems like mostly wide-open space. What you won't see is the busy behind-the-scenes activity going on in an effort to either help business owners quickly leap to the next level or curtail efforts on non-viable ventures.

This is not your typical incubator. Support is narrowly focused on startups that have the potential to expand quickly into national or international firms. Funded with a \$150K one-year Go Virginia grant that requires a 100% match from the Innovation Mill, the entity is looking to put itself, and the companies who are approved as clients, on the fast track.

## Growth industry specialization

Debbie Custer, who owns Coeus Research, is tasked with achieving success, not only for the Innovation Mill, but also for the companies that come there for help. She cites green energy, construction, personal services, food and beverage, and agriculture as some of the top growth industries she's targeting.

Her goal is to give companies the means they need to scale up efficiently. She's determined to stop businesses from leaving the Valley because they can't find the resources locally to support their growth. She's also focused on providing knowledge and contacts to help startups get to where they want to go faster – or stop trying if research reveals their concept isn't likely to work.

## Starting small but thinking big

The Innovation Mill is the brainchild of Annette Patterson, who leads the Advancement Foundation, perhaps best known for its GAUNTLET competition. The Foundation owns the building where the Innovation Mill is located and also serves as the umbrella organization it operates under.

Five companies currently reside in the Vinton space. These include Wingman, LilyHemp,



Coeus Research, Advance Energy Solutions and a hydroponics research and growth initiative done in cooperation with Blue Ridge Hydroponics.

In addition to the onsite businesses served by the Innovation Mill, there are a number of companies with established locations elsewhere that are tapping into the resources available through the entity. This includes Farmburgesa. The owners recently traveled to Nashville to audition for Shark Tank. Custer is also working with Total You Health, a holistic natural health provider of alternative medicines located on Starkey Road in Roanoke County.

Innovation Mill also operates in space at Virginia Western, Virginia Tech and Dabney Lancaster Community College in Allegheny County.

Custer has created an international network



Cannabis grows under lights in a hydroponic gardening system at the Innovation Mill in Vinton



**Martha Parrott**  
Stroke recovery

## from sudden stroke to SINKING PUTTS!

*"Martha's stroke was totally out of the blue – all of a sudden I had to make big decisions for her recovery. LifeWorks Rehab was amazing – they were there for both of us every step of the way. Having her back home is just a miracle. She's even golfing again!"* - John Parrott (Martha's husband)



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Various hemp products are for sale for drop in customers to buy at the Innovation Mill in Vinton

## Current Innovation Mill tenants >

**Wingman Outfitter:** developers of a cooler outrigger for canoes. They're in the Innovation Mill for help in redesigning the product to make it more attractive as a wholesale product to be marketed to major retailers. <https://wingmanoutfitter.com/>

**Advance Energy Solutions:** technology company focused on research & development as well as design and deployment of next generation smart grid solutions, automation, energy monitoring and asset management systems, and micro-grid integrators for renewable energy companies, OEMs and manufacturers. <https://advanceenergy.net/>

**LilyHemp:** a retail company dedicated to sourcing unique, premium industrial hemp products. The company has a retail shop inside the Innovation Mill and also sells products online. <https://lilyhemp.com/>

Hydroponics research and growth initiative in cooperation with **Blue Ridge Hydroponics:** designed in part to help change the conversation around good nutrition and food production, particularly with kids. It addresses issues including making food safe when soil can't be filtered. Multiple hydroponic stations are set up in the Innovation Mill that include fresh produce for visitors to see, touch, and taste. Children are introduced to growing their own vegetables through hydroponic gardening. <http://blueridgehydroponics.com/>

**Coeus Research:** plant-based product development that brings over 40 years of manufacturing, design, development and branding experience to clients in the consumer product industry. <http://www.coeusresearch.net/>

of people to help make sense of various issues business owners face and help them succeed. This includes companies that can help get products to market quickly and affordably. She taps business based in China for manufacturing, Vietnam for hemp clothing, India for clothing and engineering and, Indonesia for solar panels, accessories and spices.

## Tapping into the program

The Innovation Mill is staffed by five employees, all on Coeus Research's payroll. This is provided as part of the grant match. Besides manning the shop, employees do product testing and development. Custer also helps by providing strategic development, problem solving insight, and creative solutions for unusual challenges.

For those interested in the Innovation Mill program, there's an application and interview process to complete. Once approved, tenants pay \$300 a month, which includes space and consulting support. Tenant companies are expected to grow enough within 6-9 months to need and want to move out.

Primary client consulting services include evaluating data, addressing expansion issues, helping with commercialization, addressing legal concerns, exploring manufacturing options, developing processes, and scaling. Company owners participate in teams that include undergraduate students, other entrepreneurs and a customized core of advisors to help with innovation and expansion. 

Contact Debbie Custer at [debbie@coeusresearch.net](mailto:debbie@coeusresearch.net) for more information.

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JULY 19 - SUPERHOLD





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Most importantly, we thank our patients for entrusting us with their care.

[CarilionClinic.org/FEVAR](https://CarilionClinic.org/FEVAR)

**Cardiovascular Institute**

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## Hold up a minute! >

About 10 years ago I was in a bad car accident in which a large SUV crossed my lane on a busy highway and I t-boned his vehicle at 40 mph in my small pickup. Airbags deployed and I came to a dead stop. A bystander ran to my door and tried to quickly pull me out because he saw “smoke” in the cab. I had to firmly tell him to “Wait!” so I could evaluate the situation and determine if I was seriously injured.


