

# Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 139  
APRIL 2020

Virginia Tech  
Carilion Studies

LewisGale's Lance Jones

Beacon HCI Patient Billing

Wine Gourmet's  
Brian Powell

Titan Trains

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## Timely Biomedical Research

Michael Friedlander  
Fralin Biomedical  
Research Institute



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# WELCOME TO THE FRONT

We started planning this month's issue with a focus on health research and healthcare months before the novel coronavirus hit the American shores. The Fralin Biomedical Research Institute highlighted in the cover story is very involved with the study of infectious diseases – and is about to double in size. On the flip side we have a story about those hospital bills that are often not correct. And we'll meet LewisGale CEO Lance Jones. Stay well – and wash your hands often!

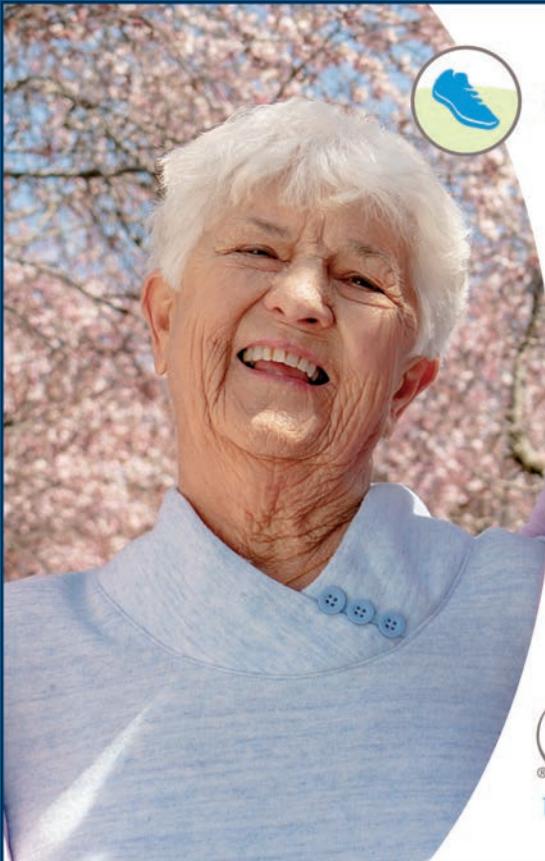


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**Gene Marrano**  
Editor

“”  
He made the wine... and  
also a career decision. — Page 37



**Martha Sullivan** | PNEUMONIA RECOVERY

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# Pushing the Boundaries

by Gene Marrano



“Was it worth it to cut corners...? I don’t think so. — Page 38

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Valley Business FRONT has organized an Advisory Board comprised of a selective group of diverse business professionals who support our mission and have an interest in how our business journal best serves our local communities and region. As a sounding board throughout their term, board members have been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. 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. 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 Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year. 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 contacting us with 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.

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“”  
Would you rather have a hundred dollars today or a thousand dollars in three weeks?

— Page 17

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

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# Pushing the Boundaries

By Gene Marrano

---

**Michael Friedlander and hundreds of associates at the decade-old research institute on the VTC campus in Roanoke are about to ramp things up a notch with a new building and “potential greatness.”**

*Background:* Michael Friedlander, Ph.D., Executive Director, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion; Vice President for Health Sciences and Technology, Virginia Tech; Senior Dean for Research, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine; Professor of Biological Sciences, College of Science, Virginia Tech; Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics, College of Engineering, Virginia Tech and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Sitting down for the half hour allotted by Dr. Michael Friedlander for an interview is like watching the Big Bang Theory in action, as he takes off rapid-fire on his vision for the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute (FBRI) he oversees on the Virginia Tech Carilion campus in Roanoke, a facility that will double in size with the opening of a new wing. About 400 research associates, technicians, graduate/undergraduate students, “a smattering of high school students,” and new state of the art equipment (\$50 million or more in all)

are scheduled to start arriving in May with a grand opening in fall 2020.

Twenty-five or more new teams of researchers specializing in cardiovascular research, obesity and metabolism, body-device interfaces, cancer, etc., are ticketed for the 139,000 square foot addition. The \$90 million facility cost was shared about equally with state funding. \$21 million came from Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic. Behavioral research will be a core focus.

A green roof, classrooms, wet and dry lab space, offices, and an LINAC particle accelerator to help treat pets with cancer will be featured in the new building, connected by an overhead breezeway to the existing research institute/medical school.

“What can benefit from [a boost] to the next level?” is the question Friedlander says was asked about what research projects the new wing should focus on, “and what are we not doing that we need to do?” Brain research and neuroscience will be a focus as well. Recruiting has been underway for months.

A \$50 million dollar gift from Roanoke businessman and philanthropist Heywood Fralin led to the name change from the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute at Riverside 2, a

““”

What are we  
not doing that  
we need to do?

— Michael Friedlander

New FBRI wing





building shared with the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. “We are transforming the institute and attracting top talent that will make the next decade even more significant,” said Virginia Tech president Dr. Timothy Sands at the FBRI addition 2017 groundbreaking.

