



Valley Business FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
BUSINESS JOURNAL**
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WELCOME to the FRONT

"For a thousand years, it's just the same...

Cats have the wit and Dogs have the game."

A "Maria from Peachtree City, GA" submitted that verse on a pet poetry blog. Insightful, I'd say. Dogs and cats not only capture our hearts, they also scurry, slink, bounce or bound across our floors right into our businesses and vocations. Today's issue of FRONT presents a dog breeder and cat veterinarian—two small businesses that serve big passions. If those animal stories aren't enough, we have Rail Yard Dawgs and a sort of junkyard dog to round out the mix. Yep, we're right here along with our subjects, wagging our tails and purring for you... your friendly little ol' business journal, starving for your attention and just hoping you pick us up. A little wit. A little game.



Tom Field

“
I'm a jack of all
trades — Page 34



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DEPARTMENTS

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“We are crazy cat people — Page 29



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MARCH



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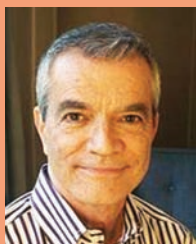
Nicholas Vaassen

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



Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Keith Finch



Mike Leigh



Anne Sampson



Michael Shelton

“

The formula for developing a winning business is 80-percent instinct, 20-percent structure — Page 51

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

2019 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness)
Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Carilion (Legal)
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Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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

“

Provide choice in work activities

— Page 18

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Fast, Fierce, Fun

Excitement is high at the Berglund Center, where over 6,000 people have turned out on a chilly Saturday night to see Roanoke's hockey team, the Rail Yard Dawgs, duke it out on the ice with the Evansville Thunderbolts from Evansville, Indiana.

Plus, it's Superhero Night, and there are a number of mostly pint-sized iterations of Deadpool, the Hulk and Wonder Woman in the stands.

"This is affordable family fun" says Brian Gardner, the team's media director, at their office at Lancerlot Sports Center in Vinton. A day-of-game general admission ticket costs \$10.

The Dawgs attract fans from a 50-mile radius of Roanoke when they play home games at the Berglund Center, as well as bringing in fans of their opposing teams.

"We have people coming from D.C., Richmond, Tennessee," says Brian. "Those people buy gas here, they eat at restaurants, they get a hotel, they go downtown or to the mall."

The Dawgs play 28 home games out of 56 during their season, which runs from mid-October to early April before going into playoffs. That gives the staff plenty of opportunity to get to know the fans, especially those dedicated season ticket holders who attend every game.

"This is really like a small family business," says Brian. "We all do a little bit of everything. We really get to know the fans and sponsors." Fans often stop him at games, or when he and his wife are out to eat, to offer comments.

"It's mostly positive," he says. "If it's negative, I don't call it a complaint, I call it feedback."

Before the teams hit the ice, the team mascot works the crowd. He's a big yellow dog named Diesel, dressed in an old-fashioned engineer's cap, bandana and overalls. He appears on the team logo wielding a hockey stick, snarling happily, wreathed in railroad tracks, an homage to the Roanoke Valley's railroad heritage.

"Roanoke has a great hockey culture," says Brian. The Dawgs are the fifth hockey team to call Roanoke home, starting with the Roanoke Valley Rebels (1967-76), and followed by the Virginia Lancers/ Roanoke Rebels/Rampage (1983-93), the Roanoke Express (1993-2004) and the Roanoke Valley Vipers (2005-2006). In 2015, an ownership

Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs hockey team >

Executive Summary:
Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs hockey team operates like a small business... with most-enthusiastic fans.

By Anne Sampson

““”

This is really like a small family business

— Brian Gardner



Boosting up our players

Shirley Holt cruises the stands at a home game of the Rail Yard Dawgs. She's carrying a roll of tickets and a bucket, selling chances on a 50/50 drawing. She scans the crowd, looking for sales prospects.

Shirley is a member of the Rail Yard Dawg Booster Club. The money they net from the 50/50 drawing, memorabilia sales, paint nights and auctions directly supports the players. Hockey players are rarely hometown boys, and they come from all over; mostly the Northeast, the Northern Midwest and Canada. A few of the Dawgs are from as far away as Latvia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. Often their families and their support systems are left back home.

"We help them furnish apartments," says Shirley, "and buy them pots and pans, everything they need to set up housekeeping."

Players get a home-cooked meal after home games, courtesy of the booster club. Club members provide goodie bags for away games, recognition of birthdays, holidays and generally treat the guys like family. The booster club also organizes parties and bus trips to away games, which are open to non-members.

"I've been taking care of hockey players since 1969," says Shirley.

As a high school sophomore, she attended a Rebel hockey game and returned home for dinner with two players in tow. Before long, those players were boarding with her family. Hockey players have been her project ever since.

Hockey brought Shirley and her husband together, too. He was a member of an opposing team's booster club. They've been married 37 years.

— Anne Sampson



Shirley Holt





COVER STORY

group headed by Bob McGuin, and including his three professional player sons, bought the defunct Mississippi Surge and relocated the franchise to Roanoke as the Rail Yard Dawgs. They are part of the Southern Professional Hockey League, based in Huntsville, North Carolina. The league comprises 10 teams in the Southeast, Indiana and Illinois. With an inaugural season in 2004-2005, it rose from the ashes of three previous, short-lived leagues.

"This league is a product of past experience," says Brian. "They're turning the town into a sustainable market."

The lights go down in the arena as students from Cave Spring Elementary School file out on the ice to sing the national anthem. They're backed up by a color guard from the Roanoke City Police. Everyone stands at attention, many with hands on their hearts, some singing along.

Next, a rainbow of lights plays on the tunnel entrance from the locker rooms. The players are announced, skating out to a (recorded) Wurlitzer organ fanfare and applause from the stands. From above, as they skate in seemingly random patterns to warm up, the team looks like animated abstract art.

"Our product is fun," says Brian. "You can have entertainment, and you can have great hockey. Some teams don't worry about entertainment. We try to do a great job at both."

The entertainment, beyond the game itself, takes many

““”

Our product is fun. You can have entertainment, and you can have great hockey.

— Brian Gardner







forms. Superhero Night brings out lots of littles in their Halloween costumes, and, this time, at least two adults: Peter Parker (Spiderman) and Thor. An entire family shows up dressed as Captain America. During the break before the third and final period of the game, everyone in a costume lines up to go out on the ice for a contest. Tonight's winners include a tiny Flash who never stops moving, and an adolescent Newt Scamander, the fantastic beast wrangler from the Harry Potter universe.

Three or four times a season, they'll have live music, typically Country or Southern Rock, like Roanoke native, Adam Rutledge, or Eric Gress, from Pulaski. There's a bar glass giveaway. T-shirt cannons. Weiner dog races – "That's a popular event," says Alexandra Martin, the team's director of corporate partnerships and marketing.

The Teddy Bear Toss, another popular event, is part of the team's community outreach.

"Guests bring a stuffed bear, and after the first goal, they toss them on the ice," says Alexandra. Bears are collected – as many as 900 – and distributed by team members at Carilion Children's Hospital, the Rescue Mission, Pheasant Ridge Nursing Facility, Carilion Behavioral Health, and to children displaced by disaster. Bill Gillespie Insurance sponsors the event, collecting and storing bears, and helping with distribution.

"We're trying to make a kid's life a little better," says Brian. Players also read to kids in the hospital, and maintain a "big presence" in the Valley Youth Hockey Association, where both boys and girls have an opportunity to learn and compete as Junior Dawgs.






"He just loves it," says Michelle Hayden, "I can't believe how much one-on-one time they get." Her 10-year-old son, Samuel, and his friend, Seth Testerman, play with the Junior Dawgs and volunteer as Ice Clean-up Crew between periods. Each time the team leaves the ice, the boys get a high five or a fist bump from each player. They're ecstatic.

Real live dogs who need homes also get a signal boost from the Dawgs. Every home game sees a "Pup of the Game" featured on the team's website. Sponsored by Black Dog Salvage, the dogs from the Roanoke Valley SPCA often visit at home games. Brian and Alexandra both succumbed to the puppy eyes of dogs in need and adopted a "Pup of the Game."

The Dawgs and the Thunderbolts are pretty evenly matched, and a 1-1 score sends them into overtime. The play is intense, and so are the fans. Chants erupt in the stands, and a couple of guys in jerseys with the word 'HECKLE' on the back, are seated behind the 'Bolts' bench, banging on the plexi.