Although bruised and sore, I was not seriously hurt, and the smoke was powder from the air bag deployment. There was no emergency requiring a hasty exit which could have caused me more injury, and I calmly left the vehicle after a quick self-assessment.

If you are like most managers faced with a challenge or problem, you may choose to jump in and take immediate action. Most leaders I’ve worked with are more comfortable doing something rather than being perceived as doing nothing. Yet doing “nothing” is often the best course of action.

The great UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, once said, “Don’t mistake activity for achievement.” Unfortunately, much of the business world makes this mistake. In our desire to make a positive impact, we often have a bias for action that limits productivity and long-term success. There are times when a true emergency requires immediate response, but most often action is not as urgently needed as it first appears.

If you want greater achievement and not just more activity, you must first define what achievement looks like. What goals are you and your organization working on? What are those critical and important activities you should be spending more time doing?

Second, spend some time to plan and prioritize your schedule around those goals and important activities. I’ve read that for every minute you spend planning, you save 4-10 minutes in execution.

The next time you feel pressure to act, hold up a minute. Evaluate the situation. Determine if immediate action is needed and if it’s worth your time and effort. You don’t have to answer every email, text and voicemail within a minute. And don’t expect your employees to either! You will experience greater control, achievement and success. 

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

## Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

**Executive Summary:**  
*These days there seems to be more advice to act and “just do it” than to pause; but we may need to rethink that.*

## Website utility >

### Manuals2Educate

My Dad calls them “destructions.” You know—the printed papers that come with most electronic items or things that need to be put together. Detailed explanations of pieces and parts and how they all operate are provided in order to help you complete the process of putting something together for use. These also help answer questions if you’ve got a product and just can’t quite figure out how to make it work the way it is supposed to.

They explain everything.

Well they do if you are patient enough to read them or do what they map, show, or say. They’re perfect for the engineer types who want details, information, and specifics. People like me get bored really quickly and just try to figure it out. I guess that’s why I’m not very good at the “Some Assembly Required.”

On the other hand, this perpetual struggle I have leads to a helpful marketing observation.


### Websites4Marketing

A lot of companies – especially technology companies – like to use their website like an instruction manual.

Most websites are supposed to be marketing tools. At least they are initially and as you determine how you’re going to build yours to attract customers (or patients or clients). Sure, you can put product specifications, schematics, directions to your location, answers to frequently asked questions, and things like that on your site. But where the real value these days comes is in the ability to connect with prospective users.

Think about that as you design your next website.

Is it easy to use? Does it catch someone’s eye? Is it helpful? Have you made it interesting? These are the types of questions that ought to drive most every website (even the fulfillment and technical ones). Naturally you’ll want it to be responsive so no matter what screen someone is using, they can have a good experience. And of course you eventually want to engage people and get them to take the steps needed to make a buying or appointment decision – over time. Websites should market first – then educate.

The bottom line is that your website is the new storefront. It’s what greets those interested in doing business with you. Start there. 



## A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan

### Executive Summary:

*When it comes to your website, remember the basics—and why people are even there.*





Margie Christianson

**Sandi Johnston encourages Ginger over a jump at the 2019 Star City Canine NADAC Agility Trials**

## Dogs—serious business >

### Executive Summary:

*Star City Canine Training Club might seem more recreational than business, but it certainly operates business-like.*

**By Nanette Levin**

prominent on both local and national stages. Each member has at least one thing in common—they're passionate about their dogs.

Star City Canine Training Club will celebrate it's 25th birthday next year as a resource for regional dog owners seeking classes, competitions and information that focuses on making training fun for both dog and handler.

## Sustained success

In a non-descript warehouse behind a retail strip on Apperson Drive is a club that's become

Although the Club is a not-for-profit and managed by volunteers, it's run like a business.



## A Mission of Quality Service, Excellent Support and Advanced Technology

Citizens 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.

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.

**Citizens lets you Bundle **YOUR** Way! Get the best prices on the most reliable services for your home and business.**



DCJS #11-9804

"One of the reasons we're so successful is we're structured," says Bob Hogan, president.

This includes an 8-person board of directors and monthly membership meetings. The Club just finished a strategic plan focused on six goal areas, namely: marketing/PR, financial growth/sustainability, facility/training opportunities, membership development, leadership development, and youth opportunities. Annual budgets and monthly financial reports are distributed to the members. Volunteer directors are selected for all major aspects of the organization.

The Club will host eight competitive events in 2019 (see sidebar). Many of the approximately 100 members participate in a variety of canine sports including agility, conformation, obedience, rally obedience, freestyle, scent work, therapy work, herding field trials, coursing, barn hunt, flyball and tracking.

According to Hogan, the majority of revenue for the club comes from classes and events. These funds help to support a \$150K-\$175K annual budget, says Bill Watson, treasurer. The Club leases the building they're in and owns a 3 ½ to 4-acre field in Roanoke City that's available for outdoor agility training classes and member access.

Dog training classes held throughout the year and open to the public range from puppy kindergarten and basic obedience to agility, scent work, therapy dog training, rally, and more.