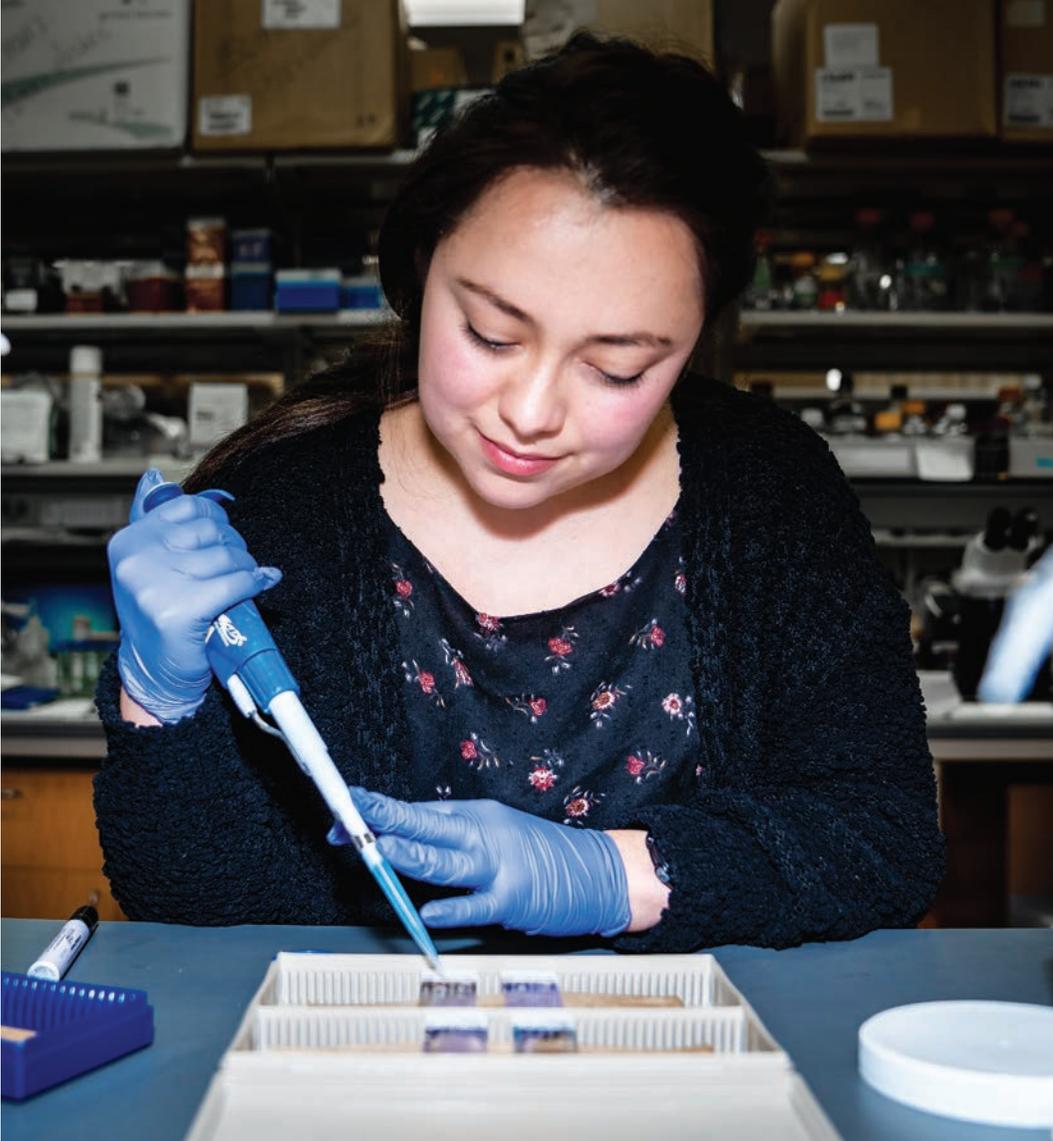
Friedlander says the study of materials implanted in the body to replace diseased organs, and the interface between skin, brains etc. “and the electronic digital world,” are on the FBRI agenda - “how we transmit information.” Then there is infectious

disease and immunology – and tie-ins to cancer, harnessing the body’s own immune system to fight cancer more effectively. “It’s really exciting.”

## Working together is the plan

It’s also very important, says Friedlander “to work together in an integrated way,” to take advantage of synergy involving the FBRI, the School of Medicine, Carilion Clinic and even the Carilion cancer center still





several years away on a parcel just down the block. “More bang for the buck,” he adds. The Virginia Tech Cancer Alliance (which he created) is already being written up in trade journals. It’s all about the integrating cancer research projects ongoing at various Tech-related campuses, so no one is reinventing the wheel.

The term cancer “center” should not be thrown around lightly, but that’s what he envisions establishing with all of the relevant players involved, “becoming competitive with the big comprehensive cancer centers. It takes a lot on the research side and the clinical side. There’s a great opportunity for these initiatives to come together in an integrated way.”

That includes the Virginia Tech Animal Cancer Care & Research Center (Friedlander was still learning the new name when we met), located in the new FBRI wing,

““”

It’s really  
exciting.

— Michael Friedlander



Erin Williams/Virginia Tech

Children's National Hospital and Virginia Tech announce a formal partnership that will include the construction of a 12,000-square foot Virginia Tech biomedical research facility within the new Children's National Research & Innovation Campus in Washington, D.C. Pictured: Michael Friedlander and Children's National CEO Kurt Newman at left.

where what is learned from the dogs and cats treated for cancer there will also be incorporated into research protocols.

Still more: a recently announced alliance with the Children's National Medical Center in Washington DC, which is building its own new research facility. Virginia Tech was invited to come aboard as a partner, notes Friedlander. The first order of business will be building a joint pediatric cancer research center. "We'll hire new faculty together. We really need to get the most bang for the buck," by aligning all of these initiatives Friedlander stresses again, "into a single entity. I think we're on the threshold of potential greatness."

## Open For business

The FBRI has spawned several spinoffs to date, like BEAM Diagnostics Inc. (see the separate story on that), which is developing a diagnostic tool for addiction treatment. FBRI's Dr. Rob Gourdie - a "serial entrepreneur," according to Friedlander, has created at least three commercial spinoffs from research; the latest - Tiny Cargo Co. - concerns the use of nanoparticles or exosomes in milk - yes, milk - that can deliver drug molecules more efficiently to prevent further damage after someone has had a heart attack.

Another Gourdie venture involves cancer therapeutics. Small grants and private investors

