

Valley Business

# FRONT

**VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE  
BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION  
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Cloud  
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# Keeping the Holidays Local

Crystal McBroom,  
La De Da



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Roanoker.

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# WELCOME to the FRONT

There's something special about downtown shopping. Even more so during the holidays. As a kid, climbing up and down the floors of Heironimus—from the top floor to the basement—was nothing short of an adventure every time.

The mall? Fun, too... especially with your young ones. But not quite the same. Even meeting Santa at the actual downtown merchant was more memorable. I suppose that's because the REAL Santa visited there; not "Santa's helper" like we see at the commercial complexes (although he's nice fellow, too).

Brick and mortar can no longer compete with the ease and efficiency of online. What's more convenient than a package showing up on your porch... often in a mere day or two? I mean that's not a lot different than the magic Santa himself does, right? You can't beat it.

Except for the memory. The nostalgia. The feeling.

Downtown is... well... it's DOWNTOWN.

Experiencing the holidays right beneath your boots just can't quite be replaced by finger taps on a keyboard.



**Tom Field**



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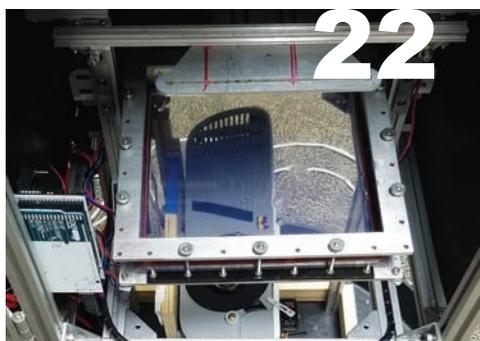
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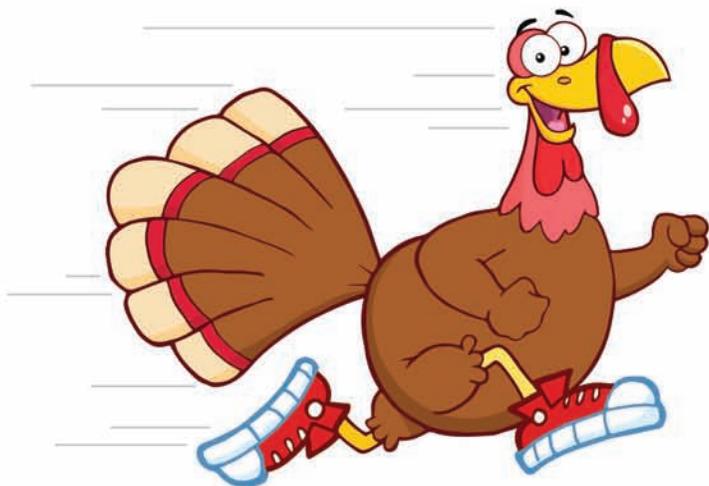
The farm has helped veterans of all ages — Page 33



Cover photography of Crystal McBroom by Anne Sampson.

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# NOVEMBER



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Bruce Bryan



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Nanette Levin



Anne Sampson



Michael Shelton

## Editorial Advisory Board

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

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "They can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia." An additional contribution by the Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

# CONTRIBUTORS



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Gene Marrano



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Pugh & Rotanz



Nicholas Vaassen



Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 54.

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**Nicholas C. Conte** Carilion (Legal)  
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**Nanci Hardwick** Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)  
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**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.

“Really small businesses are the ones who stand to gain the most and also have the most to lose. — Page 18

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# The Merchants of Downtown Roanoke

## Shopping local for the holidays >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Local retailers will see a business bump on Small Business Saturday the day after Black Friday - but downtown Roanoke merchants want you to stop by on other days this holiday season – and all year long for that matter.*

**By Anne Sampson**

In 1949, with an impending holiday season and declining Christmas sales in previous years, the Roanoke Merchant's Association had Roy C. Kinsey Sign Company join Roanoke Iron and Bridge to build an 88 ½ foot tall neon star and place it on top of Mill Mountain. Easily visible all over downtown, the idea was that such a novelty would draw people downtown to do their holiday shopping. It was intended to be a temporary installation.

The star was officially lit for the first time on Thanksgiving Eve, November 23, 1949, glowing red and white. The merchants didn't know it at the time, but the Magic City had just become the Star City.

It's unclear whether the giant neon star, now beloved by Roanokers and visitors alike, actually impacted Christmas sales that year. In the 70 years since it was lit, economic trends have come and gone, Tickle Me Elmo exploded and disappeared from kids' wish lists and the City Market went from bustling to seedy to trendy.

Today's small businesses are competing, not only with each other, but with big budget/big box stores, social media, and the 24/7 availability of online shopping and overnight delivery. How does a merchant in downtown Roanoke now keep shoppers, well, local?



**Toby Mills, manager of  
Walkabout Outfitters**

## Special Events

- 85 percent of consumers are likely to make a purchase after an event. (Eventmarketers 2018)

"We do a Santa's Helper event," says Toby Mills, manager of Walkabout Outfitters' City Market store. "We send out a personal invitation, decorate the store, and have people come in the week before Thanksgiving to put things on their Christmas list. We send the list to a family member for them. It gets another person in the store. People look forward to it and ask about it."

"We'll do food, wine and beer tastings throughout the season," says Heather Badger. She and her husband, Scott, bought Eli's Provisions, where she was the manager, four years ago. "We're going to do a '12 Days of Christmas," she says. "You know, one day, peanuts will be 20% off, the next day the wines will be on special."

Ladles and Linens, a kitchen and cooking specialty store, has special events, like cooking classes and product demos, throughout the year. "It brings people in to experience the store, to experience the products," says Valerie Angle, the store's manager.

"Our first holiday event is the Preview Sale November 14th. We have refreshments and we do holiday wish lists, so people select what they want. It's a fun sneak peek and a way for people to start their Christmas shopping."

“ ”  
We do  
a Santa's  
helpers event.



## The Merchants of Blacksburg

Downtown Blacksburg Incorporated director Lauren Blacksburg says things really get underway at the end of this month as far as local merchants getting their share of the Christmas/holiday shopping pie on Small Business Saturday – the day following Black Friday. DBI, 100 members strong, takes in an area that extends to Prices Fork Road from the heart of downtown Blacksburg. “It’s especially important for our retailers,” says Blakemore, “It’s the biggest season for them. They do lots of special activities throughout the month of December.”

Check out Matrix Gallery for works from local, national and international artisans; Capone’s Jewelry “design and make all of their jewelry, even custom made.” Unique clothiers (Fringe Benefit, Sugar Magnolia) are also just a few of the “wonderful things,” holiday shoppers can find in Blacksburg when they want to go beyond the local malls, big box stores or the online merchants.

It always helps to have an attraction that draws people away from the mall or their

## Dickens of a Christmas

All the merchants have extended hours for Dickens of a Christmas, part of a year-long schedule of events staged by Downtown Roanoke Incorporated (DRI), which works under contract with the City of Roanoke. DRI manages the downtown district, an area which includes the Rivers Edge Sports Complex, Dr. Pepper Park, Elmwood Park, the Jefferson Center, Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke Memorial Hospital, Jefferson College, VTC School of Medicine and the Farmer’s Market.

For three Fridays in December, the City Market becomes an extravaganza of outdoor food, music, performances,



**Winter Lights Festival in Downtown Blacksburg**

computer/phone screen, and Blacksburg's Winter Lights Festival may just be the ticket. Held on the first Friday of every December, Santa and Mrs. Claus are on hand to greet children at the Lyric Theatre, there's a holiday craft market on College Avenue and downtown merchants hold open houses with special treats for visitors. "They reveal the holiday shopping specials they have going on," says Blakemore.

The Christmas Tree is lit during the Winter Lights Festival with Santa's help, kids sing carols. Then there is "Tuba Christmas," when 50 or more tuba players from multiple states show up on that first December Friday night, getting together for a short rehearsal with Virginia Tech tuba players before they hit the streets. "They play an hour of Christmas music; it's pretty impressive - amazing" Blakemore notes. When they are done there is a holiday parade. Merchants at Kent Square decorate trees and invite shoppers to vote for their favorite throughout December. It's all about getting consumers "in the door, shopping local," whether it's at Christmas time or any other time of the year, says Blakemore.

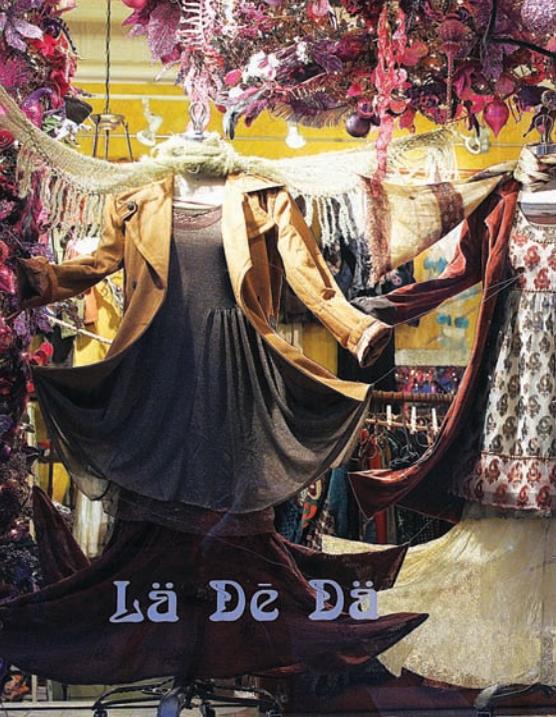
—Gene Marrano

carriage rides, costumes and sales. "Over the three nights, we estimate the crowd between 30,000 – 40,000 people," says Jamie Clark, Marketing and Communications Manager for DRI. "Our goal for Dickens of a Christmas is to bring people downtown to shop and celebrate."

"Dickens is the beginning of the holiday," says Katy Newberry, owner of Gypsy Palooza Too. "A lot of people come in and look, and come back Saturday to buy." She feels that customers enjoy the crowds and festive atmosphere and use the time to explore and plan purchases. She stocks a lot of gifts for Dickens, she says, like handmade jewelry and scarves, and pottery crafted by her sister.

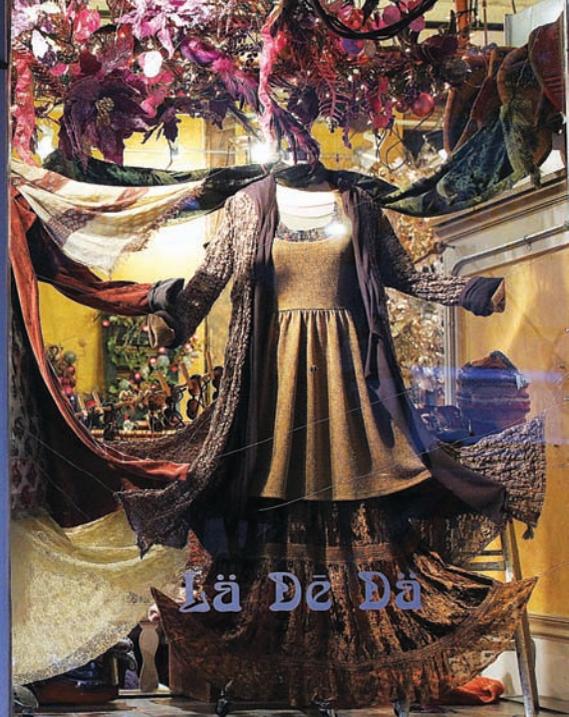
"Dickens is about the community experience," says Crystal





La De Da storefront

Previous owner of La De Da, Carol Hughes, crafting dress made of candy.



McBroom, the new owner, since April, of La De Da. Her store sells a lot of boots and jewelry during the holidays. "It's a big part of downtown," says Pauline Wood, owner of Shades of Color. "It's delightful. I've never missed one." Pauline's store, a 35-year market veteran, carries imported clothes and accessories from around the world. She's adding shoes from Italy to her loft.

"It's a madhouse in here," says Heather of Eli's. "We sell a lot. We've got tastings going on, and we tailor it to which week it is. The first night is the tree lighting. Lots of little kids. The second night is very family oriented. The third night is the pet costume contest and it's more of an adult event."

## Social Media

- 39.3 percent of consumers say Facebook has influenced them to buy a gift.
- 64.8 percent of shoppers use social media to find the perfect gift.
- 66 percent of 2012 Black Friday purchases were the result of a social media interaction.\*

Social media is an ever-growing driver for retail sales. Facebook tracks clicks and targets the ads you see. Instagram shops and influencers (stars with big followings who partner with retailers to promote their products) feature styled photos of experiences with beautiful products and beautiful people using them.

Many local retailers use social media to their advantage. Katy at Gypsy Palooza sells "a lot" through social media. "I post on Facebook and Instagram every day," she says, sometimes responding to current conditions, such as offering stylish umbrellas on a rainy day. In an interesting

# COVER STORY

combination of high and relatively low tech, customers will see something they like and call the store, paying by credit card.

"We ship every Monday," she says. "It's nice to be able to chat with them about their purchase." La De Da uses "a lot of social media, says Crystal McBroom. "We have customers all over the country." She uses both Facebook and Instagram, with her manager, Kristin Flack, doing most of the posting.