After long minutes of lightning play, Evansville gets one past the goalie, ending the game at 2-1.

"It's a fast-paced game," says Brian, whose favorite childhood sport was hockey. "There's a lot of hitting, and a little fighting."

"If I can get you to one game, I'll get you to five," he says. "It'll get you hooked on quality hockey." 

““

There's a lot of hitting,
and a little fighting

— Brian Gardner

““

If I can get you to
one game, I'll get
you to five.

— Brian Gardner



Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

Executive Summary:

Is your workplace ready for the generation following Millennials?

The “Screenagers” are coming >

Move over Millennials, Gen Z is about to enter the workforce. Born between 1995 and 2010, the oldest among them are turning 23 and are looking for careers. How does a business attract, motivate, and retain this generation?

The realities that shaped this generation are different than those that influenced Millennials. Also called the Homelanders and iGen, Gen Z has come of age during a recession. They’re less worried about the likes, followers and shares coveted by the previous generation, and instead are concerned about the economy and world. They have fewer siblings and are much more likely to save money. Born into the era of Homeland security and used to being watched, they prefer vanishing messages like those of SnapChat and Whisper. They arrive at your workplace having learned more from a portable device than from their formal education.

What does this mean to your business?

To recruit them:


1. make the workplace as secure as you can, with job security, regular raises and long term career growth opportunities
2. provide flexible work schedules
3. consider recruiting through live streaming, a blend of personal connection and technology

To retain them:

1. reward them for their work. They will work hard and understand that no one will hand them a trophy, but they do expect to earn rewards
2. provide independence, separate work spaces, and the ability to manage their own projects.
3. allow them to communicate face to face. Millennials in general prefer email. Not Gen Z. They’ve seen their older counterparts have over-reliance on technology and want to be different
4. be prepared to conform to their needs
5. allow their ideas to be heard and validated, they are a more entrepreneurial generation

To motivate them at work:

1. allow them to do peer-based development where they share their expertise with their peers
2. provide choice in work activities
3. offer alternative ways to learn: shadowing, being mentored, professional development via streaming

This generation possesses drive, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity. Your challenge is keeping them as interested in your business as you are in them. 

Who's down with the new tax laws? >

New tax laws are affecting people in some surprising ways.

If you're in Southwest Virginia making a living wage, 2018 may cost you more.

Drivers, sales professionals and insurance reps beware

Workers who use Form 2106 won't be happy. W2 employees use this to deduct job expenses such as food, clothing and mileage.

Are you a truck driver? That CB radio purchase can no longer be claimed. Do you spend a lot of time on the road doing regional sales? Meals are now off the table. Is insurance your gig? Dressing for success is no longer deductible.

Sure, you can submit receipts to your employer for reimbursement, but it logs as wages. There's a big difference between tax-deductible and taxable income.

Let's say you made \$50K in 2017 and deducted \$1,200 for work miles traveled for reported income of \$47,800. In 2018, with the same figures, taxable income jumps to \$51,200. You'll be paying 22% for that extra \$3,400 and an additional \$748 in taxes without a raise. Ouch.

Employers can write off reimbursements, but employees will be bringing home less.



Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:
Beware expected tax deductions based on previous allowances; many of the changes mean you might pay more.



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Millennials are frowning too

Are you a younger adult starting a new career? Goodbye job search and moving expense deductions. Think hitting the road will help?

Unreimbursed travel and mileage are in the rearview mirror too. Knuckling down with a self-employed shingle? Forget about logging that home office deduction.

If you're commuting, companies can't deduct help they provide for this anymore either. So transit, parking, and bicycle cost reimbursement will probably take a hike too.

Don't toss your smiley emoticon yet


On the good news family front, the child tax

credit doubles from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Even for trade professionals and young adults, there are tax changes to appreciate. The standard deduction goes up to \$12,000 for single filers and \$24,000 for those married filing jointly. That's almost double from last year. Most won't need to itemize deductions anymore.

For the self-employed, the mileage figure goes up from 54.5 cents to 58 cents in 2019.

If you have high health care costs, you'll probably feel better with 7.5% of AGI being the new hurdle vs. 10% previously for the medical expense deduction.

Filing your 2018 returns may be confusing. There's no shame in asking for help. A qualified professional will understand all the changes and be able to explain what this means for you. 

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Say, Ahhh >

Executive Summary:

Salt Foot Sanctuary greets visitors to Roanoke (or residents, for that matter) to a most relaxing experience.

By Anne Sampson

The newest place in Roanoke to put the “Ahhh” in “Spa” is the Salt Foot Sanctuary, located at the Hotel Roanoke. A partnership between the hotel and Tour Roanoke, the Roanoke Food Tour company, the Salt Foot Sanctuary promises bliss in the form of an herbal foot soak, a mini-massage, and a choice of tea, beer or wine.

“Our foot soaks are made with salts from the Blue Ridge Mountains,” says Tour Roanoke’s Larry Landolt, “and blended with herbs known for their soothing properties and clays or oatmeal for moisturizing.”


Guests are treated to a foot bath in their choice of recipe, freshly prepared in a copper bowl handmade in Floyd County, wheeled

in on a rustic cart crafted at Black Dog Salvage. After a soak and some relaxation with a warm herbal neck wrap, a massage therapist can provide an optional mini-massage: feet and lower legs, hands and forearms, or shoulders, neck and head. The whole experience, accompanied by low lighting and soothing music, lasts about 45 minutes.

“It’s perfect for couples,” says Larry. “It’s a great way to unwind after sightseeing or shopping. Great for local people, visitors, and perfect for wedding parties.”

The Salt Foot Sanctuary can accommodate four people at a time. It’s located on the main level of the hotel, past the Regency Room.

Soak blends include the Tudor Revival Tingle, the Hotel Roanoke Signature Soak, and the Land of Milk and Honey. The spa hopes to make soak blends available for sale, as well as it’s signature powders and soaps.

The Salt Foot Sanctuary is open to hotel guests and the public, Saturday from 10 to 5, and Sunday from 11 to 5. 



FRONT

Jennifer Rekowski

Let the fur fly >

Executive Summary:

Posh Doodles of Virginia is a boutique designer dog breeding service in Southside, Virginia, concentrating on a most selective market.

By Tom Field

"I love animals... and I always wanted to deliver babies."

Put those two joys together, and you've described Jennifer Rekowski's passion. Today, it's a home-based business called Posh Doodles of Virginia. Married with four children, Jennifer says one day she found out she rather hated computers (though that's what she has her degree in). Her love affair with the now-popular boutique breed "Goldendoodle"—began when she kept admiring a neighbor's dog across the lake. And then she refined her passion even more to the "mini" version, when she adopted Heidi from a retired couple.



FRONT





FRONT

"Then, they (retired couple) came back and bought another puppy from me," she says.

That's no surprise, though, Jennifer explains. "Doodle people... we stick together."

"The Goldendoodle combines the two smartest dogs in the world [Golden Retriever and Poodle]. Plus, you get hypoallergenic [a low-shedding and non- or less-allergenic coat] and without the spastic-ness," she says. The breed is quite popular today, but it was rare when it first captured her heart.

"It's a wonderful dog. Great disposition, beautiful, and a family-friendly temperament."

Jennifer graduated from a fanatic dog lover to a professional breeder in 2014. And though that's when she got down to serious business, on the surface, when visiting her home in Ringgold, the whole caboodle looks like any other home where the pets are obvious family members. (That would be a 'Doodle Caboodle' of course, not 'the whole kitten caboodle'.)





Lauren Moore Fine Art Images in Danville [laurenmoorefineartimages.morephotos.net] describes her process: "Does your pet follow commands or will our pet session be more candid? Goofy, silly? Or Classic? No matter what you choose, your adored companion will be the focus. Lauren speaks doggie language... kind of. Woof. Lauren has enjoyed dogs, cats, bunnies, horses, donkeys, fish, turtles, birds, lizards, ferrets, cows, goats, sheep, alpaca and more, in front of her camera!"



Dog paws scurry all over the floors, tails wag as fur babies scoot between one door to the next, snouts snuggle up to whatever body is there to embrace them.

But indeed, Posh Doodles of Virginia is a business, even as it feels more like a fun petting zoo. In reality, it works more like an adoption agency.