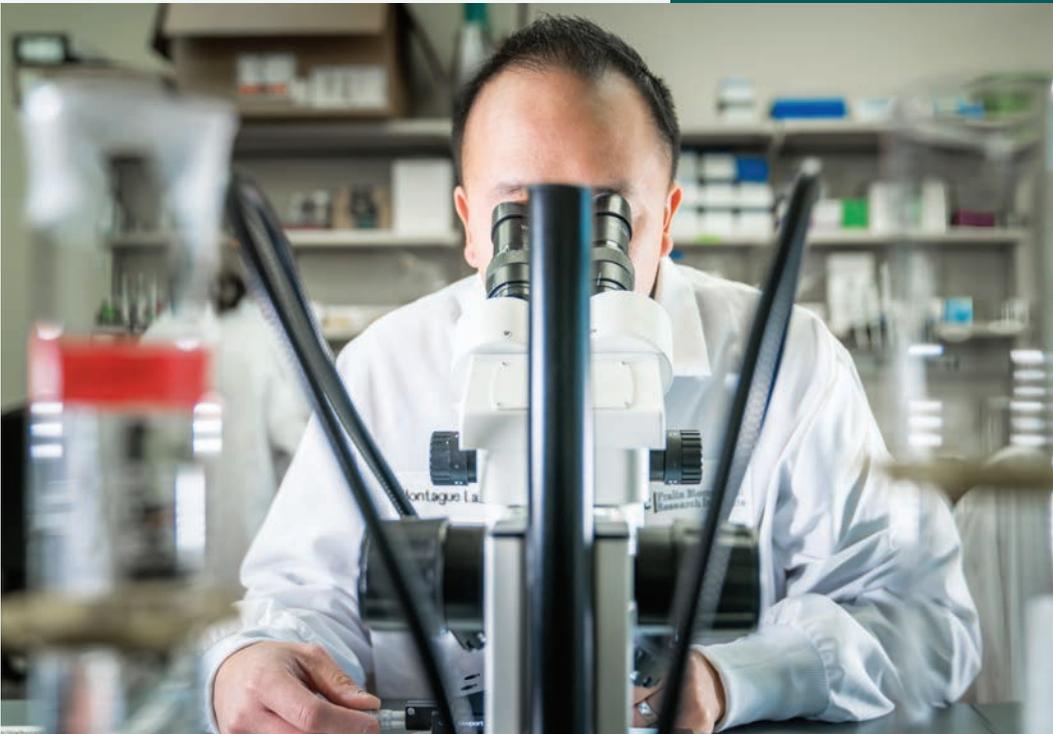
are boosting these efforts. One he created before coming to the FBRI focused on better wound treatment has already drawn \$60 million or more of investment capital according to Friedlander. He says it's a "fine line – we are first and foremost an academic institution," but FBRI researchers are also encouraged to think about how their big ideas translate to the real world as a business venture. "They know that's going to change people's lives."

Friedlander also sees the FBRI and the VTC Medical School next door becoming even more of an economic engine in the future; "dollars in dollars out," for starters. He explained that to an audience last fall at the South County Library where he envisioned a mix-use development corridor stretching all the way from the VTC campus on South Jefferson Street to the Tanglewood Mall area along Route 419 that Roanoke County seeks to "Reimagine," with students, faculty and researchers driving the demand for housing and upscale retailers. As the Institute's reputation grows, more and bigger grants he says have become available as well. "Those grant dollars turn into jobs."

Case in point: he says the FBRI's success rate in securing grants from the National Institutes of Health is 3-4 times the national average. "Attracting people – the same thing [is occurring]." A \$13 million grant awarded to research pediatric stroke will help develop recovery methods. Creating their own business incubator in Roanoke based on FBRI studies "is very much something we would like to do," and Friedlander has been huddling with Virginia Tech about that. "The startup is just around the corner."

“ ”  
We're on  
the threshold  
of potential  
greatness.

— Michael Friedlander







Friedlander himself started Precision Neuroscience, with partners in the Nordic countries of Europe—dating to his time at the University of Alabama and at Baylor. It focuses on the “biggest disorders that affect the brain,” and has led to a series of Precision Neuroscience conferences in Roanoke and in Oslo, Norway. It returns to Roanoke next month.

In places like Denmark and Sweden, he says the tendency to record more family medical history and a willingness to take part in research “is a great strength,” when it comes to neuroscience research. “We’re hoping to launch something even larger [out of the third conference] that we’ll be talking about.”

With many small spinoffs dying early on the vine, Friedlander says they have to create dozens or maybe even hundreds “to have an ecosystem – but we’re going to do that because we’re putting in place the pieces.” Partnerships with existing industries also help move research to the private sector. “They’re willing to make us a development site – some of the biggest companies in the world.” Some of those worldwide companies have even placed employees on the FBRI campus.

“We’re really growing on strengths we have, but pushing the boundaries,” says Dr. Michael Friedlander about what lies ahead for the soon-to-be-enlarged Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion. As for the many different hats he wears (see background again), “it feels right and I’m enjoying it.” Just try to keep up with him if you can. 

“  
”  
We’re  
growing...  
but pushing  
the boundaries.

— Michael Friedlander



Dr. Sarah Snider and Dr. Warren Bickel

# The "A TEAM" takes research to real world

By Gene Marrano

---

**Lab studies at Fralin Biomedical Research Institute can become diagnostic tools in a physician's office; here's one example.**

Dr. Warren Bickel wears a lot of hats: Virginia Tech Carilion Behavioral Health Research Professor, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC (FBRI); Director, Addiction Recovery Research Center; Co-Director, Center for Transformative Research on Health Behaviors; Professor of Psychology, College of Science, Virginia Tech and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

Bickel arrived at what is now the FBRI in 2011. Now that his credentials are out of the way, let's look how research on addiction—from drug and alcohol abuse, to weight gain – and why people often relapse, even after their health has been damaged, might have commercial, more widespread applications.

Those focused on immediate outcomes "where they discount the future," often relapse, says Bickel, while those who can envision longer-term scenarios are more likely to avoid falling into the same abusive and addictive behaviors.

"It opens up the door to the future for them," says Bickel of those prompted to look ahead. It also means they value their "substance" less, whether it's drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, compulsive sex, etc.

Bickel and his research team found that just by texting subjects about future events they were looking forward to (birthday celebrations, anniversaries, etc.) they drank less. It's about "expanding their temporal view," notes Bickel, referring to that lobe of the brain. One method he's explored – paying subjects a small amount of cash to not drink or take drugs over the next few days.

It worked, but he admits some found it "abhorrent" to pay people not to continue their abusive behaviors. That was just a proposed first step he adds, to weaning people from addiction, which he calls "an economic development issue," as well as a health concern – i.e., companies that can't hire enough employees because they cannot pass drug tests.

Bickel and several fellow researchers just received a \$3.45 million NIH grant to study alcohol use disorder – in part by setting up a faux bar at the Institute. Subjects will drink at the “bar” (within safe limits, says Bickel) and then have their brains scanned, looking for clues on how people make decisions about drinking.

Bickel has been involved in several spinoffs; one created some years ago was based online to help treat drug dependent people. Now a company in Boston has licensed that concept and turned it into an app that was FDA-approved (the first ever) to treat opiate-dependent subjects.

Dr. Sarah Snider, a postdoctoral associate in Warren Bickel's laboratory, is helping to take that concept to the next level with BEAM Diagnostics Inc. Behavioral Economics Advanced Medical diagnostics is all about translating its addiction research “into the hands of a physician.” Subjects with severe addictions “have a short temporal window,” which can be predictive of how likely they are to relapse for example – and treatment success.