## Upcoming Star City Canine Competitive events (free to spectators) >

**September 13-15, 2019** - NADAC Agility Trial, Boxley Fields, Old Schoolhouse Ln, Blue Ridge, VA 24064

**October 12-13, 2019** - AKC Scent Work Trials, Camp Roanoke, 6498 Dry Hollow Rd, Salem, VA 24153

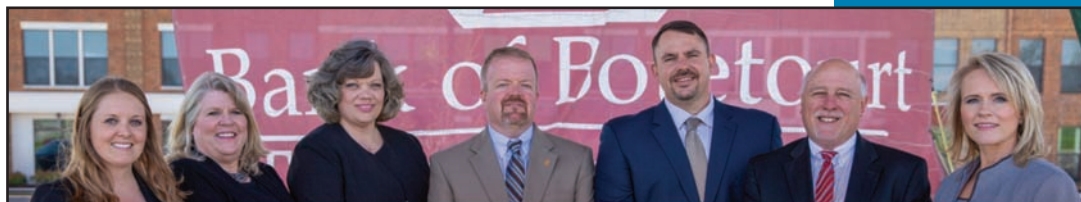
**November 2-3, 2019** - AKC Obedience/Rally Trials, Icimani Adventure Center, 5488 Yellow Mountain Rd, Roanoke, VA 24014

**January 2020** - 3-day AKC Agility Event, Lexington, VA

**February 2020** - 3-day AKC Agility Event, held at Lexington, VA

**March 2020** - 2-day AKC Rally Obedience, held at training building, Salem, VA

**March 2020** - 3-day NADAC Agility Trials



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Margie Christianson

**Betty Wilson tells Finn where to go after exiting a tunnel at the 2019 NADAC Trails in Roanoke**



Margie Christianson

**Linda Anderson sends Two through the weave poles at the 2019 Star City Canine Agility Trials**



Connie Perdue

**Axl herding**



Mitzi Tinaglia

**Maverick showing off his trick training**



Connie Perdue

**Lure Coursing**



Linda Perdue

**Cody doing on the job training at South Roanoke Nursing Home. Mrs. Phyllis Trent, who is in her early 90's and lost her sight in an automobile accident is with Pat Quillen (left)**



Jeanette Templeton

**Jenni at the Governor's School Stressbuster**



## An interesting membership model

"We don't do any big campaigning for new members," says Hogan. "A lot of times people who are taking classes we offer see results with their dog. They grow in confidence as trainer." Then they inquire about membership. Potential members must take at least one class offered by the Club. They're required to attend membership meetings. Each application needs two existing member sponsors. "It's not about how many new people you can bring in, it's about having people who join you that are a good fit," says Hogan. "We want people who are happy with what we're all about."

Basic membership is \$35 a year. Training members pay \$240 annually and can take up to 10 classes for no additional fee, but are expected to give back to the club and provide a minimum of 16 volunteer hours. Typical class fees are \$105 for seven sessions. Hogan notes Club sponsored trials wouldn't be possible without member volunteers.

The Club also has a Star City Bucks program. Instructors are paid with this currency which permits them to exchange these earnings for seminars, training member fees and in some cases, product. "We have outstanding trainers – some of the best in the country," says Hogan. "Our trainers usually compete in what they're training so have a lot of experience."

## Capturing the national spotlight

Trainers throughout the US recognize Club members. This year, Mitzi Tinaglia and her Border Collie Maverick won the



**Roger the dog at VMI during an Exam Stress Buster that's focused on pet therapy**

Pat Quillen

2019 AKC National Obedience Championship in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "That's like getting the gold medal in the Olympics," says Connie Perdue, the Club's Obedience Chair. Tinaglia's also an instructor. Perdue says Vicky Gillow was the first Club member to earn the National Obedience Championship title when she won the 2014 Nationals in Harrisburg, PA.

Linda Anderson, who's a board member and has served as the NADAC Trial Chair since 2008, has represented the Club at national championships in agility every year but one since 2009. She's been competing in NADAC since 2001.

"I came from a strictly conformation background," says Hogan. "It wasn't until I joined Star City Canine almost seven years ago that I realized what a great partnership and working relationship you could have with a dog." 🐾

You can find the club at <http://starcitykgtraining.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/Star-City-Canine-Training-Club-159272897428284/>.



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Photos courtesy of Jeffrey Van Doren

**No petition is filed at Van Doren Law until it is double and triple checked. Mambo and Maureen make sure Jeffrey Van Doren dots all the I's and crosses all the T's.**

## All immigration isn't illegal >

### Executive Summary:

*Jeffrey Van Doren's law practice addresses immigration issues, though not the kind making current headlines, so much.*

**By Nanette Levin**

Today's daily headlines (or tweets) shouting about illegal aliens tend to cause people to forget immigrants have been the backbone of this country since its inception. "There's a surprising amount of legal immigration that occurs in this area," says Jeffrey Van Doren, whose Blacksburg law firm specializes in immigration issues.

"This includes businesses bringing in technology workers and foreign-owned companies transferring workers from their headquarters," he explains. "There are students coming to school. Citizens fall in love and want to get married. There's all kinds of immigration in our valleys that has nothing to do with what's going on at the southern border," he says. Van Doren is trying to help companies and individuals understand the critical issues and discard misconceptions.

"The laws are so arcane, you can make a simple mistake and it can take months for these cases to be processed, then the case is

denied and you need to start all over again," Van Doren explains. He says, until recently, applicants would get a request for more information if there was a problem. Now they're just denied.

## Foreign students

"The majority of graduate degrees in the science, technology, engineering and math fields in the United States go to foreign born students," notes Van Doren.

According to a 2017 report from the National Foundation of American Policy (NFAP), 81% of full-time graduate students in both electrical and petroleum engineering are not US residents. In electrical engineering alone, there are 32,736 foreigners versus 7,783 citizens. Computer science, industrial engineering and statistics are close behind at 79%, 75% and 69%, respectively.