"It's huge," says Heather at Eli's. "I use Instagram and Facebook and it's just crazy. I'll post whenever we get a new beer or wine and people see it and they are right here. We sell a lot like that. Younger people (she's 36) are just very visual shoppers. Especially the beer drinkers."

Linens and Ladles uses a well-designed website with regular blog posts, a weekly newsletter, recipes and workshop schedules to stay in touch with customers, as well as Facebook and Instagram. "Instagram is actually our favorite," says Valerie. "We get more engagement there than anywhere else. And we can see how often people click through to our website, where they buy tickets for classes or browse. It really drives traffic."

## Curbside Vendors

The Farmer's Market is an integral part of the City Market and its history, and it has expanded over the years to include artisans selling quality art and handmade items, as well as the traditional products from local farms. The holidays can be particularly challenging for these outdoor vendors, who trade lower overhead for less comfort and the need to pack up their store every day.



The Little Gallery





Heather Badger,  
Elis Provisions



I use Instagram and Facebook and it's just crazy.

## The Experience

"Experiential" is the big trend in retail, with buzzwords like "intuitive," "human," "meaningful," and "personalized." The experience is where the market's small businesses shine. "Some things are irreplaceable," says Melissa Palmer of chocolatepaper. "All five senses are part of the shopping experience at chocolatepaper: the smell of chocolate as you walk in the door, seeing the array of greeting cards, gifts and chocolate [display] cases, the sound of laughter as customers shop, and the feel of the texture or softness of items around the store."

"People buy from people," adds Katy, again from Gypsy Palooza. "They are like extended family to us." She describes customers who visit during difficult times and wind up talking about their troubles, trying on the flowing, feminine and handmade clothes that are the store's specialty, and leaving uplifted, whether or not they bought something. "We call it Gypsy Therapy," says Katy. "It's simple when you do what feels right."

"We take care of people," says Crystal at La De Da. Customers are made to feel welcome, she says, with no pressure to buy, and the focus is on service. "We build entire outfits for customers; they come in because they have a wedding or a party to go and they need our help pulling it

together, or they want to give a whole outfit as a gift.”

“We’re just as much friend or therapist as a store,” she continues. “Many of our customers say this is their ‘happy place.’” La De Da’s décor is an important part of its appeal. Windows are changed frequently with the layered, bohemian looks the boutique features, and the entrance is elaborately twined with grapevine. The store’s displays are vignettes suggesting exotic locales, adventure and a bohemian lifestyle. “La De Da is an experience,” says Crystal.

“We provide an experience,” echoes Toby of Walkabout. “People are super excited to see all this gear. It’s like a toy store.” Melissa of chocolatepaper sees tourism as an important part of their business. Chocolatepaper stocks a number of locally and regionally themed gifts attractive to residents, visitors and transplants as well as to the corporate clients who purchase custom gift baskets for their own customers.

“Tourism is about experiences—the total of the whole Roanoke region and Downtown Roanoke. We feel we are an important part of that. We hear all the time, “I always bring my family and friends to see you when they come to town” or “We love to just come in your store and laugh at all the funny stuff.”

Eli’s Provisions carries a variety of wines and craft beers but specializes in Virginia food products and gifts, many of which are made locally enough that their vendors deliver personally. “Betty will bring in her barbeque sauce, Josh brings his spice blends; that’s all he does is spices,” says Heather. “The actual person brings in their product that’s been made in small batches. People like that story. They love to know it’s local. We do a lot of gift baskets, and people will just call and say, ‘I need a Virginia basket.’”

## The Community: some numbers

- 20 to 40 percent of yearly sales for small and mid-sized retailers take place within the last two months of the year.
- Consumers spent an estimated \$5.5 billion at locally owned stores and restaurants on Small Business Saturday 2012.
- 65 percent of consumers plan to browse online and then go into a store to buy.\*

While downtown Roanoke has been reborn in the last 10-15 years as a neighborhood where people live, work and play, its core retail district, the City Market, has chugged along for decades. Market veterans like La De Da (25 years) and Shades of Color (35 years) have seen it all. “When I started here, it was right after the flood of ‘85,”





Pauline Wood, owner  
of Shades of Color

says Pauline Wood of Shades of Color. "The building was full of mud." She kept her business going on a market where prostitutes and "bums" walked the streets and fights broke out by her front door.

Now revitalization makes Roanoke an example that other cities look to for inspiration. And the market area, anchored by legacy businesses, is a community where merchants know their customers, where they look after one another's stores, and where much of the profit remains local, not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.

"Many businesses do more than half of their revenue during the holiday season," says Joyce Waugh, President/CEO of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Consumers often shop downtown because they are looking for unique items with the feel that comes from an owner-operated shop. Some of these items are not easily found at larger stores where items may be mass produced. These stores give individuals with unique tastes a chance to purchase gifts that have a story attached to them."

# COVER STORY

"I'm a big fan of shop local, shop unique," says Michelle Darby, executive director of the Salem-Roanoke County Regional Chamber of Commerce. (She also suggests holiday shopping at some of the local merchants who may not be right in downtown Roanoke City – like her members). "But I think we have to be careful not to put all our eggs in one basket. Don't bank everything on the holiday season. Get people in the door, put your best foot forward, and they'll come back."

Some shoppers are kept away by perennial downtown parking challenges or enjoy the convenience of shopping at home. However, many express their appreciation for the experience of the market. "I enjoy interacting with the owners of local stores," says Becky Ellis. "They answer my questions and help me choose just the right gift. And they always have a smile and a kind word; a computer doesn't do that."

Internet shopping can often be fast and convenient "but real-life experiences win over screen time," says Melissa Palmer of chocolatepaper. The City Market, with its village atmosphere and charming, turn-of-the-last-century architecture, competes in a brave new world by being utterly on trend. By providing authentic, hands-on experiences, rich, sensory texture, and with savvy use of social media, small local businesses stay viable, not just during the holidays, but year-round - still gazed upon by that giant neon star. 

*\*Retail statistics for 2012 compiled by Ryan Pinkham, Constant Contact*



**Walkabout Outfitters  
decorated for Christmas**





Rob Couch

## Confused about cloud computing? >

### Executive Summary:

*Still not sure what the cloud is? Or if your business needs it? We make an attempt to unravel the mystery.*

By Nanette Levin

"There's a concept that cloud computing is nothing more than the mainframes we had in the 60s and 70s and early 80s," says Robert Couch, Network Engineer at Entre Computer Center. "Essentially, that mainframe just happens to be the

## Know your cloud computing lingo! >

Cloud computing is the on-demand availability of computer system resources, especially data storage and computing power, without direct active management by the user. The term is generally used to describe data centers available to many users over the Internet. (Wikipedia)

Internet." Cloud computing involves using services or applications that don't reside on your computer; it's about centralizing data, he says. "In that respect, it's almost like going back to the past."

Adds Couch, "a perfect application for the cloud is email, and nobody really thinks about the cloud being email, [but that's] one of the original cloud applications." He cites Cox, Entre, Microsoft Office 365, Gmail, Yahoo and Outlook as some provider examples. How you use email is important to consider before making decisions on the provider you choose. Calendars, phone synchronization, website access and other feature availability vary a lot among the options. Knowing what you need to keep your business running smoothly should influence your choice.

"In terms of cloud computing, really small businesses are the ones who stand to gain the most and also have the most to lose," Couch says. They often lack the capital to invest in a company's infrastructure. Cloud computing can reduce an initial large investment. Many small companies rent instead of own server space, as an example.

Small business mistakes can get expensive very quickly when owners or managers don't take the time and resources to find a solution that will not only fit company needs now, but as they grow in the future, Couch says. Often different services, such as CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software, can't migrate together. These include systems such as Redtail, Salesforce and Zoho, all of which operate in the cloud. "As you grow and as your business has changed you realize that some of the features that are available in one application versus another don't fit you as well as they should," he explains. "Migrating out" can cause big headaches if data has to be transferred manually.

"As a small business, you need a relationship with some service provider, whether that be Entre or whether that be any of our competitors," Couch explains. He notes such firms can assess your needs and do the necessary research to find the right solutions. "We ask you those questions.

'Do you need a call center? Are you service based?'"

"Almost every software vendor has been making a cloud version of themselves at this point," Couch says. This includes everything from fundraising and event ticketing to financial software. "Some MSPs (Managed Service Providers) can offer services that enable cloud access to applications that were not [even] designed for use in the cloud." Couch cites AutoCad as a prime example.

Robert Turcotte, Senior Systems Consultant at Entre, cautions businesses owners about unexpected expenses that can crop up after moving operations to the cloud. Hidden expenses for migration and/or the operating environment, poor timing on action decisions, and over-committed application hosts can prove to be costly surprises for those who neglect due diligence. Still, "many service providers want to switch their clients to cloud computing because it is a wonderful revenue and profit opportunity," he says.

Turcotte cites shifting from older backup tape or drive systems to cloud storage as an economical decision in most cases. Cloud email systems for companies with a small number of employees is prudent. Some companies find hosting their entire operation in the cloud is best, particularly when compliance issues are relevant.

A recent State of the Cloud Survey by RightScale asked technical professionals across a broad cross-section of organizations about their biggest concerns regarding the adoption of cloud infrastructure. The top five issues were security, cost management and containment, lack of resources/expertise, governance/control, and compliance. Gartner forecasted a 17.3% growth in cloud computing in 2019 (\$206.2 billion) and predicts 90% of organizations will be using cloud services by 2022.

It's here: cloud computing is a reality every business leader faces today. Understanding present and future business needs and the costs associated with decisions before they are made can make a big difference in long-term costs and profitability. As is the case with so many other business decisions, the answer on what's right for your company is, "it depends." 

## Common Cloud Computing Terms >

**SaaS** (Software as a Service): the traditional concept of Cloud Computing (Netflix, Amazon, QuickBooks online, etc.), meaning software you are using that is not installed on your computer.

**PaaS** (Platform as a Service): this typically refers to the database layer of an applications environment (Oracle, Microsoft systems managed by the cloud vendor, as an example).

**IaaS** (Infrastructure as a Service): "This is where some of the big dogs play," says Couch. He cites Amazon, Microsoft and Entre.

**Server backend:** this is the data access layer of a piece of software or the physical infrastructure or hardware. It usually involves three parts, namely, a server, an application and a database.

**VoIP** (Voice over Internet Protocol): the internet's answer for remote voice conversations. "Phone systems are increasingly cloud based," explains Couch. "Even when you get your plain old telephone line from Cox or Verizon, it's all cloud based once it leaves your house."

**Private vs. Public Cloud:** "A lot of businesses do not understand that with the server structure they have in their building they already have a private cloud," says Couch. Netflix is public because it's built off Amazon. Rackspace is a private cloud. Public cloud hardware, software, and supporting infrastructure are owned and managed by the cloud provider. Private clouds build their own infrastructure.



## Sisu (see-soo) (n.) Finnish >

Sisu is a grim, white knuckle form of courage and determination in situations where success is unlikely; a cultural concept of Finnish character and pride.

In today's workplace, it can be scary to have courage. Courage at work shows up as leaders asking questions, speaking honestly, asserting themselves, having difficult conversations, insisting on facts, taking initiative, having conversations around diversity and inclusion, challenging corporate conventional wisdom, getting input from others, or sometimes saying no. Being courageous at work (and at home!) requires a bit of vulnerability.

Everyone has fears. Nelson Mandela said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." So how do you get courage? There are several ways you can steel yourself to take action. One of my favorite ways is to give myself a time limit. For example, if I have to have a difficult conversation with someone, I set a deadline for a certain time. I'll tell myself that I will start that conversation by 9:30 AM and I honor that commitment to myself. I find that just starting the conversation is the hardest part, the conversation itself usually works out just fine.

Another idea is to make courage a habit by consistently expanding your horizons and breaking your routines. If you're a runner, run somewhere new once a month. If you're in a creative field, create something in a different genre once a month. Adding a courageous act of some sort every month makes being brave a habit.

Sisu begins where perseverance and grit end. It's doing the necessary even when it's difficult. We all have moments when we need to reach beyond what we think we are capable of. By taking a deep breath and doing it anyway, we strengthen our courage reserves. Choose courage over comfort in your own way consistently and you'll find this makes you a leader worth following. 

## Professional Development

By Lesa Hanlin

### Executive Summary:

*What is real courage?  
And why is it so scary to some?*



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## Here's what's really scary >

Would you believe U.S. citizens were expected to shell out \$9 billion on Halloween purchases this year? This is the second highest amount ever, according to the National Retail Federation (NRF). That's a lot of candy. In fact, projected candy spending alone is \$2.6 billion with 95% of those surveyed buying into this trick. How hard did you say you were working on that waistline?

When you consider how many citizens don't have enough set aside to cover next month's bills—61% of Americans have less than \$1000 for emergencies, says CNBC—it's mind-boggling. Most of those who can find almost \$100 for two hours of revelry claim they don't make enough to save anything for retirement. Here's the kicker—only 30% of those spending the big bucks will be trick-or-treating with kids.