Finding an app-based tool to help treating physicians identify that risk – without asking invasive, stigmatizing questions – is the goal. Snider says it started off as a tool for those abusing alcohol but is expanding to cover opioid abuse and compulsive overeating. Screening would be done on an iPad at the physician's clinic by patients answering questions in under four minutes. Queries like “would you rather have a hundred dollars today or a thousand dollars in three weeks?” says Snider. “We see how they value the future,” adds Bickel.

Grant funding sources including the NIH (National Institutes of Health), Virginia Tech, and Carilion are being used to validate the app-based tool now, described as a beta prototype by Snider. Data from Carilion patients “next door” is being used to validate the algorithms underlying the app. FDA approval will most likely be sought for commercial viability says Snider.

Bickel calls the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute a “unique setting” and credits executive director Michael Friedlander with encouraging projects such as BEAM, that can be translated and used beyond the walls of the VTC campus by those on the front line working to heal people. The interaction with Carilion Clinic physicians on what tools they need has been invaluable says Bickel. “When I got here, I felt like I was asked to become a member of the A Team. In fact, that is the case. They're all really remarkable scientists.”

New tools that will become available as the addition to the FBRI is opened over the next few months (like a device that can measure every calorie a person burns) will help augment the research and collaboration with Carilion partners as well: “it's a very synergistic time,” Bickel concludes.

““”

When I got here, I felt like I was asked to become a member of the A Team. In fact, that is the case.

— Warren Bickel



LewisGale Robotics Surgery team

Submitted

# A LONG JOURNEY

By Gene Marrano

**LewisGale's Lance Jones moved from Down Under to Virginia's Blue Ridge to assume the executive role and make a mark.**

Background: Lance Jones came to LewisGale in Salem as CEO & Market President in December 2018, after serving as CEO for parent company HCA Healthcare's Stone Springs Hospital Center in Northern Virginia. The New Zealand native joined HCA in 2013 and has over 25 years in the healthcare business. After earning two bachelor's degrees in New Zealand, Jones completed a Master's in Healthcare Administration at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. He also serves on the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce Board and is with the Economic Development Commission.

Jones jokes that what he knew about America before emigrating here was shaped by several TV shows that made their way Down Under – Beverly Hills 90210 and The Simpsons – but he seems to have survived that experience. As market president he oversees LewisGale Medical Center in



Lance Jones-LewisGale

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Dr James Leipzig with surgical spine robot

Salem, several other hospitals in southwestern Virginia (Montgomery, Alleghany and Pulaski), and LewisGale physician clinics (about 2500 associates in all he says).

Several new clinics closer to patients in Floyd and Covington have opened recently. HCA Healthcare has upwards of 190 hospitals in the U.S. says Jones. "Our size and scale have meant tremendous support for us." Research undertaken at another HCA facility is transmitted across the system. Case in point: preparation elsewhere for the coronavirus has put HCA outposts "well ahead of making sure the local facilities are [ready]," for an outbreak. "The heightened awareness of the magnitude of this virus has been very important."

LewisGale (named for the original local hospital founders) has embraced robotic surgery tools in recent years, with more planned, and enhanced diagnostic technology for breast exams. "The technology race in healthcare continues to be significant," says Jones. Companies are always inventing

the next best thing and shopping them to systems like HCA. "We are heavily invested in the robotic arena." Computer-assisted robotic systems help with spine surgeries at LewisGale. Shoulder surgery employing robotics is next; it's all about safety and best practices he notes. "We continue to see phenomenal advances [in robotics] and it's driven by the surgeons."

The Salem hospital has also launched a midwifery program, where women who choose to deliver their babies more naturally go through the process with a certified nurse-midwife on hand. Having that service in a hospital setting provides another level of safety should more medical attention be required.

Jones says the Roanoke Valley is "incredibly lucky" to have healthcare resources like the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and other training centers. LewisGale's Graduate Medical Education program features more than 100 residents – important notes Jones as it gets harder to attract the next wave of

physicians (and nurses) as veterans age out. "HCA is the largest training program in the United States for physicians," says Jones – currently over 5000 residents in fact, notes Jones. All of that clinical data from HCA's massive system is used to arrive at better treatment and training procedures.

Some LewisGale physicians are also enrolled in clinical research projects, including an oncology program that's based in Nashville. "We have a number of physicians that are a part of different trials ... in the LewisGale system."

After arriving in December 2018 Jones set out to learn the LewisGale culture first before laying out any grand agenda. He calls that culture "phenomenal and very family-oriented." Physicians drive change and made it clear to Jones they needed to recruit staff in areas where services were lacking. A quality and safety focus – LewisGale has

been ranked as a top hospital nationally he says – was another mainstay.

As for the tie-in to his roles with the Chamber and Economic Development Commission, Jones says public safety and quality education experiences help enhance a community. So does excellent healthcare: "if you have those things coupled with strong employment opportunities you generally have a very sustainable environment economically. Healthcare forms one of those four pillars of the table. The valley is very fortunate to have the healthcare services it has."

Ninety-five percent of southwest Virginia residents get the healthcare services they need right here, says Jones – they don't have to travel to UVA, Duke, Richmond or elsewhere. It's also pretty simple about what patients want: "don't harm me, heal me – and be nice to me. That's it." 



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## SMALL BUSINESS TOOL KIT

By Sherri Winesett

### Executive Summary:

*You don't have to be an entrepreneur to possess an entrepreneurial mindset.*

*Sheri Winesett is Chief Innovation Officer for the Innovation Mill in Vinton and adjunct faculty for business & entrepreneurship at Virginia Western Community College. Reach her at [sheri@sheriwinesett.com](mailto:sheri@sheriwinesett.com)*

## An entrepreneur's secret weapon

There are many different types of entrepreneurs: tech-preneur, gig-preneur, mompreneur, kidpreneur, STEMpreneur, agripreneur and many more. No matter which type of entrepreneur we are talking about we know they all have at least one thing in common, and that is they have the entrepreneurial mindset (EM).

Learning to think like an entrepreneur can have a profound impact on society. An entrepreneurial mindset shifts our perspective in a way that exposes opportunities, and ignites ambition, both of which are essential to individuals and organizations to adapt in today's fast paced and ever-changing environment.