"We allow people here to go to school and we pay to educate them because a lot are attending our state universities and colleges," Van Doren states. "If we don't provide a path for them to stay here, then we're essentially educating our competition."

## Bringing in foreign business talent

"Why don't these people that are here illegally just come in legally?" Van Doren says he is often asked. "The short answer is there really

isn't a way for most of them to come here. Central and South American immigrants generally are not highly skilled. US immigration laws do not have work visas that allow most lower skilled workers to come in," he explains. "There is one visa, the H-2B, that permits lower skilled workers to live and work for up to 10 months for seasonal employers," Van Doren clarifies, "but that visa is limited to only 65,000 workers per year for the entire country. That simply is not enough to meet the demand."

Even for higher skilled workers, the number of visas is restricted. The H-1B visa requires that someone has a college degree and holds a position that requires a degree. There's a cap of 85,000 per year. Van Doren states there were more than 201,000 applications for those slots this year.

He illustrates the challenge in the lottery system that exists for those competing for H-1B visas. One of his local business clients has an employee with a master's degree from a US college. He's now on his third year applying for an H-1B visa. "If he doesn't get one this year, he'll have to go home," he explains. "This is a quintessential green company with a key guy working for them since he got his graduate degree. He wants to stay in the United States. The company wants him to stay in the United States."


Van Doren notes there are sometimes alternatives for people who get these three strikes. "If you have an employee who you want to retain or are looking to bring in talent from overseas, there may be options other than the H-1B, so it's worth talking to an immigration lawyer to see what alternatives might be available to you. Sometimes we can go right to a Green Card for someone, bypassing the H-1B process," he says.

## H-1B & Green Cards >

The H-1B is a visa in the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act, section 101 that allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations. Source Wikipedia

A Green Card is a Permanent Resident Card. People may be eligible to apply for a Green Card through family, a job offer or employment, refugee or asylum status, or a number of other special provisions. In some cases, you may even be able to self-petition. Source U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [https://my.uscis.gov/explore/myoptions/green\\_card\\_eligibility](https://my.uscis.gov/explore/myoptions/green_card_eligibility)

Work permits are always incidental to some other immigration benefits someone is applying for, Van Doren explains. That could be dependent on the relationship one has with a company they're working for, an asylum request, family relationships, or other specific circumstances. "You can't just apply for a work permit," he says. "You have to apply for some other benefit that makes you eligible."

While it can be time consuming and complicated to legally immigrate to the US, those who succeed recognize the privilege. Local company owners seeking specialized knowledge or looking to fill hard to fill positions get it too. "Legal immigration isn't easy, but certainly has its rewards," Van Doren concludes. 



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# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Tom Field** is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs

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

and process improvement. [ Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com ]

Waking up with the peaceful sound of bird chatter while watching the sun rise over the mountains is one of **Nanette Levin's** simple pleasures. Still considered a foreigner by some local residents (she moved to Roanoke at the end of 2015), Nanette's determined to illuminate 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 ]

**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 ]

**Dan Smith** is the former and inaugural editor of FRONT magazine and an award-winning veteran journalist, now freelancing. [ pampadansmith@gmail.com ]

**Nicholas Vaassen** is a graphic designer with 17 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [ nvaassen@berryfield.com ]



Everything we do in that first adult adventure is outsized and often lasting.

— Page 8

## Clip, snip, give >


She was in a hurry. A fan of the no-nonsense, do-it-and-go kind of hair salon, she had been a customer of Great Clips for more than a year. She preferred the one on the traffic circle in Blacksburg, but now way overdue and not headed home for another week, she decided to try her luck at one in North Carolina. It had been a rough month. One family member with breast cancer, another with Stage 4 colon cancer and still another having just undergone triple bypass surgery—all women, none older than 62.

Now encased in a black cape, she glanced to the right of the mirror and saw the Post-It that read: "Know about Clips of Kindness? Ask your stylist." So she did.

The young woman, a native of Peru with liquid brown eyes, explained softly as she worked: "It's simple really. We provide clipper cuts for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

"This is a different way of asking for contributions," the "clippee" mused. "And who pays for it?" she asked, fully expecting to hear, "You can help if you'd like."

Nope. "We offer them free," snip-snip-spray. "And I have to say, it really gives me a good feeling."

As the Great Clips website puts it, "Impacting communities, one clipper cut at a time." 

“ ”

Who pays for it...

We offer them free...

it really gives me a good feeling.



## Good Work

By Rachael Garrity

**Executive Summary:**  
*The Great Clips hair salon franchise integrates charitable support as part of its regular operations.*



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## On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

### Executive Summary:

*You never know where those earliest experiences can take you—to the edge of fortune or misfortune.*

## My first job >

*[ continued from our Welcome page 3 ]*

I met my first boss; and started working alongside him that same day.

A real job. Hours. Paycheck. And the pride that comes with striking out on your own.

As expected, my first task was rather menial. I cleaned up the shop. But by the second day, I was happy to discover my boss was completely accommodating to my learning the trade. That late summer and for the year following, I learned all about silk-screen printing from a real master. How to prep art work. How to properly apply emulsion to the screen. How to set the image and separate color. How to work the squeegee, depending on the substrate or use of inks versus vinyl. We printed everything commercial from massive decals for oil tanker trucks to real estate signs to promotional displays for Burger King and elaborate graphics for the “new” ATM kiosks for First National Exchange Bank.