"I've never had one puppy come back," Jennifer exclaims. "And it's in my contract... if, for any reason, you aren't keeping the dog, you must bring it back to me." Her top concern is to be a responsible breeder, and that involves all the details from protecting genetics, healthy testing, and doing everything possible to ensure a long life. Her business is not a kennel, she refuses to release any animal to someone she is not comfortable with, she doesn't ship dogs as cargo, she petitions against pet stores that cage large animals, and she supports her local Pittsylvania County pet services agency. She also limits her breeding to three or four litters a year. (In the dog breeding world, that would make her business a "mini" business.)

"I like focusing on Mini-Goldendoodles," Jennifer says. "I used to do others, but I like having a niche."

The breed produces a variety of colors, from whiskey (red) to blonde to black and every shade in between, with coats that can vary between tight curls and the more wavy "teddy bear" fur. The Mini Goldendoodle is a smaller version of the CKC-recognized Goldendoodle (that can weigh up to and over 100 pounds); and if you mix a Mini Goldendoodle (less than 35 pounds) with a Mini Poodle, the result is even smaller, an F1-B or 2nd generation. The life expectancy is 10 to 14 years.

On the business side of her operation, Jennifer admits her service is for people... "but I can control where my puppies go," she says. That is most important.

With a 63-day gestation period followed by 8-weeks of new puppy care, that schedule accounts for nearly half a year... of just one inventory. Breeding the investment with the care, you're at a level where you only want the best homes for your offspring. Adoption rates in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 range assure some degree of commitment; but Jennifer still reserves the sale only to people she trusts.

You don't want those adorable bouncing balls of fur flying around just anywhere. 



Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
Don't get scared about a disabled employee asking for a "reasonable accommodation"—the term just means "a common-sense adjustment that will allow a disabled employee to do the job without costing you too much money or trouble."

A reasonable accommodation >

Our client was a large child-care center with about twenty full-time employees. The owner called because she was worried about someone who had come in to interview for a vacant position.

"She has epilepsy," the owner said. "Obviously she can't take care of children. I need to know how we can reject her job application."

"How do you know she has epilepsy?" I said.

"One of our employees has known her for years," she said. "When that employee saw her leaving the building, he came and told me that she has epilepsy."

"OK, that's a relief," I said. "Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, you're not allowed to ask questions about a job applicant's medical condition before making a job offer."

"But that's ridiculous," the owner said. "Obviously we would need to know if someone had epilepsy before we hired her!"

"Yes, but you have to make the job offer before asking about disabilities," I said. "The job offer is conditional on the applicant being able to do the job. Then, after you make that offer, you can ask job applicants about their medical health, or even have them get a medical exam. But you can only do that if all applicants for that kind of job are asked the same questions or are required to get the same exam."

"So we'd have to go through that whole process before rejecting her application?" she said.

"Are you sure you want to reject her?" I said. "The ADA requires you to make a reasonable accommodation if she requests it. And she might be able to do the job, if you give it to her."

"Isn't it obvious that she couldn't take care of children?" the owner said. "What if she were to have a seizure and fall down? She could leave a whole room of children unsupervised! Or she even might fall on top of a child. Not to mention the possibility that she might fall and crack her skull on the floor! No, no, it is simply out of the question...."

"But there are lots of types of epilepsy," I said. "For example, some people only have seizures at night. That wouldn't be a problem for you, would it?"

"Well, no..." she said.

"Also, some people have rubber pads or wear helmets to protect themselves against getting hurt if they fall over," I said. "Would it bother you if someone used a pad or wore a helmet?"

"No, that would be fine, I guess," she said.

"Some people even have service dogs that are trained to put their body between the epileptic and the floor in order to break the fall, and that then bark to give an alarm," I said. "Would having a service animal in the day care center be OK?"

"Yes," she said. "I didn't know all of that about epilepsy."

"I don't really know much either," I said. "But that's why the ADA requires the employer to engage in an interactive process with an employee who requests a reasonable accommodation. That's how the employer learns what the employee needs in order to be able to perform the job."


"So what exactly is a reasonable accommodation?" she said.

"It's just the sort of thing that we were discussing," I said.

"A reasonable accommodation is a rubber pad, or a helmet, or a service animal, or whatever relatively minor thing is necessary in order to allow that particular employee to perform the job."

"What if it's too expensive?" she said.

"The ADA does not require you to make an accommodation if it would cause you an undue hardship," I said. "That means that if the accommodation is so expensive that it would threaten your financial viability, then you don't have to do it. However, according to a study, a third of all accommodations cost nothing, fifty percent of them cost less than \$500, and ninety percent of them cost less than \$1000."

In the end, it turned out that the employee did require a reasonable accommodation — but it was a very simple one. Her seizures only happened at night, and so some days she did not get enough sleep at night and had to come to work late. So the day care center just put her on a later shift. Problem solved, and at zero cost. Far better than a discrimination lawsuit, which could have cost tens of thousands of dollars. 

Keith can be reached at keith@creekmorelaw.com

Note: *facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer before deciding whether and how to offer employment, determining whether a prospective employee is disabled, evaluating a disabled employee's request for a reasonable accommodation, etc.*

“ “

You have to make the job offer before asking about disabilities. The offer is conditional on the applicant being able to do the job. Then, after you make the offer, you can ask job applicants about their medical health, or even have them get a medical exam.

“ “

A reasonable accommodation is a rubber pad, or a helmet, or a service animal, or whatever relatively minor thing is necessary in order to allow that particular employee to perform the job.



Best clients ever >

Executive Summary:

Veterinarians To Cats raves about their clients—and their owners (whether the client is the animal one or human one seems not to matter).

By Tom Field

Oh, those darn cat people.

You know the type.

There are countless jokes about them. About how eccentric they can be. Fastidious. Overdramatic. How special they think they are. Separated from more common folk. Neurotic even.

Those are all stereotypes.

(But mostly true.)

Cat owners are rather discriminating. But you see how especially true that is when you step into Veterinarians To Cats—a clinic designed specifically for this one kind of pet owner. You see why having such a “boutique” practice caters

to the most loyal of the feline-appreciative demographic. Not all folks who have cats around them crave the special attention or insist on the environmental details you find at this cat clinic in Roanoke County.

But these clients? They’re all about the unique experience. Quite the “cattitude” they have.

Doctor Canode doesn’t mind the elevated demands. In fact, her entire practice and modus operandi leverages it.

“We have the best clients ever,” says Connie Canode, DVM, founder of Veterinarians To Cats. She opened her clinic in 1990, after graduating from Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech, and working at other medical hospitals (yes, the human kind). She grew up on a small farm in Craig County, and has always loved animals.

For the record, yes, she loves dogs, too.

“After working at clinics with both dogs and cats, it was very clear to see that most cats are afraid when dogs are around. On top of that, many veterinarian practices are set up all for the dogs.”

Connie realized there would be many



Connie Canode, DVM, Veterinarians To Cats owner / operator says she's releasing the "business running" side of her practice to longtime associate and technician, Angie Miller.



Angie Miller, LVT, never was exactly "ready to pounce" on the business opportunity... she just loves working at Veterinarians To Cats; nevertheless, she's excited to step into the management role.

advantages to having a clinic specifically for cats. Since she opened, that business design has proven to work well. The cats do better. And their owners appreciate the difference.

"If people don't really love their cats, they won't come here," Connie explains. "We get the cream of the crop.

"We are crazy cat people," she confesses.

Veterinarians To Cats currently employs three doctors, three licensed technicians, three veterinarian assistants, four office and reception administrators, three kennel personnel, and an office manager. Because the practice is unique for cats, customers come from all over, not



Veterinarians To Cat surgery / operating room



Some of the staff at Veterinarians To Cats: We love it here!

just local... even crossing the state line.

Recently, Connie (she insists on the first-name basis) decided to hand over the day-to-day business operations to her longtime technician, Angie Miller. Business management, she says, is “not my thing” and as much as she enjoys what all her clinic provides and launching the business, she looks forward to just

practicing her calling. You notice the empathy and concern she has when she describes any activity with her patients.

Veterinarians To Cats provides pain management, spaying and neutering surgeries, laser-precision surgeries, dental work, wellness and preventative care, digital radiography, an in-house lab and pharmacy. The clinic also



Okay, so she’s a little anxious; still, she appreciates her safe space.



I just had a procedure... waiting on my doctor’s note now so I can go home and... well, lie around and do what I always do anyway.