At its core, entrepreneurial mindset is a set of characteristics, behaviors, and skills that drive action. A person with EM recognizes an otherwise overlooked opportunity, develops the confidence to take a risk, communicates ideas, and can adjust and learn from setbacks.

Successful entrepreneurs are great at identifying problems and finding solutions. They are curious; they observe and inquire. They are creative and critical thinkers. They also know how to conduct and design experiments while communicating and working with teams.

Here's the real secret. You don't have to be an entrepreneur to possess an entrepreneurial mindset.

Employers find employees with EM of high value to their team. In fact, in 2018, the World Economic Forum published a report called "The Future of Work." To better understand what employers needed in future employees, WEF interviewed senior leaders from 371 top global employers, representing 13 million employees in nine sectors across 15 emerging economies, including the United States.

Here's what they found: the top 10 skills that employers were demanding in future employees were complex problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, people management, coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, service orientation, negotiation, cognitive flexibility, judgment, and decision-making.

In fact, 77% of employers reported that these "soft-skills" are just as important IF NOT MORE IMPORTANT than technical skills. Employers explain that training employees on technical skills is much easier than training them on soft skills.

Whether you are exploring entrepreneurship as a pre-retirement transition, want to earn extra money while maintaining a current job, or transition from unemployed to self-employed, one thing is clear, you can accelerate the pace at which you grow, working for someone else or working for yourself, by adopting an entrepreneurial mindset.

The world requires everyone to think like an entrepreneur. So ... instead of asking yourself what you want to be when you grow up, ask yourself what problem you want to solve.

For more about the entrepreneurial mindset visit [elimindset.com](http://elimindset.com) 

## The cost of 401(k)s and IRAs

Most people think it's smart to divert income regularly to an employer-sponsored retirement account or an individual IRA. Of course, those folks are miles ahead of the majority of Americans in setting money aside at all, but how you do it can make a big difference come retirement time. I see people losing thousands of dollars every year when they don't look at tax consequences, especially possible savings, as they make decisions about funding retirement.

### Diversifying gives you more control with tax liabilities

IRAs and 401(k)s are great investment vehicles if they fit your individual situation. Sometimes it makes more sense to maximize your benefit in a brokerage account. This can help reduce your taxes when you have other financial matters to consider with your household.

For example, perhaps you had an unusually low-income year. It's common for small business owners to experience profit ebbs and flows. It might make more sense to realize some capital gains to reset your cost basis and pay off some bills than to max out your IRA contribution.

Alternatively, you could be looking at a big capital gains debt from a real estate sale. If you have stocks and bonds, you can take some losses to offset that tax hit.

There are a lot of reasons you might want to reduce or add income to your tax return. You can't do this effectively if you're not paying attention to all your income streams and expenses each year. In most cases, once a new year hits, you're stuck with the decision you made – or didn't make – the year before.

### Management fees add up

Another thing to consider with 401(k)s and IRAs are the fees. According to the Center for American Progress, the average American pays out 1% in fees, or \$138,000 in lifetime retirement account management fees. If you're paying 1.5% or even 2%, which isn't uncommon, those numbers get a lot bigger. Fees under 1% can save you tens of thousands of dollars.

### Know your numbers

So often, people think they're doing the right thing by adopting a "set it and forget it" practice. If you're dealing with company matches to a retirement fund or don't have varying financial issues facing your household, that makes sense. Most of us, though, face income and expense surprises. Tax costs for these changes can be considerable. With the many recent changes to federal tax law, it makes sense to talk to someone who understands how retirement funding decisions affect your taxes this year, and for decades to come. 



## FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

**Executive Summary:**  
*Are you asking the right questions about your retirement accounts? You could be losing thousands for starters.*

*Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at michael@discover360 Financial.com*



Sarah Wohlford: "We need a different response to improve upon that ... a change in the way we think."

all photos by Dan Smith

# HEALTHIER PRACTICES IN HEALTHCARE

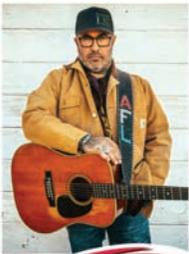
By Dan Smith

Carilion Clinic's Sara Wohlford is confronting waste and environmental threats at the region's largest healthcare organization.

When Sara Wohlford landed her first nursing job, the environmental impact of hospitals was almost immediately a "pull" on her. And not so much a good pull at the time. She noted not only waste and inefficiency, but also a lack of action on how hospitals impact the environment in ways that could easily be changed. Over time, she studied the problem—working as a Registered Nurse at Carilion in Roanoke.

"I saw the volume of waste and it was astounding," she says. "I looked around and there was a ton of work to be done."

Then the question came up: "Is this a thing?" She "found touchstones," including a website where "everything was conceptualized." After three years of learning and earning a master's degree in public health from Virginia Tech, she



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- 08/08 Jamey Johnson
- 08/14 Bee Gees Tribute
- 08/21 Queen Tribute
- 08/29 Roanoke Wing Fest 2020
- 09/11 Tim McGraw & Garth Brooks Tribute
- 09/25 Prince Tribute
- 10/09 Kid Rock Tribute
- 10/23 KISS Tribute



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Single-use plastics are prevalent in hospital settings.

created a proposal and worked on a business plan for it.

"I was just winging an idea." She took it to Carilion President/CEO Nancy Agee,

who "loved it," says Wohlford. "She gave me guidance I needed to make a plan." It was a go.

At the end of the most recent fiscal year, she says, "with all the adjustments," Carilion saved \$1.3 million with its efficiency/environmentally friendly efforts, though exact figures are "tricky and it's [sometimes] hard to be specific" because of the number of variables.

Unused (and unopened) medical materials, which had been thrown away in the past, are now being donated to various efforts, including health care foreign missions and for educational purposes. Most recently, the count was up to 107,000 pounds of unused medical materials that had been donated.

That's quite a bar to reach for a woman who began as an electronic journalist at CBS News and CNN in New York, after graduating with a degree in journalism from Georgia State. The 43-year-old Roanoke



native (she went to Cave Spring High School) has “always had a [love] for the environment, but in the 1990s, educational opportunities [in those disciplines] didn’t grab me.”