The job was a real apprenticeship, and I learned more than any other kid my age I knew at the time. I went on to apply those skills in other graphic production positions, and ultimately, leveraged my experience to marketing executive roles. My first job was an incredible investment.

That first “company” was American Decal Co. Two employees: me and the owner. That owner and my first boss was Earl Bramblett. Earl Conrad Bramblett was an American mass murderer, convicted for the killing of four members of the Hodges family in Vinton (1994). He was also a suspect in a case of two missing teenage girls (who I think I met once) who never returned from a beach trip. Bramblett was executed in 2003.

Other than “be careful, it can be an evil world out there” I don’t know how much of a lesson we get from such an experience as mine. I do know my youngest daughter experienced two betrayals in her life that happened before I wish they did (around my same age). I believe we are fortunate when evil does not come our way, even when we are right beside it, unknowingly. We need to weep for the unfortunate even as we remain grateful for our own fortune. In my understanding, I see evidence of providence when bad people are not bad to us. I refuse to postulate why some of us get that protective hedge, though.

Yes. I learned a lot from my first job. 





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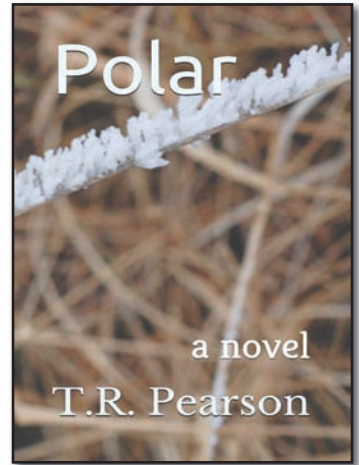
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## Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers.

Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto:news@vbFRONT.com)



### *Brilliant (no) point*

There are a few people who you can keep listening to, even if it takes forever for them to get to a point (or even never get to the point). A few narrators on public radio, some literary podcasts... perhaps your grandfather. You embrace the "story teller" because the aural experience keeps you hooked... the very sound of their voice, the cadence, and the art of mental imagery. There are even fewer people who can do this in written form. Particularly in this day and age of instant information and abbreviated content platforms, few of us can tolerate meandering—much less eternal, perpetual, everlasting meandering.

I have no doubt most of our younger demographics could hardly tolerate T.R. Pearson.

A master of diversion, Pearson (our Blue Ridge neighbor just down the road a spell in Winston-Salem, NC) offers an exemplary escape from the contemporary rules today's writers follow. And in *Polar* (Penguin; 2002) we get the runaround like no other! You not only can't get from A to B within reason in our narrative (shared in collective voice by our community in remote Virginia's Blue Ridge), you can't hardly get to A. 2. And it's exactly that eccentric path that slams the color and smell in your face like a well-thrown, rocket-speed, Granny Smith apple, freshly stolen from the orchard down the road. Forget the point (and you will); just go along with Deputy Ray and Clayton for the ride. There's a missing child, oh sure, but let's just hop up in the truck, like we used to, back in the day. I'm glad some literary agent stuck

with the manuscript to release this novel... must have been an old guy or gal.

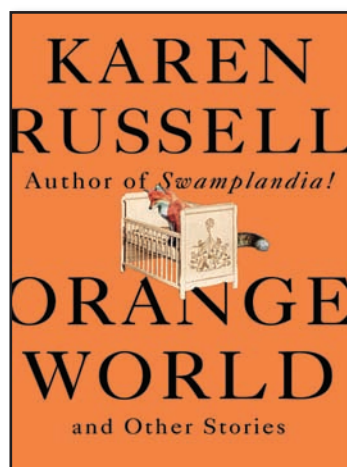
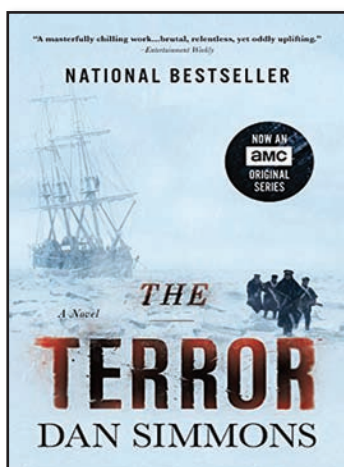
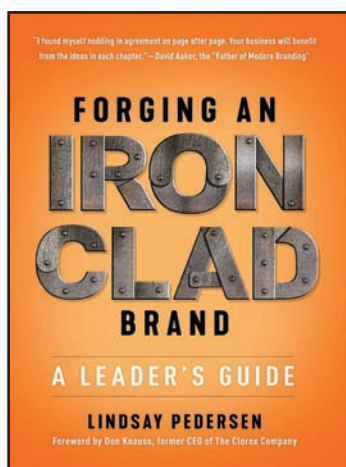
—Tom Field

### *Branding iron*

Whether or not you realize it, *brand* is tremendously important to every aspect of your business. A well-crafted and well-executed brand strategy can cut through the noise of a million messages, articulate your promise to the customer, set you apart from the competition, scale your business, and establish yourself as a leader in the space. Problem is, most leaders underestimate and neglect their brand. Even those who think they know brand inside and out often have big misconceptions or serious flaws in their strategy—and in this case, what they don't know can hurt them.

"Misunderstanding brand leads to costly mistakes," says Lindsay Pedersen, author of *Forging an Ironclad Brand: A Leader's Guide* (Lioncrest; 2019). "Only by recognizing common missteps and avoiding them can you fully realize the power of a strong brand and put your business ahead of the competition."