The millennials are taking the lead on pet costume spending. Nearly 20% of folks surveyed by NRF were expected to be dressing their animals. Here's hoping you saved Fido the embarrassment by shifting your spending on that pumpkin, hot dog, bumble bee or devil garb toward savings in a rainy-day fund.

Here's something to chuckle about: the top ranked costume for children is princess, while adults lead with a witch outfit. Wonder what that says about us?

### Southerners shouldn't rejoice

Us Southerners spent almost \$12 more than our Midwestern or West counterparts, or \$90.35 each, according to USA Today. If you set that aside annually for 10 years factoring compounded interest, it's almost \$1,700. Granted, you're not going to retire on this, but you'll be ahead of most in the country with your emergency fund.

What's important, though, is developing a savings mindset. If you managed to save \$90 this Halloween, that thinking helps get you focused on future investing. Soon you'll start noticing how much that daily coffee, subscriptions you're not using, and impulsive purchases are costing you. Those mindless or emotional buys can turn into choice opportunities for future comfort once you consider the true cost of those squandered dollars.

Shifting your thinking about money starts with baby steps. This means if you'll be in crisis next month with a pay cut or unexpected doctor bill, going all out for Halloween—or any other holiday—is dumb. Wouldn't it be better to sleep peacefully knowing you have reserve funds set aside? Think how proud you'd be if you diverted some of those useless costume and calorie costs toward a more comfortable future. Well, there's always next Halloween. 

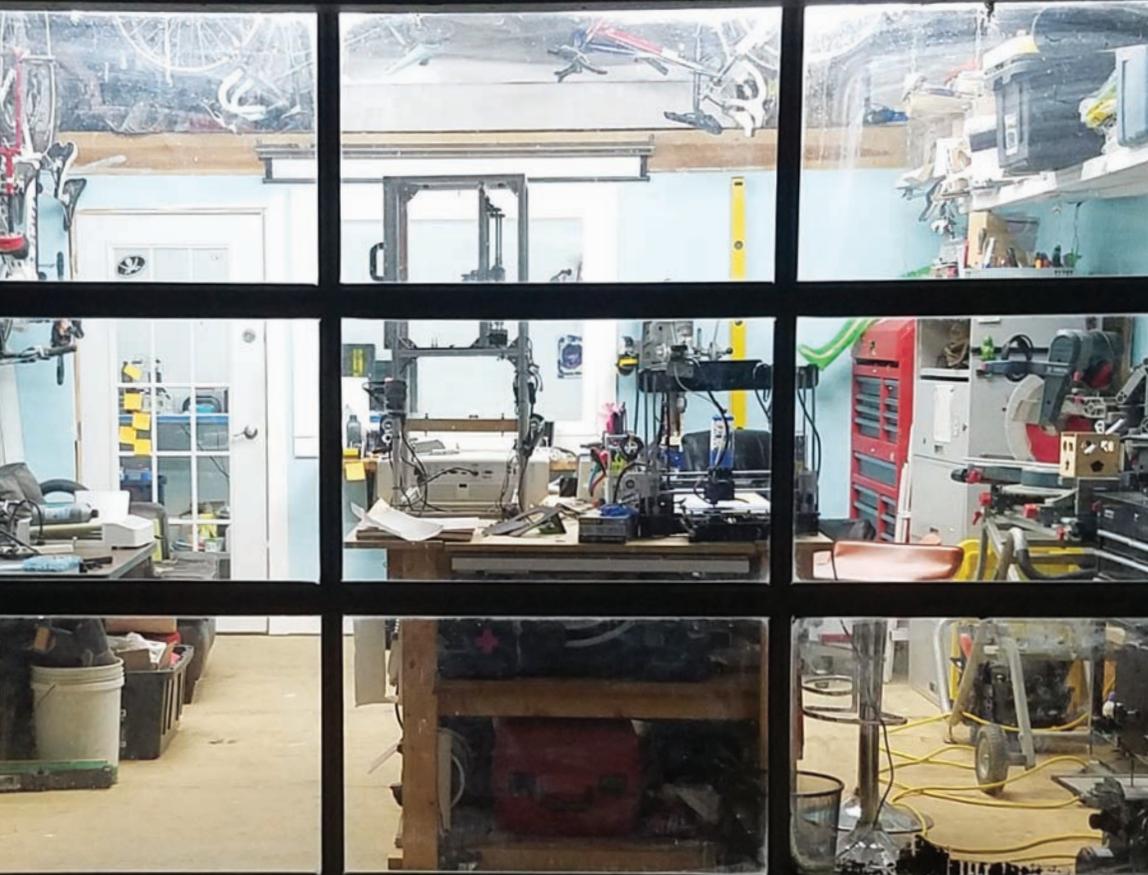
*Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at [michael@discover360Financial.com](mailto:michael@discover360Financial.com).*



## Financial Figures

By Michael Shelton

**Executive Summary:**  
*Consider the true cost of squandered dollars.*



## Lab on a Chip: on the absolute edge of 3D printing in the New River Valley >

### Executive Summary:

*There are stories out there that 3D printing can even fabricate houses – yes houses – but in Blacksburg one entrepreneur is thinking much smaller.*

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Three-dimensional printing has been around since 1989, but Elliot McAllister is constructing a new type of 3D printing business, one at a micro-scale. His printers build "lab on a chip" devices with the potential for speeding up a formerly long and arduous process. McAllister, sole founder of Skyphos Industries, spent two years working out of his converted garage to develop this ability.

Lab on a chip devices use smaller samples, are faster, and are cheaper because they use fewer chemicals. The process involves creating microchips that allow a small amount of fluid in, perform a reaction,

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and release another fluid. Existing examples of microfluidics include over-the-counter pregnancy tests and rapid strep tests.

Previously, manufacturing involved an etching process to make a mold, with nothing smaller than hand-held size. The wait was two to four months, and the end result was virtually “guaranteed not to work the first time,” said McAllister. With it typically taking three to five times to get it right, the process was clearly inefficient. Skyphos’ technology shrank both the size and time required, allowing three iterations to be tested in the same time and at the same price as one try used to take.

In the past, 3D printing could not deal in resolutions smaller than one millimeter. Now, said McAllister, it can accurately manufacture something one-tenth the size of a human hair. It is more economical because there is no need for an expensive clean room – those tightly controlled environments with an extremely low level of contaminants. Additionally, printing is on demand. “You can go right from the drawing to the finished product,” said McAllister.

These devices are incredibly complex. From a CAD (computer aided design) 3D file, the 3D printer uses filtered UV-light which cures FDA-approved resins. The combination of Skyphos’ patent pending system along with these resins allows printing at this resolution. It works layer by layer, with each layer attaching to the previous one.

With a master’s degree from Virginia Tech in material science, and a couple of biomedical classes under his belt, McAllister started Skyphos on a “shoestring budget.” He took Skyphos through last year’s cohort at RAMP, the business accelerator in Roanoke. Over



**Elliott McAllister**

one year, RAMP helped him refine his business model, provided a platform for demonstration, and allowed the company to locate there.

Skyphos has also partaken of other industry groups’ expertise, including interviews with over 60 other small businesses and participation in two worldwide conferences. Market reaction among the industry has been disbelief, said McAllister, but customer reaction has been positive due to the benefits of speeding up the process - and not



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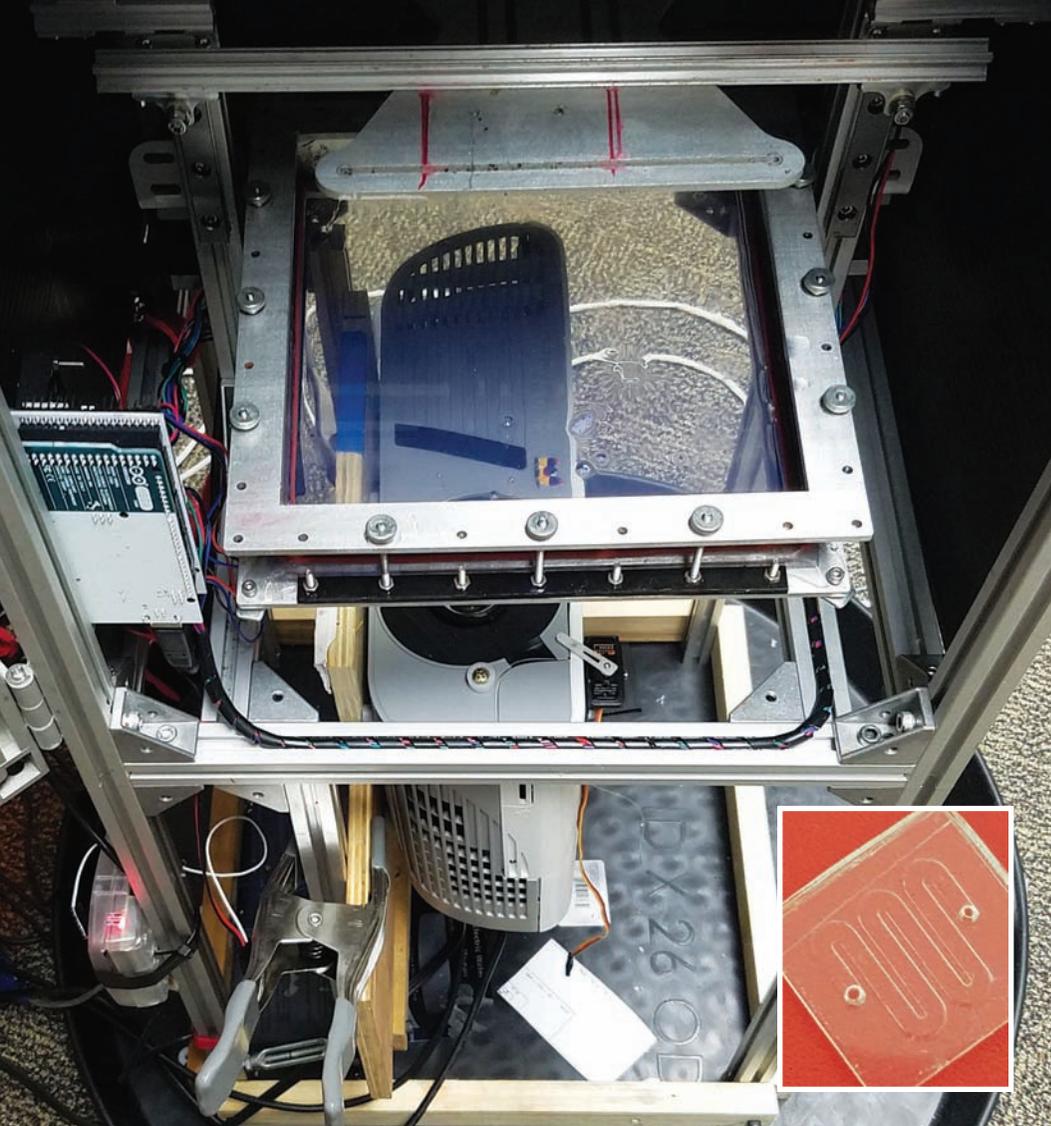
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having to assemble the chip themselves.

"When a product gets to market faster, it adds value to the company," said McAllister.

While there are potential applications in the military and in space, McAllister is focused on "making medicine happen a hundred times faster." Skyphos' customers tend to be start-ups employing less than 50 people with products pre-market or in the phase just before clinical trials with the FDA. That is when changes can most easily be made.

In this early stage of the business, Skyphos is service-based, only doing in-house fabrication. "We'd rather trip in our own home, not someone else's," said McAllister. In the next five years, he anticipates selling 3D printers and the accompanying materials, too. Growth in microfluidics is projected at 18% and 3D printers at 25%-35% annually.

McAllister says Skyphos' biggest accomplishment was "actually getting customers." But there are still challenges. One is that in southwestern Virginia it's difficult to find investment capital, in a competitive business environment. There is scant expertise in the biomedical field here he says. Skyphos has stayed in the New River Valley because of McAllister's connections to Virginia Tech and support from some special professors, but it is considering where to base the company long-term. Another challenge is balancing his time and energy between the company and his family.

Skyphos is already making a difference. One diagnostic tool uses blood proteins to test in five minutes - versus the previous two hours - whether a patient likely had a cardiac event, leading to quicker and more successful treatment. This tiny technology could have huge impacts. As an expert from Brigham Young University told McAllister, "you are on the absolute edge of 3D printing." 



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## Why social media is bad for your business >

Have you ever pulled up to or driven past a store that has a terrible sign? Some of the letters are missing, the colors are faded, and there's a weird mold growing on it? Not the best first impression. Here's the thing: that business might just be the best in town, but a passerby will likely move on to the competitor after seeing how bad the upkeep of the storefront is.

Social media is, in many ways, the digital storefront of your business. For example: If you have inconsistent posts, photos taken in bad lighting, or content that doesn't seem genuine or deliberate, it doesn't matter how many times you post in a week. Your social media could be giving your company a bad first impression to prospective customers.