I’m never thrilled to go to the vet, but at least there aren’t those awful dogs barking and all up in my space.



Doc and tech work together to make examinations as stress-free as possible.

provides boarding and grooming.

"We have a great staff here," Connie says. "It's wonderful, and I love it as much now as I did when I started."

Connie says there is a 180-degree different mentality of cats versus dogs. The treatment you give should factor in that difference. One particular cat on this visit was screaming like a wild animal, bearing its teeth, claws fully extended, and attempting to escape

or attack with all its strength. (And this was a simple routine examination.)

"You have to realize," Dr. Canode says calmly (as if no one can hear the blood-curdling screams, even as all the other cats in the entire building look on as if this one's lost its mind), "she's just being honest."

Cat people.

Hard to explain. 



Are those cat paw prints across the ceiling tiles? Why, yes they are. Why would you not expect a cat-friendly interior design at Veterinarians To Cats?





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The Salvage Junkies

New life from old things >

Executive Summary:

Making custom pieces out of reclaimed 'junk' is what Salvage Junkies does best—and it's pulling in all kinds of folks seeking most unique, one-of-a-kind items.

By Michael Abraham

You may have noticed the business, situated at the crest of Christiansburg Mountain on old US-11/460 just east of town, distinctive for its driftwood dragon and the folksy "Salvage Junkies" sign over the entrance.

"My name is really Travis Hauschulz, but everybody calls me 'Jack,' because I'm a jack of all trades," says its owner. Jack, a native of North Dakota, runs the business with his lifetime partner, Merissa Sachs, who also owns Logo Hub, nearer downtown on Roanoke Road.

The store is filled with a delightful, eclectic jumble of restored, rebuilt, and refashioned

items, many with Jack's craftsman's hands involved.

"Merissa and I were collectors of odd, unique things. We filled up the house to overflowing. About five years ago we decided that to get rid of some of it, we needed a store. Lots of people liked the unique things we were making. That's how this took off.

"We're always on the look-out for unique things. We buy from estate sales, barn sales, auctions, and the like, and have bought from as far away as Kansas. Sometimes a country home will be ready for destruction and we'll go remove anything of salvage value.

"I buy lots of old whiskey barrels and make all sorts of things out of them. Rocking chairs. Kegerators. Ice chests. Sinks. I make coffee tables out of old traffic lights. I consider myself a craftsman; I grew up in a shop. I'm a certified welder. I worked in industry with power plants, food processing plants, and towers.

"It's a lot more work than I expected! Let's say we go to an estate sale. We have to collect everything we've bought, load it up, transport it here, then unload, clean, and prepare for re-sale.



Handmade computer desk from Jack Daniels barrel

"We have a large following of repeat customers. We have a bit following on Facebook and we sell on Etsy and eBay. Merissa is really good on social media. I take the photos and she does the posting. We work 12 to 15 hour days.

Building our own custom pieces out of barn wood, things like tables, chairs, or shelves, is our most profitable product. You can't just go to a furniture store and buy this kind of thing. We do lots of repurposing, more than just re-selling antiques. We get door knobs, trim, moldings, flooring, windows... all kinds of stuff.

"Our biggest clientele is college kids coming to school at Tech and Radford. They buy small tables, chairs, dressers, coffee tables. We buy seasonally to serve them.

"We compete with the local Restore and various antique stores. But we don't feel much competition. Any store that gets stuff donated to them that I have to pay for has a competitive advantage. And like everybody else in retail, we compete against Amazon.com.

"With our social media following, people come in time after time just to see what



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Handmade rocker from Jack Daniels barrel

we've got. We have people come from surrounding states, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, and North Carolina. I've crated and shipped product all over the country. We have people come down from Canada.

"The antique market has fallen off, replaced by barn wood furniture and what's called 'shabby-chic.' Some people still want antique pieces, the worn look and the quality build. We go to the Jack Daniels factory and get a load of barrels three or four times a year. I bought 6 dozen streetlamps from UVA when they were installing 400 new ones, and they

sold out fast. If I could get 1000 more, I'd sell them all.

"It's great when a family moves to town and uses my store as a one-stop shop to outfit their house. Dining room table and chairs. Desks. Bed frames. They can fill their house with durable furniture for a reasonable price instead of going to a big box store where everything is made in China of pressed wood or pressed cardboard. I make a bit of money. They get a good deal. They come back for other things time after time. For me, that's a good day." 



Jack Hauschulz with his driftwood dragon



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Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
To keep your growth momentum positive, be especially attentive to these core areas.

Growing pains >

Business is booming, your customers are happy, and your company is growing. Congratulations! However, performance is starting to degrade, important tasks are starting to slip through the cracks, and it's getting harder to keep track of everything. It sounds like you are having growing pains.

For small businesses, these are common symptoms of a growing business. It's often said that these are "nice problems to have," but they are problems nonetheless, and if you don't address them, your growth could stall or even reverse. Consider these actions to reduce the pain:

Make improvements to your most common processes.

Your growth has revealed inefficiencies as your volume has increased. That frustrating process you did once per week is now done once per day. Finding ways to shave some time on these tasks can make a big difference for your employees and customers.


Re-evaluate everyone's roles and responsibilities.

Are the skills of your key employees being wasted from spending too much time on less important work? Determine those tasks and activities most valuable for each employee to do, and get the rest off their plates through delegation, outsourcing or role shifting.

Invest in your business. Evaluate, and get help with, the tasks and functions that others can do better than you. Marketing, payroll, and IT support are common functions that growing companies turn to outside support so they can spend more time on what they do best.

Take care of your current customers and employees.

They are the ones that got you here, but it's sometimes easy to take them for granted and ignore them as you focus on other challenges. Don't make that mistake! It's much easier to keep good customers and employees than to find new ones.

Growth can be fun, exciting and satisfying, but only with effective pain management. Take these actions to keep your pain under control. 

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

“Are the skills of your key employees being wasted?”

When uniform— isn't >

Something You Simply Had²Notice

For years now, my creative team has been inserting clever images or photographs into my blogs as a way to get the attention of our readers, amplify a point, or possibly even to make (a lot of) fun of me. This time, the photo is the main point of my monthly missive.

Sometime back in 2018, I wandered into a fast food joint in Maryland. I remember exactly where it was because whenever I pass by that exit in Frederick, I think about what I saw.

The headline on the poster says "Quality Is Our Recipe" and, as you can see, there is subtext and some photography to support the statement. I'm not actually sure what the copy says because something else about the poster took all of my attention.

Pay Attention⁴Good Execution

The poster had obviously not been framed in a UV protected frame and mounting. And after years in



A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan in

Executive Summary:
Do your marketing communications, practices, visuals match the corporate message you intend?






Sometimes sepia tones work well as part of an advertising campaign – just not when the focus is on food. No one wants to see a gray hamburger or washed out tomatoes, or the faded bubbles of a fresh carbonated soft drink.

the sun (or maybe months, I'm not sure), every image in the design had faded. Sometimes sepia tones work well as part of an advertising campaign – just not when the focus is on food. No one wants to see a gray hamburger or washed out tomatoes, or the faded bubbles of a fresh carbonated soft drink.

Yuck.

No matter the artist's intention or the agency's design, if no one at the store bothers to look at the finished product and make a local decision that "hey, this doesn't look right," the project won't end up with the right execution. It's likely that people at the store looked at this every single day and hopefully cleaned it or at least wiped it down at least once a week. No one bothered to really look at it. In the end, that poor execution became an ironic example of "Quality is Our Recipe".

So in that instance, I used the restroom, bought a soft drink, and hit the road. I never bothered to stop back in to eat and I had lost my appetite for a burger that day for sure. 

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Jeffrey Haley



Susan Still

Two banks take bigger step in region >

Executive Summary:

Two banking CEOs share their insights on a merger impacting Southwest and Southside region of Virginia.

FRONT Special Assignment

On October 1, 2018, Roanoke-based HomeTown Bankshares Corp. (HMTA) and Danville-based American National Bankshares (AMNB) announced an agreement for HomeTown to merge with American National

*in a transaction valued at approximately \$95.6 million. Valley Business FRONT reached out to **Jeffrey Haley**, president and chief executive officer of American National Bank & Trust and **Susan Still**, president and chief executive officer of HomeTown Bank to get their perspectives of the merger.*

1. The latest “pre-merger” financial reports indicated growth by both American National Bank and HomeTown Bank. Why combine companies?