After she returned home and went to work for Carilion, the giant hospital organization helped her earn an RN and she was assigned to the emergency room. There, the environmental and efficiency problems were especially obvious. After five years of working on the environment and efficiency, Carilion employees have become especially sensitive to those issues says Wohlford. “Everywhere you turn, there is a unique perspective” on how to solve the problems, much of that coming from employees. “I’m not personally involved with every sustainable project” (as Carilion’s efficiency and sustainability manager), but “the enthusiasm is contagious.”

She now works with people across the

country and sees “the whole picture.” Wohlford has spoken to business groups and “reached out to our medical school and nursing school [including a guest lecture at Radford University]” in order to get students on board. Climate and environmental health are growing as curricula, she says.

Hospital impact on the environment “is massive,” Wohlford insists. Ten percent of the nation’s energy and 10 percent of emissions come from the health care industry, she says. “We need a different response to improve upon that ... a change in the way we think. I hope it has a ripple effect [throughout the community].”

Still, she estimates that “we have only scratched the surface and it’s taken five years to be able to say that. We have a long way to go.” But it’s happening. “At the end of the day, I feel good. I love what I do,” says Sara Wohlford, RN. 

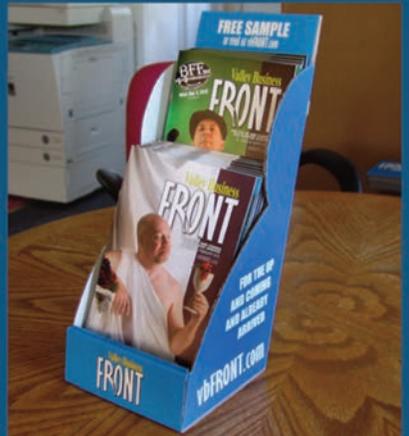
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## Culture shock

As someone who has spent many years working to help organizations implement positive change, I've spent a lot of time studying organizational culture. The more I've learned, the more fascinated I've become with its power.

Culture is like a giant flywheel. A flywheel requires a lot of energy to get moving. Once moving, inertia makes it very hard to stop or change. Culture acts much the same way. Culture consists of the cumulative attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of employees, which were formed from years of past experiences and conditioning. Once those mental and physical habits are formed, it takes a lot of energy to change them.

Although he may not have been the first to say it, Peter Drucker is credited with the phrase, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." The meaning is clear. If a company's culture does not support the changes needed to achieve strategic goals and objectives, those changes are going nowhere.

In last month's article, I described why one-time training events such as workshops are a waste of money if lasting behavior change is needed. This is because for an individual, development requires changes in the attitudes and beliefs that drive current behaviors. But even if an effective training and development process is used, the desired new behaviors may still not happen if they go against company culture.

For example, one of the effective productivity habits I teach to leaders is to check email only a few times per day, and at all other times to close Outlook or Gmail. My development process can help those leaders develop the attitude and habit to do this, but if their company culture (and especially their manager) expects immediate answers to email, it will be extremely hard for the leader to be successful.

It's imperative to review your culture before working on significant change initiatives. There are numerous survey instruments that can help an organization identify its cultural strengths and weaknesses. If the culture supports the desired change, then press forward! If not, you have two options. You can either modify the goal or desired change initiative so it more closely aligns with the strengths of your culture, or you can change your culture, so it supports the desired changes.

Company culture CAN be changed with focused effort. More on that next month. 

“It's imperative to review your culture before working on significant change initiatives.”

# BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

**Executive Summary:**  
*Changing a company culture for the better starts with those leading the company.*

Send your questions  
or comments to Mike@  
OpXSolutionsllc.com

## Simple Observations 4 Business Growth

Over the years people have asked me how I decide what to write about. Often, it's noticing something basic and then pondering how it fits into marketing or business operations. I have a teenager, which means I have to deal with mobile phones and all of the adventures they bring. My normally sure-handed young man occasionally drops his cell and, after a few such instances, I recently found myself at the local iPhone repair store. As I observed the owner working to make the little hand-held computer, we call a telephone function properly again, I noticed two pretty obvious things.

To fix something as intricate as a mobile phone, you'd better have a lot of knowledge. And then, you best have the right tools to help you get the job done. That day I realized the same principles hold true in commerce.

### Knowledge and Tools 2 Improve

Have you ever heard the story of the plumber who charged a customer \$150 to fix a clogged pipe?

He went to the house, researched the issue, pulled out a wrench, and hit the broken pipe — hard. Before the customer knew it, the pipe was fixed, and the water was flowing again. The tradesman gave the customer the bill and the homeowner asked, "How can you charge me \$150 just for hitting a pipe?"

The confident plumber replied, "Well it's \$50 for the call and \$100 for knowing exactly where to hit the pipe and how hard."

The iPhone repair guy figured out what was wrong with my son's phone, pulled out a miniscule instrument from Apple, and proceeded to fix it. He knew what to do and he had the proper tools to make the repair.

It's the same in your business. Employ people who can help you fix what is broken, give them the knowledge they need, and make sure they have the pieces on hand to take care of whatever is broken. If you decide to fix something yourself — you'll need to follow the same basic steps.

While this may seem pretty obvious, it's the simplest observations that frequently make the biggest difference in business, marketing, and operations. 📌

“Employ people who can help you fix what is broken.”



## A LITTLE INSIGHT

By Bruce C. Bryan

### Executive Summary:

*Its pretty simple -  
employ people  
who can help you  
fix what is broken.*

Bruce C. Bryan is the president of 5Points Creative. Contact him at [bruce@5PointsCreative.com](mailto:bruce@5PointsCreative.com)



all photos by Cory Crouser

Jim Humphrey (center) and his employees stand behind two recently-completed locomotives, a DASH-9 (Left) and an SD40-2 (Right).

# MANUFACTURING TO SCALE

By Cory Crouser

**While Roanoke’s “East End Shops” announces it will no longer build and maintain locomotives and train cars—that’s not the case down the road in Boones Mill.**

Founded in 1982 and helmed by Roanoke-area businessman Jim Humphrey, a Roanoke-native and Virginia Tech graduate, Boones Mill, Va.’s Titan Trains manufactures 1/8-scale, 7.5-inch gauge ride-on locomotives, train cars, trucks and accessories for hobbyists, collectors, historical/preservation interests and cinema.

Humphrey employs 11 plant technicians

and administrative staffers at his relatively new 16,000-square-foot, Boones Mill manufacturing facility, which is open weekdays for tours (with advance notice). Until 2016, Titan Trains operated out of a smaller facility in Salem.