We're sure you've already heard how important it is to have an online brand and digital presence - it's just a matter of having the time to execute it. We bet you've also felt lost, discouraged and unproductive at times when working with these tools. Well, let us start by saying, you are not alone. Many business owners have put hours into trying to figure out the art of social media ... and many have found that it doesn't always yield the biggest "harvest" in terms of leads or sales. That's because social media is just like any other aspect of business - there are proper ways of strategizing and executing that allow these tools work in your favor.

Social Media can be an extremely powerful marketing tool; however, it can also be a powerful detriment to your business. It's a common belief that if there is at least an effort being made (for example, if your business HAS a Facebook/Instagram, or if SOMEONE in-house posts every once in a while) everything is fine. While that used to be the case, social media is no longer a fun bonus to have. It is now a crucial marketing tool that can do more harm than good if not used correctly.

So, you might find it's better to not post at all until you have some training on how to create appealing and engaging content... or even better, skip the learning curve and hire a team to run it all for you! In summation, take your social media efforts seriously. These efforts will ultimately put you above the competition, help strengthen your brand, further cultivate your community, and lead to more sales or bookings." 

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## Tech Whisperer

By Spencer Pugh  
and Maggie Rotanz

**Executive Summary:**  
*Wait ... what? The Tech  
Whisperers explain just  
what they mean.*

## A little insight >

### Marketing Makes **4** More Marketing

I've said it so many times lately – mostly as a sort of a preparation for what is to come for our prospective new clients. The more marketing you do, the more there is to be done. We've been talking with a lot of companies who've gotten to where they are in spite of not having consistent marketing. Once they jump on the train, they quickly see what we've been saying. Some may say the concept is a great racket for companies like mine. Well, it does generate a lot of ongoing work, but the real benefit for us is seeing how instituting a plan works. You've gotten where you are without a conscious effort to share your story, spread the word, and help people see and understand your value – imagine how much better things can be with consistent messaging, right?

### Recognize It and Use It **2** Fuel Growth

Before you started this marketing thing, you were plenty busy and perhaps you even saw success. Now some consultant is telling you it's important to have a strong website, to update its content regularly, and to have news to share on a variety of platforms. They want you to find your voice, message it consistently, and even find ways to talk to people who used to be clients or prospects in the same manner. Then, you have to do it all again next month.

It never ends.

That's right – the business development process, a DRIP marketing program, nurturing relationships, starting new client engagements, and ongoing care for clients really is truly never-ending. You may as well take note of that, and make sure you're doing what you can to get more people into that process and more clients cared for in better ways. Once you start – you won't see a finish line. And that's a good thing. 📌

*Bruce C. Bryan is the president of B2C Enterprises.  
Contact him at [bruce@bzcenterprises.com](mailto:bruce@bzcenterprises.com)*

“The more marketing you do,  
the more there is to be done.”



## A Little Insight

By Bruce C. Bryan

**Executive Summary:**  
*Have a true marketing plan – or get one to keep growing your business.*



all photos: Denise Allen Membreño

**Meagan Sallade with Franklin Road McDonald's Manager Brad Ward. Ward has worked for the Lewis family for 29 years. He started in Vinton and then transferred to their newer location.**

## A small business by any other name >

### Executive Summary:

*Remember that old marketing campaign – McDonald's is a Happy Place? It seems to be true at these two locations in the Roanoke Valley. So, what's different?*

### By Denise Allen Membreño

When you think of small business, McDonald's does not come to mind. Most people would consider the term "family business" a misnomer in relation to the fast food giant as well. Small family business is exactly how the Lewis family would describe their business and if you have ever spent time in the Vinton McDonald's you would agree. It feels more like a mom and pop establishment than a fast food chain.

The cashiers greet diners by name and know their orders and that of many of

the drive-thru customers by memory. "I think a lot of times people think of it as big McDonald's," said Meagan Sallade, daughter of Bob and Fran Lewis and soon to be second generation McDonald's owner. "No, it's just the Lewis family business. It just happens to have golden arches out front."

Sandra Meador grew up in Vinton and has returned home after living all over the country. "This McDonald's was always Mom's favorite place to go. She is gone now but she had a whole group of people that would sit over there every day and visit. I still come in everyday to get my ice cream."

Bob and Fran Lewis bought their first McDonald's 45 years ago. Bob graduated from the Naval Academy in 1966 with an Engineering degree. After his service he went to work in his father's construction business in Pennsylvania. A few years in, he realized it was not for him.

"My wife had gotten work altering uniforms for a couple who had started up a Dairy Queen," remembered Bob

Lewis. "One night she came home and said, 'I can't believe it. They took home \$238 dollars tonight.' That was a lot of money back in 1967."

His dad loaned him the money to start a McDonald's and Lewis moved his young family 400 miles away to follow his dream in Vinton, Virginia. "I knew McDonald's was a premiere franchise and still is today," added Lewis. It took a few years to get established. Through community involvement the Vinton McDonald's became number one in sales in the Roanoke region and then in the district, which at the time included restaurants in North Carolina and Virginia.

Now the Vinton location is one of top performers in the nation. "In overall sales we were number 97 in the country last year," said Lewis. "But in drive-thru



**The Franklin Road McDonald's is a smaller store with a parking lot that only has one exit which sometimes slows the drive thru.**

sales, [where] we actually do over 77% of the business, we were 12th in the country for number of cars coming through the drive-thru."

Lewis credits his managers for the success. "My managers are very, very good with people." The loyal customers also come back because of the Lewis Family's loyal employees. Lewis' managers

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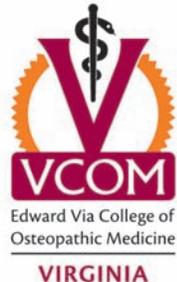
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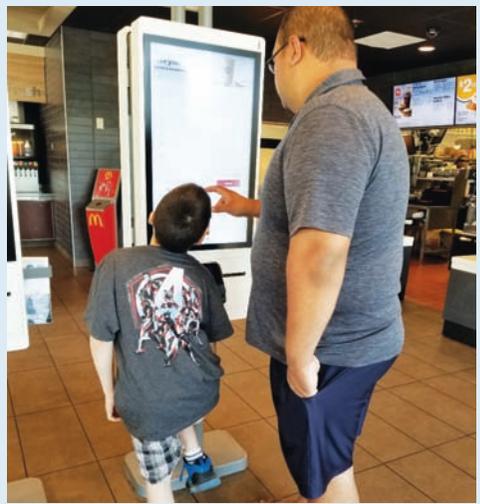
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Customers can now order through the mobile app and when they park in the curbside pickup it tells McDonald's they are there to pick up and the order is taken to the car.



Sallade says the kiosks inside do not replace workers, it enables them to serve more customers in a timely manner.

## Competing in the digital age >

McDonald's is working to stay relevant in the ever-changing digital world by appealing to people who shop on their phones. "There is ordering through the McDonald's app with curbside pickup," said Meagan Sallade, area supervisor for the Lewis family's two McDonald's locations. There are also kiosks for ordering and paying inside the restaurant. Sallade says that helps them serve more diners quickly.

"The biggest impact for us is we now have delivery through Uber Eats and Door Dash," continued Sallade. "My parents don't see it as a big deal but anyone my age or younger says, 'Oh its only five dollars for Uber to come

bring this to me. I'll just do that.'" If we're not on there, they are not just going to come down here and get it. They are going to find something else on Uber Eats."

The Lewis' Franklin Road McDonald's does twice as many delivery sales than the Vinton store, 10 to 15 orders a day. Sallade says she expects that number to keep growing. "There may be a dynamic app, which in the future, may offer a rewards program and if the customer has their geo-location on and goes through the drive through it will recognize them and ask if they want their usual or most frequent order," predicted Sallade.

range from the "rookie" with seven years of experience to two managers with more than 40 years at the Vinton restaurant. "That's very unusual for a business like this," continued Lewis. "I'd like to think it's because we treat them right. We have fun here. They get benefits and vacation."

"It's a good place to work," added Christina Jones, who has 40 years on the job. "It's a friendly atmosphere and everybody gets along. We've all worked together for a long time and that helps." Adds Sallade, "we have a lot of family connections, kids of employees or families with five kids and four out of the five worked for us. "That goes a long way

in terms of the expectations we have. They know what they are getting into and that there's a certain standard."

That standard is clearly defined and always upheld. It lets people know where they stand and what is expected from them. It is the same standard and culture Lewis and Sallade are working to instill in their newer location. Three years ago, they acquired the McDonald's on Franklin Road in Roanoke. "It's a totally different store," explained Sallade. "It's a different layout. Location wise, the Vinton store is closer to people's homes. It's in the middle of town catching people on the way home or going across town for activities."



**The Vinton McDonalds on Hardy Road is a local gathering spot, especially for seniors.**

"We're making some good progress on Franklin Road," continued Lewis. "We are improving the speed of the drive-thru and making more sales. We are above the national average at that store now and we were well below it when we took it over three years ago." One of the challenges is changing the culture at the Franklin Road location to resemble what has existed in Vinton for nearly five decades.

"We have a lot of turn over there," said Lewis. In the years I've been doing this, this is the most difficult time to attract new employees because of the low unemployment rate. Meagan and I have learned we need to set the standards and

then apply discipline to those standards - and not be afraid even though it's hard to get people, to let people go who are not signing up for those standards."

Lewis has enjoyed watching his daughter follow in his footsteps. Sallade has a psychology degree and business minor from William & Mary. "I was going to work at McDonald's for a year," remembered Sallade. "Save up some money and go back to school. A couple of months into it I was like, this is what you guys are talking about - liking to go to work every day. It's just fun, exciting, challenging and rewarding." That's still the way she feels 12 years later. The loyal customer base benefits as well. 



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## Holidays, break room treats, office parties: the seasonal black hole of caloric consumption >

You've been diligently making time for walk breaks the last few weeks, maybe you registered for your first 5k, you're using the company gym: you're checking all the boxes when it comes to doing the right things for improving physical fitness. Now enter: the holiday season. Colleagues are bringing mountains of cookies and other baked goods that normally are not loitering about in your break room and now are omnipresent for the next two months straight. Surely there is some way to offset the constant temptation to indulge in Karen's signature peanut butter chocolate chip cookies.

If you are not already strength training, and you enjoy the seasonal treats handcrafted by friends and colleagues around the holiday season, now is the ideal time to pick up this healthy habit. By building lean muscle mass, you not only help improve your body composition, which helps burn calories at rest, but you also improve things like posture, balance, and bone density. While having a gym membership is helpful for a diverse repertoire of exercises from which to choose, you do not need gym access to build lean muscle mass. In fact, many people find that selecting bodyweight exercises - which can be done anywhere with little to no equipment - is the easiest way to fit resistance training into your day.

So, where do you start? If you are currently not strength training, a very simple routine of a few bodyweight exercises completed at least twice a week on non-consecutive days is a simple and effective place to start. For example, take your Tuesday/Thursday lunch break: find a small space in the nearest conference room or even in your office cubicle with enough space for you to hold a few plank positions. (Ignore the strange looks from coworkers.) Variations of planks are great total body exercises which help strengthen the core musculature, as well as stabilizer muscles needed for improved posture. There are certainly MANY strength exercises you can perform but if you are just starting out, making time for a few core routines is highly recommended. Check out this YouTube video outlining some simple core exercises you can complete with minimal equipment (a resistance band is used in one activity but you can omit this if you do not have access to such a band): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaTVJvFJSV4&t=115](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaTVJvFJSV4&t=115)

Other activities like push-ups, squats, and lunges are also great functional bodyweight exercises which can be completed almost anywhere. However, because many folks fighting the weight gain trend over the holidays are also spending lots of time sitting behind a desk at work, incorporating these challenging core-focused exercises as demonstrated in the YouTube video will help offset all the sitting and the extra holiday cookie you grab on your way back to your desk. Happy planking! 

## Wellness

By Ally Bowersock

**Executive Summary:**  
*At the risk of sounding like the Grinch, consider slowing your roll during the impending holiday season – or pick up your game.*

*Ally Bowersock is the Co-Owner of RunAbout Sports Roanoke. Contact her: [runaboutroanoke@gmail.com](mailto:runaboutroanoke@gmail.com)*

## Horses that heal >

Lois Fritz suffered from PTSD and sought traditional therapy to help her readjust. The traditional therapy, however, turned out not to be as beneficial as the comfort she discovered from spending time around her horses. Recognizing that there was something special and therapeutic in that relationship, Lois set out to share that personal discovery with veterans who were struggling with the same often-debilitating diagnosis, while also seeking to take in horses that were slated for an untimely end. To realize her dream, Lois founded New Freedom Farm in 2016 on 13 acres in Buchanan, Virginia.

Today, the farm provides shelter to nineteen equines, many that would have been slaughtered had it not been for Lois's intervention. Visiting with Lois's horses in this peaceful setting minimizes the veterans' feelings of isolation and lack of trust and helps improve their communication and social skills. Since its inception, the farm has helped veterans of all ages from early twenties to mid-nineties, bringing them back from PTSD to a more normal fit into civilian life. New Freedom Farm is truly a place that gives veterans the help they so desperately need and deserve and provides them with hope for a brighter and more peaceful tomorrow.