JH – In this industry, partnerships have become a vital part of a community bank’s growth strategy. By seeking out strategic banking partners, we can make sure we meet the needs of our customers and shareholders



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while continuing to serve our communities.

SS – HomeTown Bank did have its best year ever in growth and profitability in 2018 which makes this question quite fair. However, as a community bank, we need to be forward thinking to ensure that we will have the capacity and the scale to serve the needs of any customer in our community. Merging with American National will take us to that proverbial “next level.”

2. What are the most significant changes your current customers will experience from this acquisition?

JH – From where I sit, we truly hope they don’t see a lot of change. American National and HomeTown are aligned so well culturally and share many of the same values, our customers should experience a very similar banking experience. They’ll also see a lot of the same faces they’ve come to know and trust at HomeTown Bank with the same culture of service excellence.

SS – We are two very similar community banks so the general banking experience should be similar as we both have a strong commitment to our customers and our employees. What people may not realize is that a bank’s lending capacity is regulated by its capital base so by joining forces with American National, we’ll have the additional scale we need to meet the borrowing needs of any business or individual in our community. In addition, we will be able to offer new services like trust, insurance, and more.

3. Where will the new combined bank entity be headquartered (and why would that matter)?

JH – American National Bank & Trust Company’s official headquarters for the bank and American National Bankshares Inc. will remain in Danville, Virginia. With this partnership, however, Roanoke will become the banking headquarters for the state of Virginia, with other critical corporate functions like credit and marketing for the entire Company to be headquartered in Roanoke as well.

SS – In addition to Roanoke and Smith Mountain Lake, the New River Valley has been an important focus for HomeTown over the past 10 years. With the merger, American National is looking forward to continuing this focus of serving customers and growing banking relationships in this fast growing and progressive region of Western Virginia.

4. What happens to the staff and employees who worked at both companies?

JH – Anticipating there would likely be job losses associated with this merger, as soon as discussions began with HomeTown Bank, American National instituted a corporate-wide hiring freeze. Once the deal was announced, the first thing we did was meet with every single HomeTown Bank employee in order to better understand everyone’s skillsets and goals. And by becoming a larger bank, we needed additional people with specific areas of expertise as well. With our larger size, our hiring freeze and retirements on the American National side, we were able to fill all open positions with people from HomeTown Bank. As a result, American National will have 150 people working



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in the Roanoke MSA, up from 95 prior to the merger.

SS – Fortunately, since we don't have a lot of market overlap with our branch network, there are less people impacted. Whenever you combine two successful companies, the people part is the most important part to get right and I do think American National did a great job managing that element of the merger. However, there are still some people impacted and HomeTown will offer an attractive severance plan as well as assist with their job search(s) in the event there are no other positions that become available with American National before the merger or after the systems conversion.

5. How will the name and branding be impacted?

JH – The name will be American National Bank & Trust Company, but we really wanted to incorporate HomeTown into our brand identity. Therefore, we have adopted a new company-wide tagline of Your HomeTown Bank. This speaks not only to this merger but also to our commitment to each distinct community we serve.

6. How will the services and offerings change (including hours of operation, locations, ATMs, etc.)?


JH – American National offers many of the

same banking products and we'll be keeping the branch hours the same as well. There are some changes to a couple branch locations but that should have a minimal customer impact overall. American National has a branch on Ogden Road in Roanoke County which will become our Virginia Banking headquarters and be converted to a limited service branch. And at Westlake, we both have branches that are about a quarter of a mile from each other and in this case, we will be consolidating to American National's location.

7. What is the expected timeline to complete this acquisition?

Both – After shareholder approval from both banks, which is anticipated on March 19, we'll close on the deal at the end of March. From a customer perspective, we anticipate the signs will change and all locations will be operating from the same systems beginning Monday, April 29.

8. What should the shareholders expect (Q4:2019 and/or FY:2020)?

Both – Shareholders will now own shares in one of the largest community banks headquartered in Virginia, with about \$2.5 billion in assets. American National has historically paid an attractive dividend to its shareholders and the Roanoke market will now own a significant portion of American National shares. We're grateful to have their support as we work to create a bigger, better, stronger bank for our communities. 



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““

We should be cautious that our milestones don't become millstones

— Page 49

““

Doodle people... we stick together

— Page 23

Parkway pals >

Let's face it—some of us are wimps. Yes, we care. (This writer is using "we," because she is one.) Yes, we want to help. But working in places, with people, or on problems outside that nifty environment we usually call a "comfort zone" is daunting. Still, that thing about helping keeps niggling.

Enter an almost perfect solution—an organization that has spent more than 30 years making sure that all kinds of people from all walks (take that word literally as well as poetically) of life enjoy one of this nation's national treasures, one that stretches nearly 500 miles across dramatic terrain; above, below and around picturesque communities.

To date, there are nine community chapters of the Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, some in Virginia and some in North Carolina. Headquartered in Roanoke, the organization employs only three people fulltime and another three part-time. That means the vast majority of the work, accomplished in collaboration with the National Park Service, is the responsibility of volunteers. Some clean up litter, some adopt overlooks the way organizations often adopt highways, some walk trails looking for washouts and other indications of needed restoration, and some even monitor the cemeteries that dot what were once family farms and are now part of the parkway. Then, there are those eager to share their enthusiasm about the area with tourists in various visitor centers or along the trails.

The board of directors is a great example of how many people find this work appealing. It includes engineers, attorneys, academicians, community organizers, event planners and even an artist. What's the appeal? Julie Whelan, director of marketing for the organization, says it best: "Being able to share all this beauty with other people simply soothes my soul."

That doesn't sound like a wimp, does it? 



Good Work

By Rachael Garrity

Executive Summary:
Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway gets a lot done—almost exclusively by volunteers.



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On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
While we celebrate our social advancements, temper the enthusiasm at least to the degree we don't oversell the promise of progress to the extent we're no better than when we started.

Let's not Liz Holmes this >

Note to self: Go ahead. Risk it. It's been a while since you've addressed a controversial subject. Write a column that's going to score or lose with half your audience.

Self: Ok. You asked for it, though.

One working title I considered (halfheartedly) for this column was: Old white men and young liberated women. In today's climate, that title alone is enough to set people off. It's not just that "you can't say anything these days" that gets anyone who expresses an opinion in trouble. It's often at the point that now, "you have no right" to even address certain topics.

That's a sad state of affairs. That's how we shut down the conversation, which in turns, shuts down much hope for momentum towards solutions. The grand shut down we're experiencing no longer happens in pockets of our day-to-day routines of chatter in grocery stores and windshield viewings of bumper stickers on the car in front of you at the stoplight—it's happening in the very venues that are supposed to foster dialogue (college campuses come to mind).

In the offbeat, black comedy, 1996 film, "Kingpin," a young bowler (played by Woody Harrelson) named Roy Munson was moving up in professional ranks until he loses his hand in a mishap. One disaster after another occurs in such notorious fashion that the entire circuit adopted his name to refer to utter failure. Anytime someone lost big (after having the whole world in the palm of his hand), well, everyone knew that individual "got Munsoned."

In like fashion, I'd like to offer my warning that we don't "get Liz Holmed."

For the record, I don't think the individual I am referring to will have her named blackmarked forevermore in relation to our social progressions. It's just an example. In fact, I don't know if Elizabeth Holmes goes by her full name, or Liz, or Beth. But because she is such a star-studded figure in our contemporary high stakes business-tech world, and her star status did fall from grace, I can cite the amazing "incident." I hope she recovers from that journey or others learn from the mistakes made along the route.

In a nutshell, Elizabeth Holmes was a darling of the Silicon Valley. She quickly rose to fame with her biotech startup (a promising blood testing product) called Theranos, garnering high stake investors and billions of dollars in capital. She was poised to change the world, appearing on magazine covers and invited to hobnob with the most elite business champions, entrepreneurial executives, society leaders, and publicity affairs. Some even compared her to Steve Jobs (she often seemed to dress like him). Theranos came a'crumblin' down when it was discovered the product did not live up to the hype. The pieces broke off even faster when that discovery revealed intentional misleading developments and fraudulent claims.