Pedersen says brand should be a company's North Star. It should guide every decision you make. Forging what she calls an ironclad brand lets you occupy the single best position in the hearts and minds of your customers. When you pinpoint this optimal position, you'll be able to create value, maximize scale, and lead with purpose. Mistakes that too many companies regularly make include: 1) you don't claim your brand position... you



let the market do it; 2) you delay strategy; 3) you focus on the category benefit; 4) you don't recognize the vastness of brand; 5) you don't choose a focus; 6) you fail to get the customer's attention; 7) you forget to consider the customer's frame of reference; 8) your brand doesn't have "teeth;" 9) you fail to narrow down your target customer; 10) you wind up too low or too high on the benefit ladder; 11) you try to reach all customers with one-size-fits-all messaging.

—Dottie DeHart

## Scared shipless

Dan Simmons cleverly mixes real and supernatural horror in his novel *The Terror* (Back Bay; 2018). Later adapted into an equally powerful television series, *The Terror* provides a fictional explanation for a real-life expedition's famous disappearance in the Arctic, adding a monstrous creature to Captain Franklin and crew's many worries. These fictional and nonfictional narratives capture how quickly the promise of the poles could curdle into terrible misfortune.

—Hank Stephenson

## Uncanny, off-kilter

Karen Russell, the author of *Swamplandia!*, offers eight fantastical tales in *Orange World and Other Stories* (Knopf; 2019). In "The Prospectors," two friends must survive a night at a party of denial-ridden ghosts. In "Bog Girl," a young boy falls in love with a girl he discovers buried in peat and mud in a nearby swamp.

Other standouts from the collection include the post-apocalyptic, poisonous Everglades of "The Gondoliers" and the bargain a woman makes with the devil to save her family by breast-feeding a fiend in the title story, "Orange World." These tales all capture the atmosphere of the unbelievable and ground it in the lives of startlingly realized protagonists, making a seemingly incredible situation, suddenly and unnervingly, emotionally prescient.

Hauntingly beautiful, lyrical and strange, these stories gleam with sensitive insight and intelligence. Each tale delights in the unexpected and the uncanny. Russell tips the worlds of her characters' lives just slightly off balance but never upends her readership. She continues to have a masterful sense of how the eccentric, magical elements of her stories map onto her readers' intimate, emotional lives. While none of these stories are straightforward metaphors, each one manages to tap into its audience's buried desires, fears and discomforts. Sometimes, it is the very off-kilter nature of these worlds, these people and their attachments that feel most akin to the real world. Whether she is tackling the anxieties of motherhood, the dark yearnings of first love or our desire for unity in a time of mutual destruction, Russell's stunning prose and wondrous creations never miss their mark.

—Alice Martin

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher; **Dottie DeHart** is a publicist in Hickory, NC; **Hank Stephenson** is a bookseller in Chapel Hill, NC; **Alice Martin** is an editor from the United Kingdom.





## And... stretch >

Construction workers at the new **Virginia Tech Carilion Biomedical Research** building site participate in mandatory morning “Stretch and Flex” to help prevent workplace injuries.



## Bold stories at TechNite >

**Michael Fleming**, who also won Entrepreneur of the Year, addressed the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC) **TechNite** awards banquet at Hotel Roanoke on May 3, where he shared TORC Robotics success, a business model he described as “student-to-startup-to-scaleup-to acquisition” and said he really “had no idea how to do it” without collaboration from his team members and the tech community. TORC’s growth was organic, he said, not aggressive capital-seeking (German company Daimler Trucks recently bought majority stake in TORC’s autonomous self-driving technology). Other 2019 TechNite winners included: **Block.one** (Rising Star); **Luna Innovations** (Innovator of the Year); **Nancy Agee**, Carilion and **Tim Sands**, VT (Regional Leadership); **1901 Group** (Company of the Year); and **Heywood Fralin** (Ruby Award) who boldly said the Roanoke Region could hit a million population mark by 2025 if fostered by technological commerce. **Ken Ferris** (Brookewood Management Advisors) and **Marty Muscatello** (FoxGuard Solutions) were inducted into RBTC’s Hall of Fame.

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



That's some rich dirt >

**Richfield Living** breaks ground at its campus in western Roanoke County near Salem on a May 1 celebration announcing an expanded 140 new independent living apartments, a new "Town Center" with dining, spa, wellness, chapel and community center; and a new skilled nursing facility—all to be completed in two to three years.



Render rah rah >

The redeveloped, renovated **Heironimus Building**, featuring retailer **Mast General Store** on street level is finally arriving, much to the appreciation of folks connected to downtown Roanoke who have waited so long for an occupant; commercial real estate firm Thalhimier is now pitching restaurant and other commercial uses for the five-story, mixed use structure.





## Gauntlet gets >

The Advancement Foundation held its 5th Annual Awards Ceremony for the Gauntlet business program and competition at Vinton War Memorial on May 16. This year's cohort included 50 entrepreneurs with quite the diversified mix of products and services. Over \$300,000 in cash and prizes was awarded at the ceremony. Class of 2019 member **Mary Ann Brechick** (Clean Valley Council) said "Gauntlet ain't for sissies,"; **Terry Kahn** (Roanoke Neuromuscular) said the work that refined her "elevator pitch" actually ended up refining her offering; **Stephen Ambruzs** (Downshift Bikes) praised the program's assistance in expanding his business; and **Jonathan Young** (Advanced Racking) was impressed with the "level of detail" and said the program pretty much provided a "playbook" for success. Valley Business FRONT served as a sponsor of the awards, and **Formidable Grabber** (patent-pending mechanic's tool) won the top Gold prize.