A few years back, the Veterans Administration released a study showing the suicide rate among veterans between 1999 through 2010. Shockingly, it revealed that 22 veterans a day, or one every 65 minutes, was committing suicide! This figure does not begin to account for the veterans who are now homeless or addicted to the opioids prescribed to treat them. Sadly, the very people that fight for our country and our safety are often overlooked after their service is complete. If you know someone struggling with these issues, please look for community resources like New Freedom Farm or other locally available programs by calling 2-1-2 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255. 



## Good Work

By Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

**Executive Summary:**  
*"Built on faith and determination, New Freedom Farm is dedicated to helping those who have served our country along with their families."*



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## It's your air after all; pretty important >

### Executive Summary:

*Green Home Solutions has become identified as the go-to contractor for mold remediation, but the company's mission is simpler than that—improving indoor air quality.*

### By Tom Field

"My husband and I were found to have high levels of mold contamination... by our integrative medical doctor," says Yvonne Baugh. She called Green Home Solutions on her doctor's recommendation. Her problems started after years of a leaking basement during heavy rains.

"We were unaware that we were not getting rid of the mold in our house,"

Baugh continues. "Andy came to check our house and talk to us. He was very knowledgeable and thoroughly explained everything. We hired him to treat our house."

Andy Brady is the owner of Green Home Solutions based in Roanoke and serving a market area that encompasses southwestern Virginia. Baugh says the company also treated their camper parked beside the house, and though it also contained a leak, Andy had already suggested treatment because mold spores are easily carried between the two spaces.

"I know our house is mold free still, two years later," Baugh continues. "Before, I could not stay inside the basement because it irritated my eyes and allergies... especially during the summer."

Baugh says she and her husband have suffered various illnesses while living in the house, and both of them feel it's "a strong



**Yvonne and John Baugh**

possibility” that their health is linked to breathing high levels of mold spores.

The Baugh’s experience is not uncommon. While the experts continue to debate how adverse mold can be—some stating that it’s more or less an allergen; others claiming scientific evidence where inhaling mycotoxins causes serious health complications—Andy Brady has a rather commonsense response.

“I believe indoor air quality is extremely important to your health,” Brady begins, “but regardless what you think about it, why would anyone want mold actively growing inside your home?” He says people obviously sweep up dirt; there’s no good reason to live with mold.

Brady says “it’s like Sherlock Holmes” every time he goes into a house, and describes running Green Home Solutions as “interesting work.” His brother, Brian, started the franchise in the Roanoke area, and in 2015 Andy joined in. Both Bradys knew the founders and discovered the business was a good fit and at the right time for the market here.

Today, Green Home Solutions – Roanoke has two inspectors and six technicians, a fleet of trucks carrying the latest tech equipment; and they are looking to expand. In addition to residential homes, the business serves commercial buildings from libraries and museums to apartments and student housing.

Brady tells stories of environments his crew



**Andy Brady, owner of Green Home Solutions, in his office**

has treated—some rather horrendous. In one notable case, black mold (*Stachybotrys chartarum*) was absolutely destroying his customer’s belongings, her rugs, furniture, cabinets...

“And where the outside spore count was 18,000—inside it measured 1,021,360 per cubic meter. Any idea that that’s okay is absurd,” he says. For people who say mold is natural, Brady says that’s not the best argument. “Cyanide and asbestos are also natural.”

Real estate agents vary in their assessment of mold in a house they are listing or showing, but given the preference, none want it in the property. Real estate sales are a significant percentage of Green Home Solutions business.

Curtis Sheets of Wainwright & Co. Realtors ([www.lovetosellyourhome.com](http://www.lovetosellyourhome.com)) turns to Andy Brady to clean up any issues, because



**Mold—not pretty, in your property... or in your body**

he believes indoor air quality is extremely important.

"When people come into a home, if there is any smell... that one sense hitting your brain in a negative way... well everything snowballs from there," Sheets says.

"If there is any indication of moisture, it turns people off."

**Patricia and Curtis Sheets**



Sheets says as a realtor, he needs things done yesterday. "Andy does things quickly, efficiently, with integrity and honesty. We went in one place and I just knew it was mold there; but Andy checked it out and said it wasn't. I know people are happy with his service, timeliness, and manners. It's not a frustration when you're working with Green Home Solutions."

Most people want their property to be as clean as it can be. It's just nice to live in a clean environment. But Dr. Talty is concerned about the health effects from that environment.

"Mold exposure is very serious for everyone as it can cause illnesses from chronic sinusitis, allergies and post nasal drip to cancer," she says. Janine Talty, D.O., M.P.H. runs her clinical biomechanics and orthopedic medicine practice in Roanoke ([www.drjaninetalty.com](http://www.drjaninetalty.com)) and says for about a quarter of the population, mold is especially serious because their genetics don't allow the immune system to identify the spores as foreign.

"When mold spores are allowed to stay in the mucus membranes in their sinuses and nasal passages, they root into the tissue like plants and start pumping out mycotoxins that are neurotoxic," Talty says.

"This is what causes systemic symptoms like chronic fatigue, brain fog, whole body aches and pains, neuropathy, leaky gut, irritable bowel, autoimmune conditions, skin rashes, chemical sensitivity, nose



bleeds, fainting, muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis of the legs, hormone dysregulation, thyroid nodules and cancers.”

Dr. Talty says it is very common for people to see her who have been to multiple specialists without receiving a definitive diagnosis.

“There are clear findings in blood work covered by insurance that can diagnose CIRS (Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome) and can tell the doctor if the person is being exposed to mold currently and if they have been exposed to it in the past. That’s when I recommend Green Home Solutions to come out and do a visual inspection, test the space if necessary, and spray Oceanic enzyme that kills the mold spores and hyphae, treats the entire house and all of its contents, as everything that was in the space has then been exposed to mold spores and is now considered contaminated. Only then can we treat the patient for mold illness.”

Brady says “any small step we can do to improve air quality, we will do.”

That step doesn’t include bleach... how people used to believe they could scrub away mold.

“Using bleach to treat mold is like mowing your lawn to get rid of weeds,” Brady says. You’re not getting the root.

Green Home Solutions attacks the source of mold at the molecular level. The process generally involves five areas: a preliminary assessment; identification of the source or

moisture (and correction measures); surface/air quality testing if appropriate; elimination of the source of mold and mildew; and recommendation of third-party air quality testing after treatment to confirm eradication.

The company will treat everything from a car to a 50,000 square-foot building, Andy says. And all work is guaranteed for a full year. 

**Dr. Janine Talty, D.O., M.P.H.**





## On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*FRONT publisher shares  
a two-month preview of  
your business journal.*

### 2020 vision >

I'm letting the cat out of the bag. Just letting him peek out, that is—no extra revealing spoilers. We just thought you'd like to know some of the plans we have for 2020. The biggest changes you will see from Valley Business FRONT magazine since our October 2008 debut.

#### All New Advisory Board

We're about to introduce a new advisory board that's a little different from the past 135 monthly editions of FRONT. We're still sticking to a single board member representative from each industry; but you'll get to know each a little better throughout the year. And there is more collaboration as we develop our journal to serve our communities and region at large.

#### More Attention on Community Happenings

As it turns out, we discovered you like our FRONT'n About even more than we thought. That's the little pictorial section simply showcasing some of the activities that affect our community and regional business. We'll be bumping that up; so, if you're out-n-about or well-connected or networking, look for your picture (or those you hang with).

#### Refreshed Content

No worries on us changing any "formula" when it comes to profiling local businesses and the people behind them—that's our primary mission; we're not messing with that. But we are going to present new voices for our FRONTperspectives (expert columnists); and we have a renewed focus on individuals. Any report on an organization will be sure to introduce the individuals who serve as the catalyst for action.

#### New Personnel

You'll get to meet our new editor and patron support representative as well as new writers and correspondents. We always show each contributor in every edition of your business journal; but we'll make sure you know them better and have more direct contact with each.

#### New Design

Ok, kitty... back those paws up and tuck your pretty little furry head back in the bag. No November surprise or spoiler, yet. Let's just say you can look forward to a new FRONTier when it comes to our FRONTcover and formatting. I can at least tell you our new look will support the items listed above.

continued on Page 40

## CBD and hemp mania: we're just getting started >

Our recent cover story on the benefits of CBD (cannabidiol) products derived from the now-legal to-grow-in-Virginia hemp plant is a to-be-continued type of story. Since the FDA doesn't currently research or approve the benefits some associate with CBD products (like pain and stress relief) other anecdotal evidence and testimony must win over curious consumers. At least one storefront dedicated to CBD products will be open soon in the Roanoke Valley (see details elsewhere in this issue) while other retailers and websites are also selling the oils, creams, hemp seeds etc. There have been warnings that the fluid found in the capsules that some employ to "vape" CBD are not regulated well enough and upon analysis harmful trace elements like arsenic have been detected in the lab.

The Women in Hemp group founded by Debbie Custer at the Innovation Mill in Vinton is funding scholarships for women at Virginia Western Community College who are studying how to grow the crop. One thing that will help propel the hemp farming industry in Virginia forward is the availability of crop insurance – like the kind purchased for typical crops like corn – in case of drought or other conditions that can ruin a year's plantings.

5th district Republican Congressman Denver Riggleman recently announced that he worked on a bi-partisan level with other federal lawmakers from Virginia (noteworthy perhaps in the current political climate) to have Virginia included as one 13 states in a pilot program where crop insurance will be available to those that take the plunge and grow hemp. Once processed, the plant can be used for a variety of industrial applications – in addition to those medicinal benefits previously mentioned. Virginia also needs more processing facilities however closer to where hemp is grown; otherwise the slim profit margin is eaten away by transportation costs.

Here's one reason crop insurance is so important for hemp: if growing conditions aren't just "right" the THC levels for the plant that is marijuana's less potent cousin can exceed the .3 percent maximum level allowed by current law. That's a benchmark Riggleman calls "ridiculous," – he says it should be 5 percent – a whole field of hemp may have to be destroyed if it grows up too "hot." The 5th district that includes Franklin and parts of Bedford County also features the largest number of traditional tobacco farmers in the Commonwealth – converting them to grow industrial hemp is seen as a logical transition allowing those farmers to stay in business.

continued on Page 40



Gene Marrano

## There's something happening here

By Gene Marrano

**Executive Summary:**  
*A nascent industry still figuring out all the rules.*

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## Field / On Tap

from Page 38

That's a lot of new...and improved. We hope you like the changes; and in fact, by letting our cat peek out of the bag now, you still have time to submit ideas and input on what you'd like to see going in to 2020. Reach out to us using any of our contacts on Page 6.

Oh, and the title of my column here? I know it's one we're all going to see, over and over... Although it's expected, for the record, I threw it out there at the end of October 2019. Another reason we're talking about next year, now. We like to be in front. 

## Marrano / There's something

from Page 39

Will the growing acceptance of CBD products grease the skids for the eventual legalization of marijuana for recreational use in Virginia? (Its already been approved for prescription medicine applications and five legal dispensaries are expected to open statewide by the end of the year.) Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring has now come out in favor of marijuana legalization for recreational use – like a growing number of other states have already done. It's not worth prosecuting and locking up all those folks for a little weed says Herring. CBD? Legal pot? Is your head spinning yet? We may have something for that in a cannabidiol. Stay tuned. 



Is your head spinning yet?

## A great gift idea.

[ for yourself ♦ for others ♦ for your organization ]

Just in — from the publisher of Valley Business FRONT and your favorite etiquette columnist. A compilation of advice and instruction that matters now more than ever!

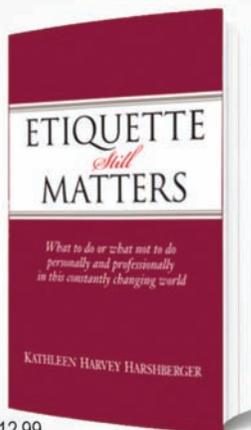
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## Books @ the FRONT >

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)

### *Dad's advice*

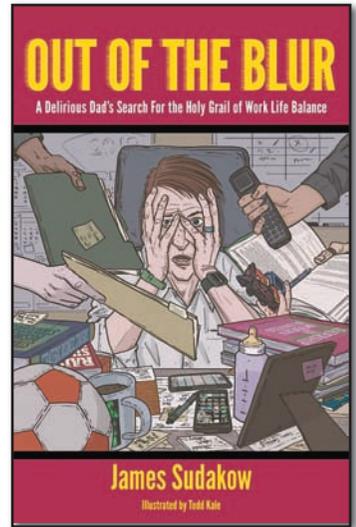
We all feel "superhero syndrome," the need to have as many things on our to-do, no matter how overwhelming it may be so that we seem busy. James Sudakow, irreverent corporate author of *Out of The Blur: A Delirious Dad's Search for the Holy Grail of Work-Life Balance* (Purple Squirrel Media; 2018), principal of a growing business-consulting practice, CH Consulting, and columnist for [Inc.com](http://Inc.com) is no stranger to the struggles of superhero syndrome. As a father and entrepreneur, he felt the need to have twenty things on his list instead of the most important three of the day in order to appear busy and in charge. He realized that this was negatively impacting his ability to parent and work.