Letters

Paid family leave

Is paid family leave finally on the horizon? The Family Medical Leave Act has served an important purpose, but the times, and the American family, have changed a lot since 1993 when Bill Clinton signed it into law. FMLA provided only for unpaid leave, and only for workers who have worked for a year or more for an employer with 50 or more employees. With states leading the way, including California, which has offered paid family leave for over a decade, we know paid family leave can work and the need is obvious. With Senator Gillibrand in the race for president, and the only candidate with young children,

her 2013 bill, the FAMILY Act, is getting renewed attention. The FAMILY Act would provide for 12 weeks of paid family leave to bond with a new child, care for a seriously ill family member, or tend to their own serious illness. It is an idea whose time has come.

Tom Spiggle
Arlington

Correction

Chloe Shelton was home-schooled and completed her high school graduation; the story on her artistic production accomplishments and her work with the Grandin Film Lab ["Self-directed" February 2019] incorrectly described her education.

Send letters to news@vbFRONT.com or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com

If we're honest, the Elizabeth Holmes story isn't that unique. It's happened many times before. What catapulted her story to the headlines was as much her gender as it was the multi-billion dollar scheme. She was eloquent, well-versed, and possessed a magnetism between her elegance and intelligence that charmed the objectivity right out of folks who unquestionably should have been more discerning.

Elizabeth Holmes was hailed as a pioneer.

In the beginning, I'm betting that was an acceptable reaction.

We should celebrate such accomplishments. We should also be cautious that our milestones don't become millstones around our necks.

As a father of three girls, I am thankful of the progress we have made for women in our society today, even as we still have so much work to do. My former editor and I deployed and hosted the first real concentrated "women's conference" for business professionals in this area, literally entitling our event "Now That We're In Charge," which marked the first time in U.S. history where women outnumbered men in the workforce.

In our political arena, the "women's movement" is downright monumental and historic. It is appropriate to applaud all of these developments when the milestone involves breaking through roadblocks, breaking down barriers, and breaking up old systems that prevented contributions that should have been allowed.

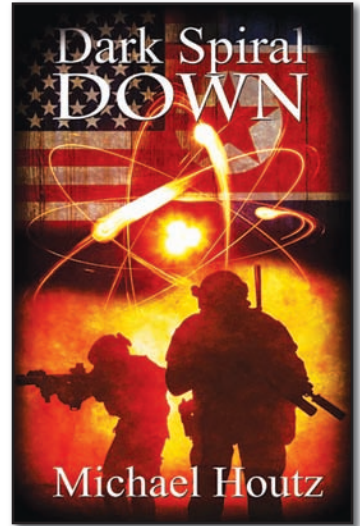
What's not appropriate (or helpful in the long term) is to repeat the very same kind of thinking and acting that caused the dilemma we hope to overcome. Regardless whether diversity is a good thing or bad thing, it's no better to cheer on the great society we will now have since young liberated women are leading us instead of old white men. Even if the statistics show one demographic performs better than another in general or key areas, that data is no guarantee of automatic and sustainable success.

We can be hopeful... without being ignorant. Kick the old white man out on the curbside if he's taking us backward instead of forward. And ignore the young liberated women if she's taking us in a bad direction, as well. Let's not pollute our reasoning solely in the interest of perceived social justice.

Let's not Liz Holmes this. 

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



Action packed

Dark Spiral Down (Wild Rose Press, 2019) starts with the action of a bloody fight. A father – a mixed martial arts rising star – hopes to win big prize money to pay for his son's lifesaving surgery. An unspeakable tragedy follows, and that father ends up traversing the globe to find his missing brother.

Protagonist Cole Haufner's odyssey focuses on southeastern China, as Haufner spent many of his tender childhood years studying in a Chinese Buddhist monastery. The spiritual and ethical values he learned there often come into conflict with the actions he is forced to take.

Mike Houtz writes with authority about an American Delta Force team, whose members speed around dark waters on a DARPA-designed boat and employ armaments and tactics so vividly described you suspect the author has a military background. (He doesn't.) Action-packed scenes spin out believably, whether Houtz takes readers inside a Shaolin temple or a U.S. hospital trauma unit or beside a river perilously close to North Korean soil.

This thriller promises much and delivers it all: a hero worth rooting for, along with family secrets, plus deft plotting that places the reader amid spies, assassins and military operatives. Houtz, with this debut novel, demonstrates a gift for conjuring prose with a page-turning quality, something works by far more seasoned writers often lack. He is an up-and-coming writer to watch.

—Andrea Brunais

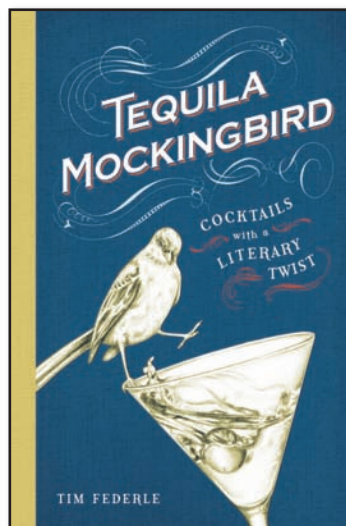
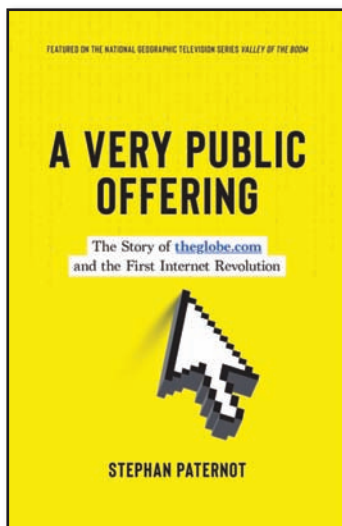
Celebrated life of loser

I didn't know Chris Gethard's celebrity status when I picked up this book. Turns out he's a standup comic, hosts *The Chris Gethard Show*, produced *Career Suicide* on HBO, has appeared in sitcoms and movies, and his current top game is the popular *Beautiful/Anonymous* podcast. I checked out the aforementioned projects; I like this book best.

Lose Well (Harper; 2018) was so serendipitous (or providential or mere coincidental, depending on how one views these occurrences) for me. I had just heard a speaker encourage her audience to embrace failure at a professional networking breakfast, and I dropped by the library to randomly pick up this little gem. If you read nothing else, *Lose Well* has perhaps the best introduction I've ever read in a book of this genre.

"This is not a book that will teach you how to hit a home run. It shows you instead how to become world class at striking out. I got to where I am today when I stopped chasing success and let the inner truth of my loser nature rise to the surface," we're told.

"Geth's" philosophy is worthy of consideration... even if you're not a neurotic or suffering from depression. And yes, his name is pronounced "geth-erd" and not the two-word spelling you make out of it that accompanies the laughable pronunciation that has taunted him all his life. His anecdotal stories coupled with his street-wise insights are quite brilliant, sneaking up on you as they are delivered in pithy, comic style. It's not like Emerson turned upside down, but rather



nudged over on its side. As a niche publisher, I liked how his stint with an underground magazine, *Weird, N.J.*, contributed to his journey. Want to get ahead? Read something else, and take your chances by applying the roadmap. Or read this and watch how that process could unfold in unexpected ways.

—Tom Field

Public disaster

Stephan Paternot became world-famous in 1998 as the youngest CEO in history. But two years after the social media pioneer took theglobe.com (the first social network) public, it all came crashing down.

"The corruption kicked in as the dollar signs got bigger," says Paternot. "There's a whole new generation of entrepreneurs that want to understand how we got here and how we can fix this. We can't do that unless you look back and see what worked—and course-correct from there."

In *A Very Public Offering* (Actarus; 2018) Paternot says to dodge disaster, don't go public (you should avoid this mistake even if your company is growing) and diversify (find the new, great assets of your team and develop organic tools to help your company expand). He says Blockchain is the new internet and will change our world as we know it, and that the formula for developing a winning business is 80-percent instinct, 20-percent structure.

—Mallory Campoli

Get lit with lit

Ok, boys and girls, this one... is just plain fun. If you're the literary type (or, as the description says, "an English major [who] walks into a bar..." Given to me by my daughter, Lauren, *Tequila Mockingbird* (Running Press; 2013) by Tim Federle really isn't as much a bar companion as it is a lovely bedside nightstand read. But that's because most of your drinking buddies can't really appreciate it (unless you all hang out at the library or the writers' co-op). The literary references and allusions are absolutely delightful, written in short pithy passages that accompany classic—and novel... ("novel"... get it?) cocktails.