# FRONT 'N ABOUT





Courtesy of Virginia Tech

## Kid code >

“**GameChangineer**” is a program with Virginia Tech where Virginia students in elementary, middle, and high school explore imaginative video game design on a platform developed by VT Engineering professor **Michael Hsiao** that bypasses coding skills needed for complex programming languages.



FRONT

## Word on the street >

Just barely off the street, really...**B2C Enterprises** marketing agency held one of its “Spring Live” info-sessions at The Spot On Kirk streetside auditorium in downtown Roanoke on May 15; here, “brand architect” **Jenna Lazenby** presents “Creating a Culture: The Importance of Branding Your Business from the Inside Out.”

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



# FRONT 'N ABOUT



Courtesy of Restoration Housing

## Save the structures >

**Restoration Housing** showcased its next historic rehabilitation project—the early 19th Century Villa Heights house on Hoover Street in Roanoke—at the Annual Community Partnership Day on May 18. The site also marked the start of **RideShare's** History Bike Tour, and an announcement identifying other “endangered sites” on the list for **Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation**.

## Epic Summer Saturdays!

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JUNE 22 - THE WORX

JULY 6 - FUZZY LOGIC

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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Rock

**John Rock** has been appointed government lending specialist for First Bank & Trust Company.



Wade

**Alan Wade** of MemberOne Federal Credit Union was recognized by CUNA Finance Council as Volunteer of the Year.

## WELLNESS FRONT



Harrop

**Lesley Harrop**, BSN, RN was appointed to serve as regional representative for the Southwest Individual and Family Support Program.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Wyatt

**Bryan Wyatt** has been promoted to principal engineer for Mid-Atlantic Special Projects Group; and **Brandon**



Quinn

**Quinn** has been appointed Roanoke office manager at Engineering Consulting Services.

**David Roles** received Western Region operational proficiency and performance excellence award from United Van Lines.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Rosenberger

**Kent Rosenberg** has joined as associate director in the commercial property

services team at the Roanoke office of Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer.

**George Assaid** has joined as operational architect; and **Stephen Feather** has been promoted to vice president at Interactive Design Group.

## RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



MacKenzie

**Meredith MacKenzie** has joined as creative associate at B2C Enterprises.

## SENIOR FRONT

**Samantha Edwards** has been appointed leasing and marketing counselor at Richfield Living.

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## Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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.



Edwards



Sheppard



Hayes

**Melissa Sheppard**, BSN, RN, CCP, EMT-B has joined as director of nursing in Willows/Arbor Kroontje Health Care Center; and **Peter Hayes** has been selected new administrator at

Showalter Center assisted living at Warm Hearth Village.

## EDUCATION FRONT



Tolan

**Melanie Tolan** has been appointed executive director of marketing and communications at Roanoke College.

**Kevin Boyle** has been named the Willis Blackwood Real Estate Director at Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business.



Boyle



Davidson

**Robert Davidson** at Pamplin College of Business was named William S. Gay Senior Faculty Fellow; **Joanne Tuohy** has joined as assistant professor of surgical oncology in Small Animal Clinical Services at the Virginia-



Tuohy



Belmonte

Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine; **Laura Belmonte** was named dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; **Resse Ramos** has been named director of University Ombuds Office; **Nikeshia Arthur**

# Here at Carter Bank & Trust.

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**Anthony Wilson**  
Mortgage Loan Specialist  
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Greensboro, NC 27407  
NMLS# 1534580



**Debi Smith**  
Mortgage Loan Specialist  
276.389.9079  
2770 Riverside Dr.  
Bassett, VA 24055  
NMLS# 1166572



**Faye Crute**  
Senior Mortgage Loan Specialist  
540.761.3782  
3132 Electric Rd. SW  
Roanoke, VA 24018  
NMLS# 336851



**Amanda Rogers**  
Mortgage Loan Specialist  
434.609.3462  
370 Arbor Dr.  
Christiansburg, VA 24073  
NMLS# 1584328

Career FRONT



Ramos

CULTURE FRONT

**Ryan Spencer** has been named executive director; and **Kenna Jewell** has been appointed program coordinator at Historic Smithfield.

Medal by Virginia Tech, the university's highest award for longstanding

commitment and advancing research.

*Compiled by Tom Field*



Arthur



Fralin

has been named director of Services for Students with Disabilities at Virginia Tech.

**Heywood Fralin** was awarded the 2019 William H. Ruffner

“Gone are the step platforms, pin-adjusted weight machines, and short shorts. — Page 24

SELECT THURSDAYS

PARTY AT THE PAVILION

MAY 9 - TOO MUCH SYLVIA  
MAY 23 - THE KINGS  
JUNE 6 - UPTOWN  
JUNE 20 - SUPERHOLD  
JULY 18 - THE WORX  
AUGUST 1 - FUZZY LOGIC

 Daleville town center





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**JUNE 7**

JAMEY  JOHNSON



**JUNE 27**

## FLASHBACK FRIDAYS



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**JUNE 14 - DEF LEPPARD TRIBUTE**



**JULY 12 - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE**



**AUG 9 - LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE**



**SEPT 13 - TOM PETTY TRIBUTE**



**OCT 11 - KISS TRIBUTE**

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<https://drpepperpark.com>

# FRONT Notes



**Carilion Clinic announced a \$300 million expansion**

## *Pucker up*

**Hockey House**, a retailer of professional and amateur hockey gear, equipment, and service, has opened on Hardy Road in Vinton.