In *Blur*, he shares productivity tips from an entrepreneur dad; how the cult of entrepreneurship can burn you out; steps to balance out stress while building your business; and how to kick the habit of being addicted to checking email, among other advice.

—Fabiana Melendez

### *Wise words from new guy*

Thomas Kemeny is not your typical advertising book author. To begin, he's a lot younger than most of them. He spent a portion of an internship living under his desk and his first big ad campaign was taken down by the city of San Francisco for smelling like cookies. He lost sleep over the next decade working at some of the best ad agencies in America, and he's likely still working late tonight.



There are a lot of great advertising books, but none that get down in the dirt with you quite like this one. In *Junior: Writing Your Way Ahead in Advertising* (Powerhouse; 2019), Kemeny shows how he got in, how he's stayed in, and how you can do it too. He breaks apart how to write fun, smart, and effective copy—everything from headlines to scripts to experiential activations—giving readers a lesson on a language we all thought we already knew.

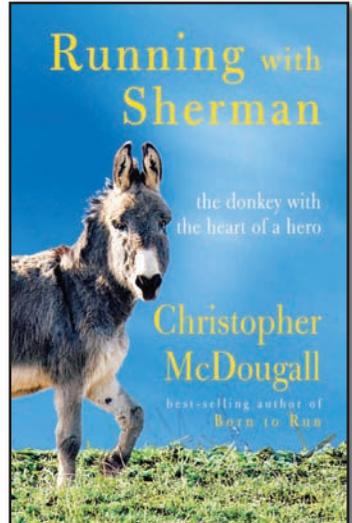
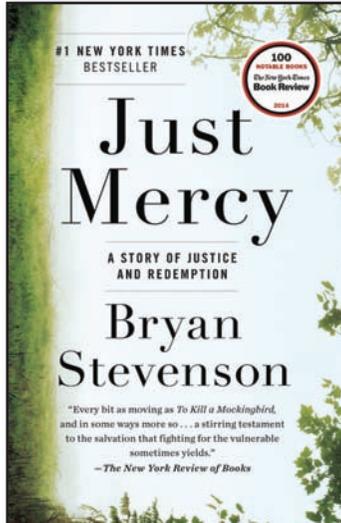
This book is not a retrospective from some retired or long-dead ad legend. It's a book that should be instantly useful for people starting out. A guide for the first few years at a place you'd actually want to work.

—Madison Morales

### *A tale of justice and redemption*

Spanning decades, *Just Mercy* (Penguin Random House 2016) by Bryan Stevenson tells the true story of how the criminal justice system has punished people erroneously in the past, and sometimes continues to do so. Author Bryan Stevenson is a hard-working black lawyer who began a non-profit in Alabama to defend death penalty cases. In this book, he depicts the economic and racial disparities in state court sentencing, giving examples of courts refusing to review new evidence or to grant new trials in light of new information. While the statistics are staggering—a majority of the incarcerated are black or Hispanic despite their percentage of the general population being much lower—it is the disturbing individual tales that make the book memorable.

Thomas Kemery wrote this book about advertising it's a great read while crying in the bathroom your first week a not so pocket-sized guide or at least a very large pocket guide to being a better writer to being a smart creative to not screwing everything up it's the book I wish I had when I started out a little but blue book that answers a lot of questions about writing your way ahead in advertising a creative writer's secret weapon for creating ads that succeed at not getting you fired a manual that has a lot of copywriting tips from someone who's worked at the kinds of places you'd want to work a book of words on words for word people and about writing with enthusiasm or whatever a likely incomplete writer's resource for anyone wanting to write in ways that people will actually read a collection of thoughtful phrases that other people haven't said yet that weren't that good at first but have been rewritten a bunch of times and are a lot better now an assortment of words that when read in sequence as intended form sentences about being a copywriter but could apply to other types of creative writing as well or just persuasive communication in general a crash course on advertising and copywriting and creative thinking for people who want to do that it's the only book you'll ever need to read about advertising even ok that was a bit of an overpromise but it's still a solid book that I recommend you read and not just because I'm the author though that does make it hard to stay impartial since it would financially benefit me if you bought it but it's a book you'll want to read if you'd like to keep that beginner's energy and grow into a creative who can hold their own and get that office across the hall with the view of the office in the corner it's a book about the type of thinking that gets you a job somewhere you can maintain a young spirit and proudly hold and hopefully soon lose the creative title that begins with JUNIOR.



Walter McMillan is the primary subject, and his sad story is woven throughout the book. In between, Stevenson discusses other defendants' cases as well as systemic issues such as incarcerated mothers, the role of mental illness, and juvenile detention. The author provides some history of the harsh sentencing for black persons, cites case law, and details the deplorable conditions in prisons. Yet the book never veers into legalese or histrionics. Stevenson is not only a strong attorney but an effective storyteller.

This important social justice issue is a travesty that all Americans should be shocked and concerned about, whether it is from fear of wrongful imprisonment as a poor or black person, or from simply realizing that even when the wrongfully accused and overly punished are set free they often never recover from the setbacks and society as a whole suffers. Highly touted in legal literature and soon to become a motion picture, "Just Mercy" is a compelling read that may have you rethinking your stance on crime and punishment.

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

## More tales (tails?) of running

Plenty of runners in these parts who also like to read about their passion have picked up the previous best-seller *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Super Athletes and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* by Christopher McDougall. In that 2009 book McDougall delved into what makes the long-distance runner tick, traveling to Mexico at one point to study an indigenous tribe that seemed to

have little problem running ultramarathons at the drop of a hat, also exploring the physiology of running along the way.

Now the veteran freelance journalist - an avid runner himself - is back with another new book that animal lovers will also embrace, *Running with Sherman: the donkey with the heart of a hero* (Knopf, 2019), wherein McDougall and his wife rescue a neglected animal near death's door, nursing it back to life. Then he finds out about a burro race in Leadville Colorado that brings gasping runners and their hooved companions up to 12,000 feet. Before long McDougall is training Sherman and two other donkeys for the race - drawing Sherman out of his shell with the help of a barnyard goat and his Amish neighbors no less.

Running with Sherman is also a tale about overcoming what seems to be an unending stream of obstacles - and rescuing a lost college student grasping for meaning in his life after he stops swimming competitively and falls into a deep depression. McDougall tells his tale in a trademark readable, somewhat saucy style that again has him delving into the benefits of long-distance running - mental and physical. It may have you lacing up those running shoes again once you put Running with Sherman down.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Fabiana Melendez** is a publicist in Austin, TX; **Madison Morales** is a publicist in Brooklyn, NY; **Jennifer Poff Cooper** is a FRONT correspondent; **Gene Marrano** is a news journalist and editor of FRONT.



## Workspace for big ideas >

**Radford University** is getting into the shared space business incubator business with **The Venture Lab**, which cut the ribbon in late September. Its described as “a space for would-be student entrepreneurs, from any discipline, to develop and test business concepts, to breathe life into them and construct a bridge that will connect developed ideas of value to the first sale of their product or service.” Students will have 24-hour access to the lab on the lower level of Kyle Hall and resources to technologies like 3-D printers.



## “New” company cuts the ribbon >

**Voyant Beauty** held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the official opening of their manufacturing facility on Plantation Road in Roanoke under the Voyant Beauty name. Formerly known locally as CEI, Voyant Beauty was formed following the acquisitions of Vee Pak, Aware Products and Cosmetic Essence Innovations. Voyant plants here

and elsewhere manufacture and private label a host of hair, skin care and other beauty products that are found at retail outlets everywhere. Around 130 full time and as many as several hundred temporary workers are on site at the Roanoke plant any day. A spokesperson says they are hiring locally and hope to grow 20 percent this year. City Council members help cut a ribbon to celebrate the new Voyant Beauty name, which took effect in June.



## Winning dish pays off big for chef >

A chef from Center Stage catering has been awarded a full scholarship to the Al Pollard Culinary Arts Program after winning a competition at the annual memorial gala named for the late restaurateur. **Daniel Lemons** (at left, pictured with Chef John Schopp at right, who also teaches in the culinary arts

program) received an \$8000 scholarship to cover the two-year Virginia Western Community College program. He’s particularly fond of barbecue. Lemons recently was named lead chef at the Blue Ridge Hotel in Roanoke. Al Pollard died suddenly at age 46 after helping to get eateries like Frankie Rowlands and 419 West off the ground.

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



## New trail connection >

A donated 230 acre parcel of land and other adjacent rights-of-way purchased with funds raised by Pathfinders for Greenways (over \$200,000) has resulted in a new 2-mile long mixed-use trail that connects the Hanging Rock Battlefield Trail near Route 311 to the Carvins Cove trail network. **Nancy Hinchee Pace** made the donation, land that had been in the Hinchee family for well over a century. Roanoke County celebrated with a ribbon cutting; a new kiosk features trail maps and information about the Hinchee family legacy. Greenways coordinator Liz Belcher (pictured at right on handmade park bench dedicated to the family) also named Nancy Hinchee Pace "Volunteer of the Year" at the annual Greenways Commission picnic.



## Art that really POPS >

The newest ticketed show at the **Taubman Museum's** special exhibition gallery is **POP Power**, featuring giants of the past like Warhol, Koons and Lichtenstein, and newer artists some younger visitors may liken to graphic novel creators. Portland, Oregon collector Jordan Schnitzer gave a preview min-tour just before the show opened in late September. He loaned 114 limited run prints and multiples for POP Power, which runs through early March. No worries – he has a 14,000-piece collection at home.



## It's not a big box store >

**Carilion Clinic** has signed a long-term lease with the owners of Tanglewood Mall and will turn the former JC Penney two-story big box store into outpatient services for **Carilion Children's**. Carilion president and CEO Nancy Agee called it an opportunity to put all of the services offered under one roof – with plenty of free parking another bonus. The \$30 million dollar renovation before move-in could take up to 24 months but Agee says they hope to shorten that timeline. The 150,000 square foot space also includes the former home of Miller Motte Technical College. John Abernathy with Blackwater Resources, the mall's owners, said "we can't wait to see the community of merchants who will grow up around Carilion's development." Roanoke County officials on hand for a groundbreaking (handled by children employing a sand box) says the health care-retail mix does fit with the county's Reimagine 419 plan for that corridor around Tanglewood Mall.



## The arts mean business >

Arts and Culture in the Roanoke Valley is big business that reaches into many different sectors and in fiscal year 2018 the non-profit arts industry generated 64 million dollars in local economic activity. That's what came to light in a sweeping survey conducted by "Americans for the Arts" and revealed in October. The arts supported 1774 local jobs and 6.5 million in state and local tax revenue according to the study. The Roanoke Cultural

Endowment is looking to raise 20 million dollars so it can then issue grants to local arts organizations. Shaleen Powell is executive director for the **Roanoke Cultural Endowment**, which commissioned that study; she says it should provide talking points when reaching out to potential donors. (Powell also plays violin and is a member of the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra)



## I, Robot(s) >

**Carilion Clinic** already was using robots for some surgical procedures; now its in-house pharmacy has a pair of programmable robots nicknamed Don and Doff that are employed to mix prescription fluids for patients at the hospital. No one lost their job – and the robot duo doesn't call in sick, take breaks or ask for pay raises. Don and Doff also take the human element out of the equation when it comes to precise measurements of the drugs to be compounded.



## Pop up catering venues >

Those passing through the Roanoke City market area one night in early October may have noticed what looked like a “pop up” restaurant with two Airstream trailers equipped as lounges, along with dining tables and food stations. It was actually the launch of the **Pink Flamingo Food Company**. Long-time caterer Jim Schaal says they will offer the onsite service in a variety of settings. The first venture for the Fincastle-based venture was an outdoor wedding rehearsal dinner.

## E-scooters arrive in Roanoke >

The first wave of those so-called “dockless” electric scooters have arrived in Roanoke courtesy of **Lime**. Riders must be 18 and older; Lime will launch a fleet that totals 400 available scooters. There are restrictions as to where they can be ridden – not on sidewalks or on greenways for example.

E-scooters have been the subject of some controversy elsewhere over safety and road congestion issues. At least one other company may follow Lime into the Roanoke market. “It is a fun way to get around ... low cost and emissions-free,” says Chris Robbins, the Virginia senior operations manager for Lime.



## Kudos for library system’s workforce development efforts >

The Urban Libraries Council chose the **Roanoke County Public Library** as one of 10 Top Innovators during the 2019 Innovations Celebration in Salt Lake City last month.

The annual Innovations award program recognizes leading practices from ULC’s member library systems across the U.S. and Canada. Roanoke County public libraries have initiated youth coding classes and embraced AI by becoming the first system in the nation to employ “Pepper,” a humanoid robot. Shari Henry, Director of Library Services, and Michael Hibben, Administrative Librarian at the South County Library, took home the hardware.