“I’ve known Jim a long time,” said Scott Weatherford, founder of Missouri-based Scott’s Trains, one of Titan Trains’ competitors



Jim Humphrey, Founder Titan Trains



Scott Weatherford of Missouri’s Scott’s Trains loads his new 1/8-scale, SD40-2 Locomotive



Titan Trains shop scene



A Titan Trains employee at the drill press

and more active customers. "Things are really moving along now [at Titan Trains], in-stock items are numerous and ready to ship and building times are quick."

"Well," said Humphrey, "That's all because we design, develop and manufacture our entire product line in-house. We're known, among hobbyists like Scott, for our

products' functional design, our attention to detail and our impressive delivery timelines, which we've worked to streamline in recent years." 

Visit [TitanTrains.net](http://TitanTrains.net), call 540.334.1322 or email [office@TitanTrains.net](mailto:office@TitanTrains.net) for more information. Follow/Like @TitanTrains on Instagram and Facebook.

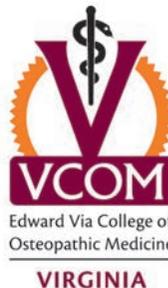
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## Milk may really pay off for this researcher >

Mentioned in Michael Friedlander's cover story as well, Dr. Robert Gourdie is Director of the Center for Heart and Reparative Medicine Research (CHRMR) at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute. He also teaches for Virginia Tech. He's found a nanoparticle-sized drug delivery method via what is called an exosome in, of all things, milk. These particles found in milk appear to be ideal for carrying drugs from the gut right into the bloodstream – think of the nutrients a nursing mother delivers to her baby from what she ingests.



"Milk is a very interesting liquid," says Gourdie, who figured out how to extract and purify these exosomes, then use them to deliver a peptide drug that can help further damage from occurring after a heart attack. Now Gourdie's Tiny Cargo Company will strive to make these milk-borne patent-pending exosomes - carriers of peptide drugs - a commercial venture. He's even worked with Homestead Creamery locally for his milk supply while developing this unique delivery system.

"There's a lot of work to do," says Gourdie about the testing that's still ahead before The Tiny Cargo Company bio-tech spinoff truly becomes viable. He says many good ideas borne out of university research sit in an office somewhere and are never developed. Setting up a startup like Tiny Cargo "is the first few steps," to the outside world. Aligning with a pharma company to do the testing and clinical trials is one option. "It's exciting and kind of scary at the same time," says Gourdie about the next steps for The Tiny Cargo Company.



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## MINDFUL BUSINESS

By Beth Bell

### Executive Summary:

*Whatever keeps you out of the office – the kids have off from school, you're keeping an eye on the kitchen remodelers, etc., this is 2020 and you are not isolated.*

*Beth Bell is the executive director for the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce (as of mid-January) and helped found FemCity Roanoke, a business networking community for women. Contact her at [bethboydbell@gmail.com](mailto:bethboydbell@gmail.com).*

## Connecting remotely in the face of a pandemic

My thoughts have moved from “suck it up and wash your hands” to “cancel everything” to, “wait a minute, we are still open for business!” Canceling meetings, events, and finding new ways to keep things moving isn't about you. The mindful thing to do here, is whatever it takes to keep our community healthier as a whole and minimize the impact of COVID-19. However, this doesn't have mean death to your bottom line. It's 2020 and the resources we have to connect with each other and keep productive are endless. Having 2-4 weeks where you are forced NOT to go to a meeting is the perfect time to catch up on everything you put off when you are focused on business development.

I've been working remotely for 14 years and I never run out of things that need to be done.

- Taxes
- Update and add to my contacts/CRM
- Audit and update my website - freshen content, branding and image
- Take a look at my annual goals and adjust if needed
- Get ahead - create marketing materials, newsletter content, and social media graphics and content for several months out (easier sometimes without all that office chatter)
- Write my own business continuity plan
- Send handwritten cards to my clients
- Get ahead on client summaries (in my business— this is a document I create that shows the work I've done over a certain number of months and the results).

Despite having plenty to do, from behind my computer, I'm also going to check in on my clients to see how I can help them. I'm going to check on my elderly neighbor and make sure my mom doesn't have to venture out. I'm going to see if there is a food pantry or backpack program that we can help to ensure kids who are not in school, still have food to eat.

As for networking, you can still keep doing your one-on-ones, make your own cup of coffee and use Facetime, Zoom or any other free conferencing tool to see how your contacts are doing. How are they dealing with closures and postponements? How can you help them or help connect them to the resources they need? Can you brainstorm some things they can do to minimize the impact to their business? Show that you meant it when you said you were here to build meaningful, lifelong, relationships.

P.S. I heard you groan when I reminded you about taxes. 

## Camp Easter Seals has a long lasting legacy in Craig County

For over 60 years, Camp Easter Seals UCP has been providing quality programs for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities, such as autism, Down syndrome, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and more. Located along Craig's Creek in Craig County, the Camp operates from the end of May through the first week of August, with sessions ranging from 6 to 26 days in length. Its purpose is to provide meaningful and exceptional services so that children and adults living with disabilities and mental health challenges can live, learn, work, play, and thrive in their community. Campers experience increased independence and improved self-esteem while garnering new friendships and developing new social skills. The unique outdoors setting also provides a break from a typical day-to-day routine.

Approximately 450-500 campers (of which 60% receive some degree of financial aid from the organization) attend the summer sessions, including Family Weekends. While at Camp Easter Seals, participants engage in swimming, canoeing, marksmanship, a climbing wall, music, sports, horseback riding, nature studies, crafts, fishing, dancing, games, gardening, and many special events. All of these activities are designed to offer campers the opportunity to enjoy fun and challenging times in a supportive and cooperative environment.

With safety always foremost, the Camp's counselors are trained college students with the average ratio of one staff member per two campers. Training covers all aspects of working with the campers, emphasizing best practices and preventive measures in everything from personal care to health considerations to the various specific recreational activities. Teams of staff members, led by unit leaders, live with campers to provide supervision and personal care assistance as needed.

Applications for the 2020 Camp are open on the Camp Easter Seals UCP website to those who are nine years of age or older. If you or anyone you know may benefit from these services, please check out [easterseals.com](http://easterseals.com) to learn more. It will be a wonderful and transformative experience. 