I wish I could share some of these delights, but it would be too difficult to pick my favorites. Instead, here is a (very) partial list of some of the concoctions: Howards Blend; Are You There God? It's Me, Margarita; The Turn of the Screwdriver; Absinthe Shrugged; The Count of Monte Cristal; The Last of the Mojitos; Lord of the Mai-Tais; The Old Man and the Seagram's; The Pitcher of Dorian Grey Goose.

Cheers (literary) peers!

—Tom Field

The reviewers: **Andrea Brunais** is the author of *Hillbilly Drug Baby: The Story* and the novel *Mercedes Wore Black*; **Mallory Campoli** is a publicity manager in Cherry Hill, NJ; **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher.



Listen, whole body >

Facts & Snacks, a short session workplace topic series held one of its events on Jan. 31 at the **Virginia Tech Roanoke Center**, entitled "Powerful Tools from the Arts: Developing Communication Skills" where attendees (about 40) performed improv-type exercises to improve listening, focusing, and communication skills with others.



Teeth shot >

A dental technician uses a new portable NOMAD intraoral x-ray device; part of a \$10,000 Dental of Virginia Foundation grant for **Community Health Center of the New River Valley**; the center also received two other grants (about \$8k from Radford University Psychology Department and \$31k from Marietta McNeil Morgan and Samuel Tate Morgan, Jr. Trust).



Courtesy of VT

Learning and leading diversity >

The 16th Annual **Diversity Workshop** by Virginia Tech's Office for Inclusion and Diversity was held Jan. 15 at the Inn at Virginia Tech; about 400 people attended the conference, including **Menah Pratt-Clarke**, vice president of strategic affairs and diversity; **Cyril Clarke**, executive vice president and provost; and **Jean Zu**, dean of the School of Engineering & Science at Stevens Institute of Technology.



Courtesy of Warm Hearth Village

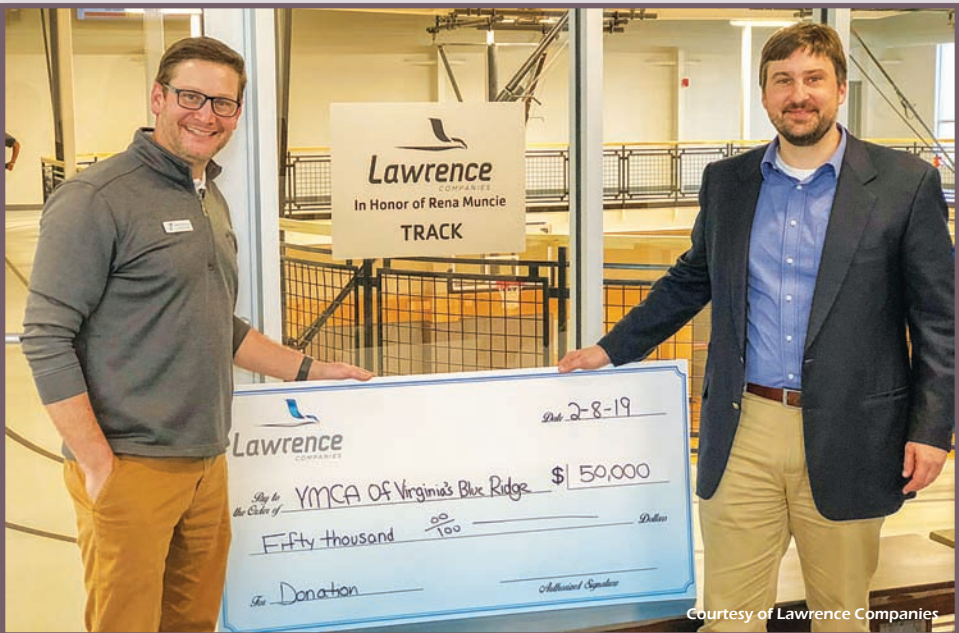
Looking back >

Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg celebrated its 45th Anniversary on Feb. 22; **Wybe and Marietja Kroontje**, Dutch immigrants from the Netherlands, were eager to give something back to the country that had given them so much during World War II. In 1974, they received the official stamp on their vision and many years of planning and hard work to build a nonprofit community with a variety of living options.



Here we are >

MemberOne Credit Union erects one of its new branches in Roanoke on Franklin Road; this unique building faces southbound traffic, rather than placed perpendicular to the road.



Moving for wellness >

Lawrence Companies donated \$50,000 to the new **Botetourt Family YMCA**; the new state-of-the-art facility includes premium health and wellness space, including an eight-lane lap pool, a warm-water recreation and therapy pool, three group exercise studios, a gymnasium, and a modern lobby with social gathering spaces.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Courtesy of Mill Mountain Theatre

Meet at mamma's >

Mill Mountain Theatre's *Mamma Mia!* Runs March 27–April 14 [www.millmountain.org]; director Ginger Poole and the cast (above) await your presence.

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

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ENTRÉ

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Taylor

Brian Taylor has joined as vice president of commercial lending at Freedom First Credit Union.



Talbott



Chernault



Moore

Mary Anne Hecht has been appointed commercial and private banker at First Bank & Trust Company, Blacksburg office.

Jennifer Theimer, CPA has joined as director in the financial institutions practice at Brown Edwards & Company.

Tammy Talbott has been promoted to vice president, loan officer and portfolio manager at Troutville office;

Annie Chernault has been promoted to assistant vice president, market manager at Cave Spring office; **Robin Moore** has been



Wade



Feltis



Lane

promoted to assistant vice president, branch manager at Fairfield office; **Marcus Wade** has been promoted to assistant vice president, branch manager at Salem office; **Sheila Feltis** has been promoted to retail officer and human



Rock



Seay

resources assistant at Troutville office; **Annette Lane** has been promoted to accounting officer and executive assistant and board recording secretary at Troutville office; **Marla Rock** has been promoted to collections officer and Troutville office; and **Jericca Seay** has been promoted to deposit operations officer at Buchanan Care Center office.

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LEGAL FRONT



Marston

Brett Marston of Gentry Locke has been inducted into the Virginia Law Foundation Fellows Class of 2019.



Grundmann



Hunter

Carrie Grundmann,

litigation, labor and law; and **Bryce Hunter**, banking and financial services, have been elected members of Spilman Thomas & Battle Roanoke office.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Johnson

Jessica Johnson, CCIM has been promoted to vice president at Cushman & Wakefield / Thalhimier Roanoke office.

Kris Cone has become a sales associate with Lichtenstein Rowan REALTORS.

Lud Eng has been named director of information technology; and **Lutheria Smith** has been named director of human resources at

the Blacksburg office of Draper Aden Associates.



Cranmer

president of VA811 ("Miss Utility of Virginia" call-before-you-dig nonprofit).

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT



Bonnie Cranmer has been appointed sales director of Carolina Cannabis News.

SENIOR FRONT



Crawford

B. Scott Crawford has been promoted to vice

Brent Poff has been appointed to lead Salem Terrace at Harrogate.

Have a career announcement?

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Career FRONT



Poff



Shah



Clause

Lisa Clause has been selected senior director of marketing and philanthropy at Richfield Living.



Dehmer

joined as vice president of accounting; **Aashit Shah**, MD has joined as section chief of neurology; and **Gregory Dehmer**, MD has joined as director of quality and outcomes at Carilion Clinic.

has joined the board of Corvesta, Inc., the parent holding company of Delta Dental of Virginia.



Hartman

David Hartman, MD has been appointed to the Governor's Advisory Commission on Opioids and Addiction.

hired as associate professor / biochemistry; **Sally Entrekin** has been hired as associate professor / entomology; **Erica Feuerbacher** has been hired as assistant professor / animal and poultry science; **Gota Morota** has been hired as professor / animal and poultry science in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech.



Learman

Dr. Lee Learman has been named dean of Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Dr. Valerie Banschback, environmental studies professor and chair at Roanoke College, received a 2019 Outstanding Faculty Award by the State Council on Higher

EDUCATION FRONT

Renee Chalmers with Workforce FastForward at Central Virginia Community College received the 2018 Rising Star Chancellor's Award at Virginia Community Colleges Higher Education Conference.

Gillian Eastwood has been hired as associate professor / entomology; **Kyle Allen** has been

WELLNESS FRONT



Barr

Matthew Barr has



Armentrout

Jeanne Armentrout



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Michelle Darby has been named executive director of Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce.