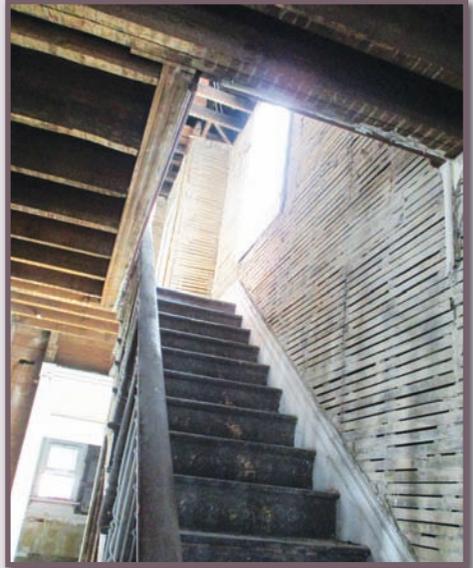
## Goodwill goes solar >

The **Goodwill Industries of the Valleys** thrift store on East Main Street in Salem has cut the ribbon on a rooftop solar panel array it claims will save more than \$400,000 in energy costs over the life of the project. Goodwill also estimates the power generated by the solar panels will eliminate 221 metric tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually.



## More housing options in Vinton >

Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton and Waukeshaw Development Inc celebrated the grand opening of the newly renovated historic and former William Byrd High School building in the Town of Vinton. The **"Billy Byrd"**, represents a \$12 million investment, bringing 82 new apartments to the community. Rents range between \$800-\$1000 monthly for 1-and-2-bedroom apartments said developer David Walker. Many of the school's features – like the gym floor – were kept intact in order to help qualify for historic tax credits that could pay for some of that investment.



## Restoration Housing takes on Southeast >

After rehabbing three historic houses badly in need of TLC in Old Southwest and Northwest Roanoke City, **Restoration Housing LLC** has now started renovating a blighted home in Southeast Roanoke near the Roanoke Rescue Mission. The 1893 Queen Anne Victorian style structure was once home to a mayor of the city. Restoration Housing executive director Isabell Thornton says they will invest about \$500,000 in the project, turning it into a 4-apartment home that will be rented to those transitioning out of homelessness. Historic tax credits in the newly minted Belmont District will help the non-profit to recoup some of the construction costs. There's lots of work to be done before that. "Our organization is excited for the chance to work in Southeast Roanoke," says Thornton. Roanoke contractor Square 1 will once again perform the extensive renovation work, scheduled for completion in mid-2020.



## New Venture: CBD retailer in southwest Roanoke County >

Not far removed from college, Ryan Schirmer and Laura Warren say they've done their homework and the research – now they are ready to open their own storefront by sometime in November. **Your CBD Store Roanoke** on Brambleton Avenue will carry a wide array of CBD products, which are derived from the hemp plant and claim to have health benefits – for pets as well. Its two doors down from Remini's Restaurant – which Schirmer's family owns. (tell us about your new venture: email [news@vbfront.com](mailto:news@vbfront.com))



## Legos on the move >

**Bricks 4 Kidz®** in Roanoke City has moved from its location at Towers Shopping Center to Oak Grove Plaza in southwest Roanoke County on Electric Road. Bricks 4 Kidz uses Lego bricks for its child enrichment programs; it also offers birthday parties, summer camps and other special activities. Owner Shelly Alley says the demographics – an elementary school right next door, adjacent neighborhoods with lots of young families – should work well for her 5-year-old franchise, one of about 600 in 40 countries. Alley even offers corporate team building Lego experiences called Bricks 4 Biz.



## Repurposing of former American Viscose plant continues with another new Carilion venture >

Carilion Clinic's newest rehab clinic will be geared towards athletes and "weekend warriors" when it opens this month just off 9th Street Southeast in the industrial park. **Carilion Sports Performance and Rehabilitation** will occupy almost 5000 square feet inside the existing Lab Sports Performance facility, which also features indoor playing fields that can be rented by soccer and lacrosse teams.



## No more beer on tap >

The **Ballast Point** tasting room and kitchen was a busy place on the last day it was open to the public, September 29. Botetourt County officials released a memo a few days later, thanking parent company Constellation Brands for investing in the Daleville Ballast Point beer production facility – which remains in operation – while hoping some suitable use can be found for the former tap room and restaurant space with spectacular views that’s now closed.



## Wayfinding sign campaign gets major boost >

With Carvins Cove as a backdrop – and a sign mockup as an example – the **Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia** announced a \$250,000 grant for the **Wayfinding Signage** initiative that has been championed by Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge for the past two years. \$50,000 goes to each of five localities (Roanoke, Botetourt and Franklin Counties; the cities of Roanoke and Salem) for the installation of street signs pointing visitors and even locals to outdoor and cultural amenities in the region. “It’s actually about branding the community,” said Botetourt County administrator Gary Larrowe. Each jurisdiction has pledged a \$25,000 match and the City of Roanoke is raising more money for signage that may show up on downtown streets soon. The total project cost ranges from 1.3 to over three million dollars if highway monument markers welcoming motorists to a new county/city is factored in. “This will further connect all of our jurisdictions,” said Roanoke County Board of Supervisors chairman Phil North at the announcement event. Signage in each locality will be topped with a unique finial, like one for Roanoke County depicting a hiker atop McAfee’s Knob.



## Dawgs are back in town >

The **Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs** have dropped the puck on their fourth Southern Professional Hockey League season. Team president Mickey Gray reports that the franchise has sold more season tickets than ever before. Now a full time Roanoke resident, head coach Dan Bremner says he is able to promote the valley's amenities as a tool to attract free agent players. He also spent part of his offseason adopting a shelter pet, Carl (pictured), even driving to the DC area to rescue the very chill pooch.



## Gran Fondo shows off Botetourt County >

A joint effort with Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge and the Muddy Squirrel outdoor adventure company attracted about 200 bicyclists for 30, 50- and 80-mile rides through Botetourt County backroads and smaller communities like Fincastle in mid-October. It was the second **Grand Fondo** – "Big Ride" in Italian – after its debut last year and is also meant to showcase local bicycling opportunities.

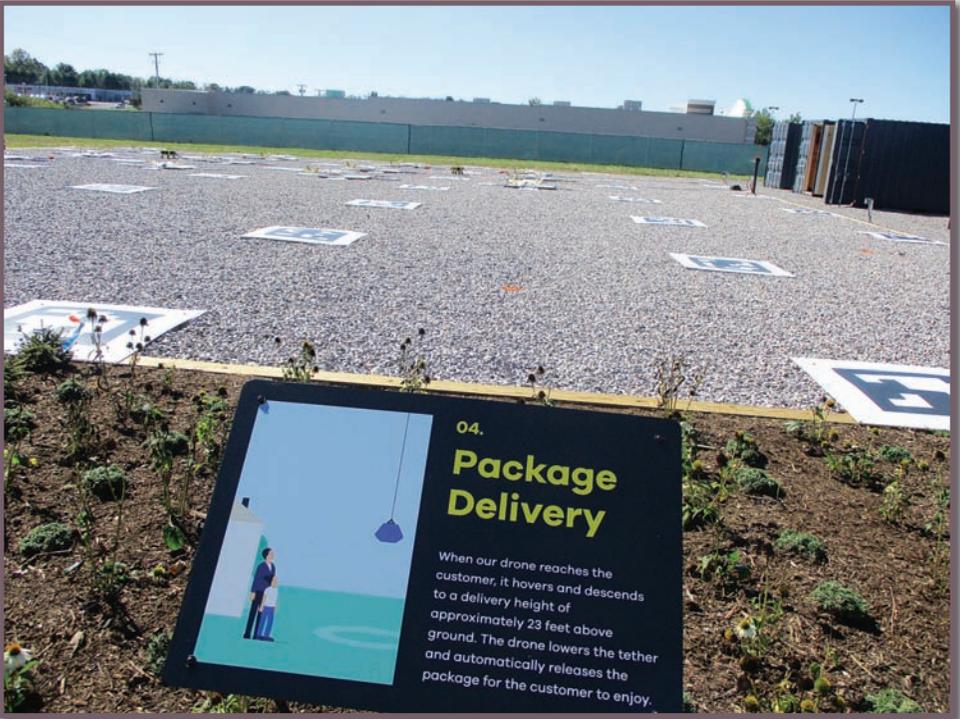


## Summit View welcomes Stik-Pak >

A second tenant has broken ground at the 550-acre Summit View Business Park in Franklin off U.S. 220 between Boones Mill and Rocky Mount. **Stik-Pak Solutions** offers custom packaging solutions for powdered materials that go into tubes. The 14-million-dollar investment includes a 50,000 square foot headquarters building scheduled to open

next year, with plans to expand to 100,000 sq. ft. down the road. The six-year plan includes a potential tripling of the workforce to almost 100 employees. The average salary at the new plant (the second Stik-Pak has built in the county since 2013) will be almost \$46,000. "We can't wait for it to get done," said Stik-Pak president Rick Sell at last month's groundbreaking.

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



## Wing(s) over the NRV >

The first-ever deliveries of commercial products anywhere in the US to homeowners who ordered via an app took place in mid-October, courtesy of a drone delivery trial in Christiansburg. **Wing** is a subsidiary of Google's parent company. Wing can now deliver items from Walgreens and Sugar Magnolia, along with many lighter Fed Ex packages, directly to homes that sign up for the service. In 2016 California-based Wing established the test delivery site (where they will warehouse a limited number of products to be sent via drones) in Christiansburg in order to work closely with the Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP) on bringing drone delivery to the U.S. Wing already provides that service in Australia and Finland. "We're proud of being one part of a big team," said Tech president Timothy Sands on the delivery test launch day, "[its an] historic moment."

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.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Dan Dowdy** is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services ([www.proofingprof.com](http://www.proofingprof.com)). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@vbFRONT.com]

**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 and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

**Lesa Hanlin**, Ed.D. is the executive director of Roanoke Regional Initiatives and works for Outreach & International Affairs at Virginia Tech. [lesa@vt.edu]

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]

**Gene Marrano** is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of

Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy. [gmarrano@cox.net]

**Denise Allen Membreño** writes for print and broadcast. Her company New Moon Creative Media, LLC, is a full service video production company offering multi-camera live streaming. They produce Roots2Rock, a live music show which streams from craft breweries and listening rooms. [denise@newmooncreativemedia.com]

**Maggie Rotanz and Spencer Pugh** were born and raised in Salem, VA. Maggie graduated from Ohio University with a degree in Photojournalism in 2016 and Spencer graduated from Virginia Tech in 2015 with a degree in Communication Studies. Upon exploring similar career paths, Maggie and Spencer decided to team up to start Harvest Digital Marketing to help local businesses turn online followers into paying and loyal customers. [hello@harvestdigitalmarketing.co]

**Anne Sampson** is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 15 years. Her work highlights the sights of people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsona7@gmail.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]

**Nicholas Vaassen** is a graphic designer with 18 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]

**Kaitlyn Van Buskirk** is a grants associate with Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia. Her experience includes development, planned giving, philanthropy, and fundraising roles with nonprofits and community service organizations, and she has a BA from Sweet Briar College focused in business, management, marketing, and related support services. [kaitlyn@cfwesternva.org]

““

No, it's just the... Family business. It just happens to have golden arches out front. — Page 28

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Using bleach to treat mold is like mowing your lawn to get rid of weeds. — Page 37

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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Cunningham

**Stephanie Cunningham** has been promoted to Associate Branch Manager, for the HomeTrust Bank branch on South Jefferson Street in Roanoke. Cunningham launched her banking career twelve years ago with SunTrust Bank. She joined HomeTrust Bank Roanoke as Sales and Service Associate in 2016.

**Pamela "Pam" L. Harris** has been promoted to Bank Secrecy Act and Fraud Officer. She has been in banking for sixteen years, all with Bank of Botetourt. She will be responsible for monitoring, investigating and reporting any



Harris

known or suspected fraud activity as well as violations of BSA laws, rules or regulations involving the Bank and its customers. She is located at the Bank's Buchanan Care Center Office.



Harris

**Ginny M. Hicks** has been promoted to Assistant Market Manager and will be located at the Buchanan Office. Ginny recently celebrated eight years with Bank of Botetourt. She began her banking career at the Bank as a floating teller and was

most recently a branch manager.



Pledge

**Stilissa "Lisa" D. Pledge** has been promoted to Assistant Vice President – Loan Documentation and Compliance Manager and CRA Officer for the Bank. She is located at the Bank's Troutville Loan Services Center. She has been in the industry for over twenty-five years, twelve of them with Bank of Botetourt.



Robins

**Paula E. Robins** has been promoted to

Branch Manager for the Bank's Bonsack Office. She has over thirty-seven years of retail banking experience and has been the branch manager and community development officer at the Bank's Peters Creek Office since it acquired the location.



Stultz

**Robin Z. Stultz** has been promoted to Branch Manager at the Bank's Peters Creek Office. She has been in the banking industry for over twenty-three years and previously worked at First Union/Wachovia and Bank of America/HomeTrust in various positions.

**Sandra Lucas** has joined the mortgage team at First Bank & Trust Company, in Blacksburg. Lucas has



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27 years of mortgage experience, most recently with Union Bank. In her role at First Bank & Trust Company, she will assist customers with the mortgage process.