Hospital for an emergency cardiovascular "tower" and a new behavioral health facility across Jefferson Street as well as a parking garage and connecting pedestrian skyway.

assisted living, and memory care units managed by Retirement Unlimited Inc is opening in fall 2019 near the intersection of Ogden Road and Colonial Avenue in Roanoke.

collaborative use, is opening in July at the Old School Center in New River Valley's Prices Fork community.

---

*Software crew to Roanoke*

## *Spreading up and out*

**Carilion Clinic** announced a \$300 million expansion of Roanoke Memorial

## *New senior spaces*

**Woodland Hills**, a new senior living community with 98 independent,

## *Kitchen-n-Fork*

**Millstone Kitchen**, a community, open, and test kitchen for

## **Nicus Software**

enterprise and government financial management platform provider is expanding

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and moving its office from Salem to downtown Roanoke.

## *Free tuition*

Pulaski County Board of Supervisors has earmarked a \$100,000 program for some high school graduates to attend **New River Community College** tuition free.

## *Fun fresh food by the river*

**Lynn Street Market**, a new food market plans to open later this summer in Danville's River District.

## *Nesting place*

**Nest Realty Roanoke** has opened on Salem Ave. in Roanoke.

## *Big pharma big money*

**Merck & Co.** announced expansion plans at its pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Rockingham County to add 100 new jobs to its current 900, and another 120,000 square

feet to its current 1.1 million-square foot plant in Elkton; an investment that could hit \$1 billion over the next three years.

## *Herbal registration*

**Avila Herbals**, a nutritional supplement division of the Obiso Company of New River Valley, has been registered as an industrial hemp grower and processor; herbal supplement, oils, dietary and food additive products expected to be available for online purchase and national delivery by the Fall.

## *Christiansburg beer 1*

Town of Christiansburg should get its first brewery by early next year, **Iron Tree Brewing Company**, in development at Roanoke Street just off Main Street.

## *Christiansburg train stop 1*

Town of Christiansburg purchased about seven acres near the Aquatic

Center in anticipation of an **Amtrak** passenger rail station.

## *Hungry kids*

**Feeding America Southwest Virginia** released a 2019 Map the Meal Gap report that states a "child food insecurity rate at 16.9% in the region; ranging from a low of 6.9% in Botetourt County to the highest insecurities in Martinsville (20.3%), Danville (19.9%), and Radford (19.6%).

## *Stores and donation centers hiring*

**Goodwill Industries of the Valleys** is hiring more than 200 part time, full time, seasonal employees for sales and goods processing at its locations throughout Roanoke, New River

and Shenandoah Valleys.

## *Teaming up for tech*

**Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance** and the **Center for Advanced Engineering and Research (CAER)** announced a partnership to develop a technology based economic plan and co-promote STEM workforce opportunities.

## *Better than hitchhiking*

**RIDE Solutions** has directed attention to the FloydFest music festival in July, encouraging carpooling and use of its instant ridesharing app that matches attendees no matter where they live, including partner finding en route via a map interface and in-app messaging.

## *Compiled by Tom Field*

*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.

*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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at the Feinour Senior Center



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There's a surprising amount of legal immigration that occurs in this area. — Page 42

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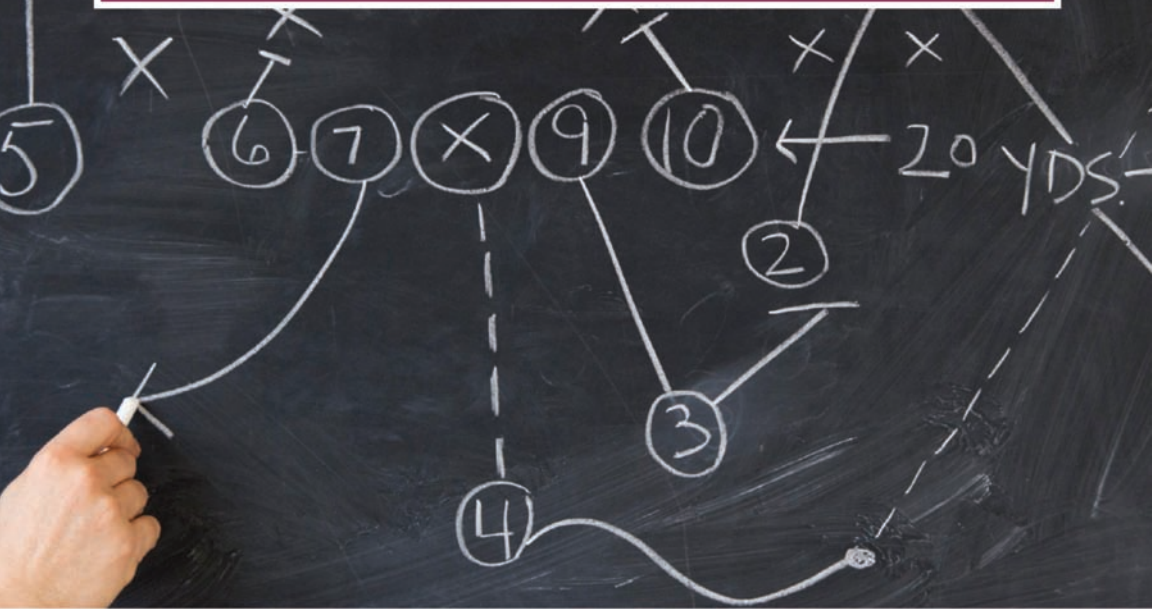


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