MUNICIPAL FRONTS



Price



Pickett

selected director of General Services Department; and **Tonya Pickett** has been selected as Neighborhood Services Coordinator for the City of Roanoke.

Compiled by Tom Field

CULTURE FRONT



Darby



Stone

Marci Stone has been promoted to deputy chief at Roanoke Fire-EMS; **Anita**



Powell

James Price has been appointed president of 2019 Virginia Municipal League; **Jeffrey Powell** has been

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FRONT Notes

Bigger lick

Roanoke City population statistic surpassed 100,000 according to census report by The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia; a number that hasn't been reported since early 1980s.

Biz ed in SW

State Council of Higher Education is reviewing plans by U.S. Magis International to open **Virginia Business College** in its former Virginia Intermont College campus in Bristol that ceased operations in 2014.

A building for building

The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in Danville announced plans to build a \$25.5 million **Center for Manufacturing Advancement** to open in 2021.

Branch branding

Branch Builds Inc is the new name for Branch & Associates, the construction management subsidiary of Branch Group Inc.

Check the scroll

Citizens Cablevision has added InfoOne, Channel 19 to its lineup, a bulletin board-like broadcast of

local information such as power outages, school closings, road information, missing children alerts, and more—based on the Floyd, Wythe, or Craig County service areas.

Pass back leftovers

Public schools in Virginia may be able to sell their excess energy from solar panels back into the power grid pending legislation under consideration by the General Assembly.

Regional moniker added

Atlantic Union Bank is the new brand name planned to replace Union Bankshares Corp. and its banking subsidiary Union Bank & Trust, starting as early as May the Richmond-based organization reports.

Barely off-campus living

Hollins University is building its first new residential housing in 50 years, a student apartment "village" that will consist of ten buildings (two phases) across from the campus entrance; the first of which should be ready for students this Fall.

Two Four! Sale

Waterfront Country Club and **The Westlake** golf courses at Smith Mountain

Lake are for sale by The Willard Companies.

Enos, Yetis, Kuhls, and Patagonias

Mast General Store, a popular brand carrying outdoor retailer (primarily in North Carolina, also SC, TN) has signed as a tenant in Roanoke's downtown Heironimus building; most likely opening early 2020.

ROA up mo

The uptick in passengers at **Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport** gets even more substantial as the traffic report shows 2018 with the largest increase since 2007 (including +7.2% over 2017).

Ivy bowl

CoreLife Eatery, a salads, grain bowls, healthy fare, fast-expanding restaurant franchise operating in about a dozen states, is opening this summer at Ivy Market center off Franklin Road in Roanoke, next to Earthfare, Mellow Mushroom, First Watch.

New designs

Blue Ridge Behavioral Health has purchased the former Hayes, Seay, Mattern & Mattern architectural / engineering

firm building on Franklin Road in Old Southwest, Roanoke.

SunnyB?

BB&T and **SunTrust** regional banks have announced a merger deal that would net a value of \$66 billion and result in the sixth largest U.S. bank ranking.

Reshelled

Book No Further book shop has moved to 112 Market St. SE on the downtown Roanoke City Market, across from the City Market Building east entrance.

Sittin' by the dock

Philpott Lake in Henry County is undergoing renovations at the marina, adding 16 additional slips by Spring 2020; more than 100 boaters are on the current waiting list at the park.

America's Toughest decade

Blue Ridge Marathon is celebrating its 10th Anniversary at this year's event and festivities (the race is April 13).

Oh, [yes], Shenandoah

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been ranked a top ten emerging U.S. industrial market to watch in 2019 by Colliers, joining Greenville/Spartanburg/Anderson, SC; Florida I-4 Corridor; Las Vegas; Lehigh Valley, PA; Twin Cities, MN; Sacramento, CA; Savannah, GA; Seattle/Puget Sound, WA; St. Louis, MO.

Navy nuke support

BWX Technologies has signed a \$2.1 billion multi-contract agreement with U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program including fuel delivery and manufacturing for reactor development.

Short train coming

Norfolk Southern railroad company has released its plans to reduce costs by cutting its workforce by 3,000 employees and operating 500 fewer locomotives by 2021.

J-term

Roanoke County Sheriff's Office and **Roanoke College** have partnered to launch an "Inside-Out" program, an

international educational program that brings college students together for semester-long learning with incarcerated individuals to explore issues of crime and justice.

Secret mission

Volvo Group is seeking engineers for an undisclosed start-up opportunity in production with its Mack Trucks division in Salem.

Building NRV

Turner Long Construction has opened a new office in Christiansburg to strengthen its presence and offer a more prominent location for construction in the New River Valley.

Southside flying

Danville Regional Airport contract with General Aviation Inc. expires June 30; the City of Danville did not issue an extension and seeks proposals from a new operator.

Girl geeks

Roanoke County Public Libraries has launched a

"Girls Who Code" program, a national nonprofit for girls in grades 3–12 to boost confidence for future engineers and close the gender gap in technology.

Gear up

Blacksburg Rotary Mountain Bike Skills Park [www.blacksburgmtbpark.org] off Meadowbrook Drive on Brush Mountain is expected to open in April.

Seeing (and hearing) stars

Science Museum of Western Virginia planetarium is being renovated to create an "immersive environment" with multisensory sound a visual experience.

From Asian to... Asian

Wokology, an Asian cuisine "street noodle" restaurant is opening (March) in the former

Bushi poke bowl / sushi restaurant location on the corner of Jefferson Street and Campbell Avenue in downtown Roanoke; under the same owner/management.

And a little Indian

Food Fanatics Kitchen has opened in the former Mel's Place / Fork-in-the-City building on Marshall Ave. near Jefferson Center in Roanoke; featuring pizza, hamburgers, pasta and some Indian fare from owners who also run Taaza Indian Cuisine.

+20 acceleration

RAMP business accelerator and mentorship program added a \$20,000 seed capital incentive per eligible STEM-H company enrollee into its upcoming 3rd cohort term.

Compiled by Tom Field

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“”
Being able to share all this beauty...
simply soothes my soul — Page 47

“”
From above... the team looks like
animated abstract art — Page 13

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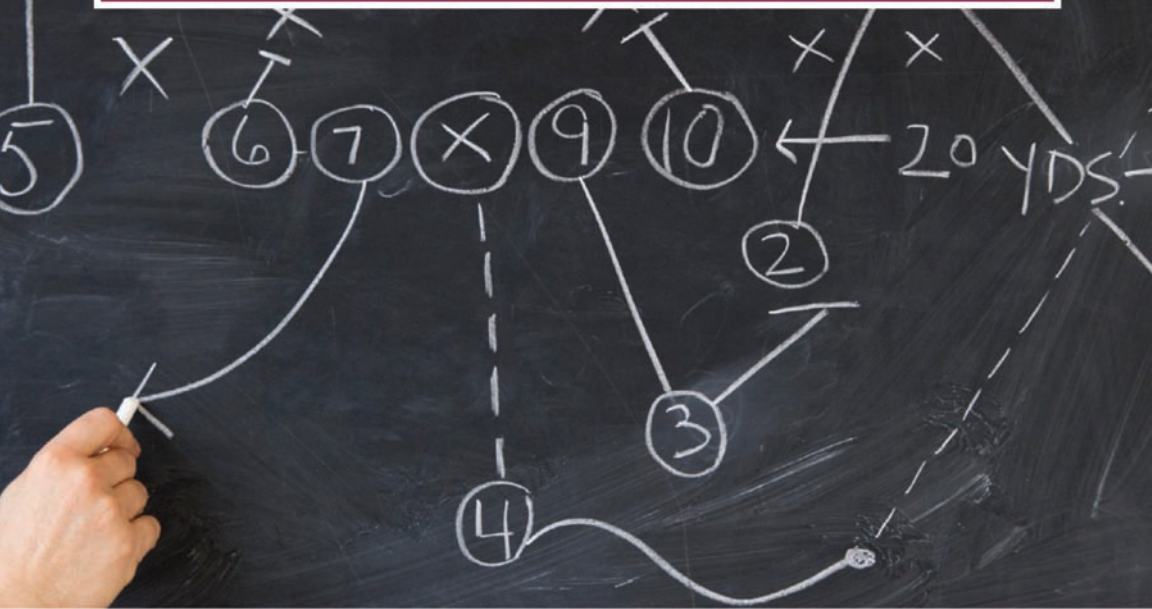


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