**Christine Smith**, financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial in Roanoke and New River Valley, has been named a recipient of the 2019 Five Star Wealth Manager award by Five Star Professional, a third party research firm.

## LEGAL FRONT



**Thompson**

Spilman Thomas & Battle has announced that **Lori D. Thompson** has joined the firm as a partner. Thompson regularly represents

businesses in state and federal courts and in mediation proceedings in matters involving breach of contract, business disputes, computer/technology law, employment disputes, real estate disputes, taxation, and various collection matters. Prior to joining Spilman, Thompson was the leader of LeClairRyan's Roanoke office.

## EDUCATION FRONT

**Joseph J. Simpson** has been appointed collegiate assistant professor in the Department of Management in the Pamplin College of Business and director of Virginia Tech's Integrated Security Education and



**Simpson**

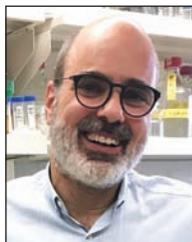
Research Center (ISERC). The former U.S. Army Ranger (he served in Iraq and Afghanistan) will provide leadership for the center's activities in education, research, and outreach to industry and other organizations.



**Ickes**

**Andrew Ickes**, associate

director of development for leadership gifts at Virginia Tech, joined the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC as its director of development. Ickes will work closely with other members of the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute's advancement team.



**LaMantia**

A scientist known for research in revealing the genetic clockwork of complex developmental disorders in children will join Virginia Tech as a professor at the Fralin Biomedical Research

# FREE CHECKING



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# Career FRONT

Institute at VTC in Roane. **Anthony-Samuel LaMantia** was the Lieberman Professor of Neuroscience at George Washington University (GWU) and director of the GWU Institute for Neuroscience.



Hammer

The Virginia Tech College of Science has named **Patricia Hammer** as its assistant dean for administration and analytics, a new role that will provide leadership for critical administrative and analytics efforts, including planning for key college infrastructure and long-range financial and operational forecasting. Previously Hammer had been with Hollins University/College for almost three decades.

Roanoke College has hired **Patricia Lynn** as Campus Recreation's director of Outdoor Adventures. Lynn will work to grow the program in outdoor leadership, education and recreation. Her background in outdoor adventures began as an undergraduate at Ohio State University, where she worked in the outdoor program leading trips around the country.



Conner

Radford University has appointed **Teresa Ann Conner**, PT, Ph.D., MBA to serve in the position of Associate Provost for Health Sciences effective December 2. Conner has 20 years of experience in higher education as a professor and academic leader.



Hammer

**Nathaniel L. "NL" Bishop** has been named senior associate dean for diversity, inclusion, and student vitality at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Bishop most recently served as president of Jefferson College of Health Sciences, prior to its integration with Radford University this summer. In his role as president, he also served as chair of the Department of Interprofessionalism for the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.



Finley

Executive Director. Finley replaces Vicki Gardner, who stepped down in July after nearly 17 years at the helm of the 750-member organization. Finley had been Communications Manager for defense contractor BAE Systems in Radford, where he was also a director for the Radford Chamber of Commerce. He's no stranger to the Lake area either, having worked for the Willard Companies previously – and having served on the SML Chamber Board.

## NON-PROFIT FRONT

The Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce has named **Christopher Finley** as its new

## OTHER FRONTS

Blue Ridge PBS has appointed **William Anderson** as President and CEO, after he had



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**Anderson**

served in an interim role since James Baum retired several months ago. Anderson has served in senior management and leadership roles at Blue Ridge PBS since 2008. Anderson says the change will usher in fresh and exciting local productions and the creation of a new educational department

centered in innovative media digital technology. “You will begin seeing more changes in the very near future. As I like to say, this is not your grand-father’s PBS, but we’re still your grandfather’s PBS. Tradition and innovation live together at Blue Ridge PBS.”

The Salem Red Sox, under Fenway Sports Management has promoted **Allen Lawrence** to General Manager. Allen served as the interim general manager during the 2019 season. He grew up in the Roanoke Valley, graduated



**Lawrence**

from North Cross High School in 1996, and Elon University in 200. He first worked for the Salem ball club as a game day employee during his time as a high school and college student, returning as an intern, and since then he has worked in multiple positions with the club for nearly twenty years, including

food and beverage director, director of stadium operations, vice president of sales, and assistant general manager.

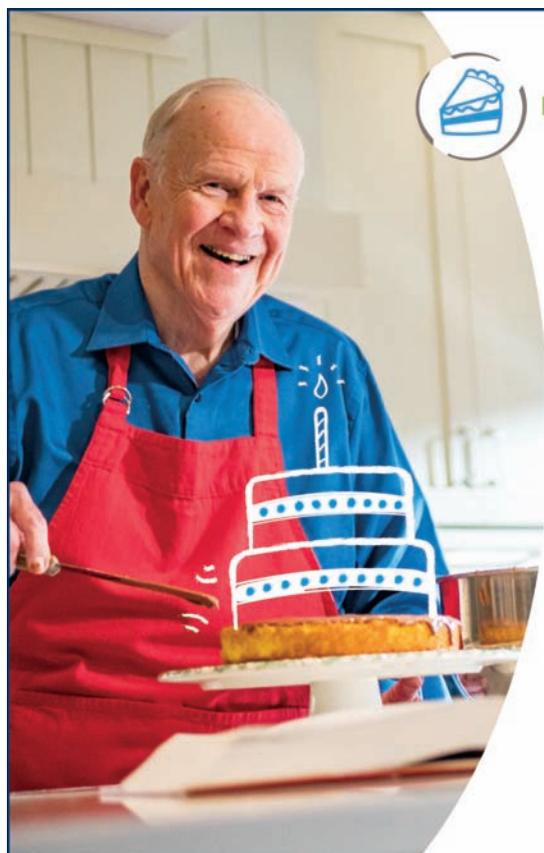
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# FRONT Notes

## *Train's a coming – eventually*

Local lawmakers and state transportation officials huddled early last month to talk about bringing passenger rail service to Christiansburg, where a site near the aquatics center has already been identified for an **Amtrak** station. 9th District Congressman Morgan Griffith and New River Valley delegates voiced their support for an extension of Amtrak service from Roanoke to the NRV. Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine was the keynote speaker. “The Northam administration ... wants nothing more than for you all to get a passenger rail service anchored in this region,” said Valentine. A group called New River Valley (NRV) 2020 has been pushing hard for passenger rail service for the past several years. A feasibility study funded by the state legislature last year is stalled because the track owners – Norfolk Southern – has not

made it a priority. “We want a win-win for both,” assured Valentine.

## *Gazebo re-do*

Supporters of the **Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College** are looking to raise \$70,000 to replace the weathered gazebo in the garden spot along Colonial Avenue. The gazebo has been the site of numerous weddings and musical performances over the years. An anonymous family has pledged a \$25,000 matching grant to help jump start the fundraising project, which includes the ability to purchase engraved paves that start at \$150.

## *More Hippy Room*

In business since 1999 at Towers Shopping Center in Roanoke, **A Little Bit Hippy** has now branched out to a second location at Valley View Mall. Owner Heidi Bundy's new location can be found on the upper floor of the mall,

with the same fuzzy sweaters, crossbody bags, Grateful Dead merchandise, incense etc. that A Little Bit Hippy is well known for.

## *Chamber Small Business Awards*

The Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center has named **Mac and Bob's Restaurant** as its 2019 Small Business of the Year. The announcement was made at the 33rd Small Business Awards event last month. Other winners by category:

Small Business Veteran of the Year: Leslie and Chris Mason, **Valley Cryotherapy**  
Business-to-Business Services: **B2C Enterprises** (a Valley Business Front contributor)  
Business-to-Consumer Services: **Mac and Bob's Restaurant**  
Health & Wellness: **Virginia Autism & Behavior Consulting**  
Tourism & Hospitality: **Tour Roanoke**  
Wholesale/Retail:

**Fleet Feet Roanoke**  
Best New Small Business: **Total You Health**

Micro Small Business: **Arara Language Solutions**  
Legacy Award (in business for 50+ years): **Medeco Security Locks**  
Not-for-Profit Organization of the Year: **Bradley Free Clinic**

## *Props for Oakey's*

**Oakey's Funeral Service** in Roanoke has been honored by the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) with the 2019 Pursuit of Excellence Award. Only 160 firms from around the world received this recognition, placing Oakey's among an elite group of funeral service providers. Oakey's was cited for community outreach programs, and the training/certification it provides funeral directors.

## *Kendig Winners*

**Susan Jennings, Jimmy Ray Ward** and

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**ENTRÉ**

**The Studio School** have been recognized with the 2019 Perry F. Kendig Arts and Culture Awards. Jennings is the recently retired Arts and Culture Coordinator for the City of Roanoke; Ward is a theater set designer and teaches at Radford University; The Studio School has offered arts education classes in Roanoke for almost 30 years. Hollins University and Roanoke College co-sponsor the annual awards, named for a former President of Roanoke College who was also an avid support of the arts.

#### *Artist gets paid retreat*

**Laura Vahlberg**, whose work can be seen at the Market Gallery in downtown Roanoke, has been awarded a fellowship by the Virginia Center for Creative Arts in Amherst. Vahlberg will join about two dozen other fellows for a residency that ranges

from two weeks to two months. Each artist receives a private bedroom, a studio and three meals a day. VCCA fellowships are awarded through a competitive peer review process.

#### *Get out the checkbook*

**Virginia Tech** has announced Boundless Impact: The Campaign for Virginia Tech, which has a goal of raising an eye-popping 1.5 billion dollars to “fuel excellence across all university programs and drive forward major strategic priorities,” according to a Tech news release. At an event to announce the campaign school president Dr. Timothy Sands called it “the kind of challenge that brings out the best in the Virginia Tech Community.” Its meant to support changes in Blacksburg, at the Roanoke Health Sciences and Technology campus and at the

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Innovation Campus taking shape in northern Virginia.

#### *Black box is now green*

The smaller, more intimate **Waldron Stage at Mill Mountain Theatre** is now green, thanks to a new upgrade. “[Its now] an environmentally responsible demonstration project,” says Producing Artistic Director, Ginger Poole. “We’ve updated all of our sound and lighting infrastructure, reupholstered our current seating, and used recycled synthetic materials for the curtains, all so that we can continue lowering

our carbon footprint as an organization.”

#### *Fincastle business expanding*

**The Woodsdale Group** that opened the Fincastle Café earlier this year has now purchased The Pie Shoppe in downtown Fincastle and is remodeling the storefront as their business holdings expand. Those “pies” are not fruit pies – but chicken and a variety of other ingredients, including mushrooms, fajita and cordon bleu recipes.

*Compiled by Gene Marrano*

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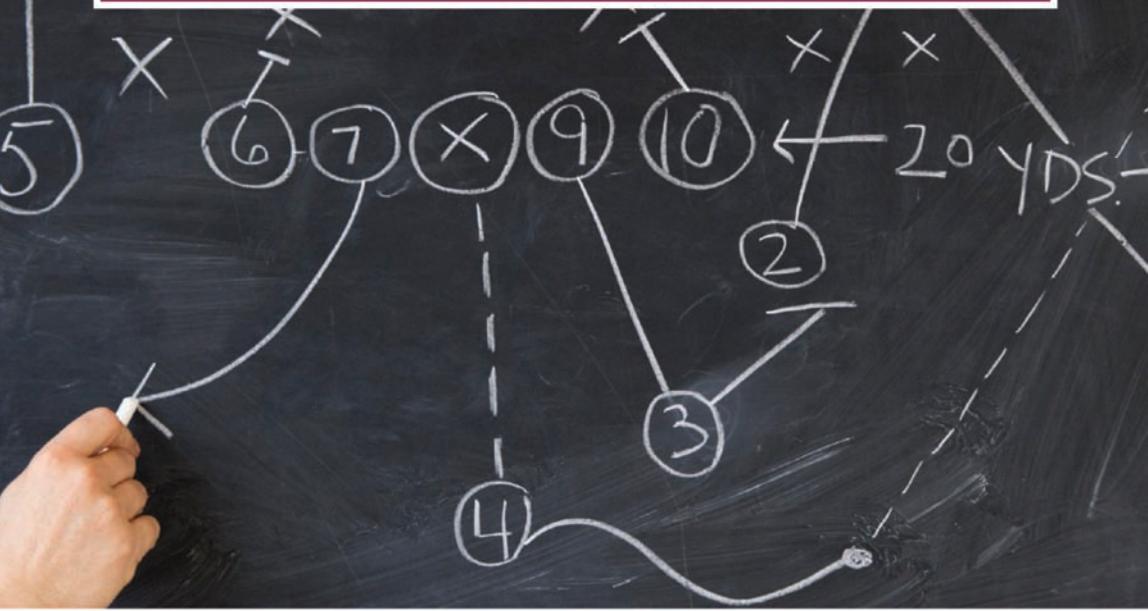
““”  
Shifting your thinking about money starts with baby steps. — Page 21

““”  
Surely, there is some way to offset the constant temptation to indulge in Karen's signature peanut butter chocolate chip cookies. — Page 32

““”  
Social media is no longer a fun bonus to have. — Page 26

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