## GOOD WORK

By Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

**Executive Summary:**  
*A special summer camp for some special people in the great outdoors.*

*Kaitlyn Van Buskirk is a grants associate with the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia.  
[kaitlyn@cfwesternva.org](mailto:kaitlyn@cfwesternva.org)*



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# Watching over the kingdom

By Dan Dowdy

If you appreciate wine—and live, work, or play anywhere near the proximity of Roanoke—you're sure to know Mr. Powell and Wine Gourmet...or will check it out soon.

Valley Business FRONT introduces Brian Powell, a 2020 advisory board member representing the region's retail sector.

Brian Powell cultivated an interest in wine-making, and perhaps all things wine-related, while he was taking a microbiology course during his time at Virginia Tech. He made wine that semester, and perhaps inadvertently, he also made a career decision. He expanded on what he learned in that course by attending wine tastings and developing an expertise in the nuances of wines, the characteristics of grape varieties, and the history and origins of wine. He channeled his passion and extensive studies into earning a Level One Sommelier certification.

[Taking advantage of a teachable moment: A sommelier is an expert in wines, often associated with a restaurant's wine steward; someone who can explain a wine's complexities and assist in pairing wines with foods. Several organizations provide study options and tests for earning one of four levels of certification for sommeliers.]

After college and working a couple of years at his fraternity's corporate offices in Chicago, Powell found his dream job in 2011 when he became co-owner of Wine Gourmet, located in Promenade Park on Electric Road in Roanoke County; he is now sole owner.

Wine Gourmet, open seven days a week, is the oldest wine store in the Roanoke Valley. Powell wants it to be a one-stop shop. At his store, shoppers can choose from among a wide variety of domestic and international wines; learn about wines from the store's staff; put together a nice gift basket; buy specialty cheeses, chocolates (from Chocolate Paper's exotic collections), and wine/beer

## "IN BRIEF"

**NAME:** Brian Powell

**POSITION:** Owner

**COMPANY:** Wine Gourmet

**BACKGROUND:** Grew up in Northern Virginia; attended Virginia Tech; became co-owner of Wine Gourmet in 2011; became full owner in 2016.

**QUOTABLE:** "Wine is king here."

accessories; and browse an eclectic assortment of greeting cards. A good selection of beers also is available, but in Powell's words, "wine is king here".

To help existing and potential patrons develop their palates for good wine and beer, Wine Gourmet offers free weekly tastings: Wines—Wednesdays, 5:00-8:00 and Saturdays, Noon-5:00; Beers—Fridays, 5:00-8:00.

Building long-lasting relationships by providing a full experience for his customers is Powell's over-arching objective. In his words, he will "be adaptive and go the extra mile to give customers what they want and to make them happy".

Powell recently leased a building on the corner of Campbell Avenue and 6th Street just west of downtown. He calls it "Deux", French for two—his second establishment. It's a venue for private parties, tastings, and other functions. With a full kitchen, he can provide food for a sit-down meal or a more casual cocktail party event. He also caters and provides private tastings and classes in homes. 



LEGAL  
BUSINESS

By Tom Ashton

**Executive Summary:**  
*Introducing our new column on the legal aspects of business, which will appear here every few months.*

*Tom Ashton is a Roanoke attorney. Reach him at [tim@ashtonlawoffice.com](mailto:tim@ashtonlawoffice.com)*

## Sue me, sue you: be prepared before you head to court

Corporations engaging in the marketplace are always at some sort of risk. One of the most common is the risk of being sued—whether for breach of contract or under some tort theory, the basic procedure during the case is roughly the same, and often includes the taking of a corporate deposition.

If you’ve been through this, then you’ll know the process. One side sends the other a written notice of certain topics on which they intend to seek information at a deposition of one or more people employed by the company. The recipient of this notice is permitted to choose one or more “corporate designees” who will be deposed on the listed topics. Proper preparation for this deposition is more important these days than ever before.

After receiving this notice of a corporate deposition (called either a “Rule 30(b)(6)” notice in federal court or a “Rule 4:5(b)(6)” notice in Virginia state court), the recipient chooses who will testify. For example, depending on the corporate operating structure, financial topics often result in the company CFO or CEO being deposed. Sometimes, the topics for the deposition will include individual, years-old transactions that busy corporate officers could never remember without being reminded of the details. This is where proper preparation of the “corporate designees” becomes very important. A recent case out of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Roanoke illustrates just how damaging a lack of proper preparation can be.

In the currently pending case of *Henderson v. General Revenue Corporation, et al.*, Judge Ballou heard a dispute where a corporate designee allegedly failed to adequately prepare for his properly noticed deposition, and could not give information on a number of topics and documents identified in the written notice of deposition. The designee spent a total of “only two hours” preparing for the lengthy deposition, which included several topics related to defenses the corporation had raised in the litigation. He often answered questions with, “I don’t know.” As a result, the Court imposed sanctions on the corporation that included re-taking the entire deposition, paying the other side’s attorney’s fees, and striking two of the corporation’s defenses to the lawsuit.

The failure of the corporate designee in this case to adequately prepare for the deposition drastically changed the face of the litigation. Now, the cost of defending the case has been greatly increased, opposing counsel and the judge have been aggravated unnecessarily, and the risk of an adverse outcome is increased because of the striking of some of the corporation’s defenses. The company’s litigation posture is now much worse than before. Was it worth it to cut corners in deposition preparation? I don’t think so. 📖

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## A MODEL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Richfield Living, located on the western outskirts of Salem, is about to roll out a new concept in retirement living. It's called the Household Model of Care. It will be the first in Southwestern Virginia.

According to Sue LaFave, Richfield Living's Chief Health Services Officer, the definition of "household model of care" varies from one retirement community to another. She should know. Over the course of several years, she toured 20 facilities in the U.S. and spent a lot of time and effort researching the effectiveness of this model and how it impacts residents. Combining what was learned from research and using nearby Bridgewater Retirement Community (in Bridgewater, VA) as a mentor, the leadership team at Richfield Living adopted its own concept of this new retirement living paradigm. A "learning lab" has been constructed on site to enable staff

to begin to get familiar with this model.

Eschewing the traditional retirement community model in which living arrangements are centered around a nursing station, Richfield Living mirrored a Household Model of Care centered on amenities that provide residents with a home-like environment in which a kitchen is the heart of the home.

"The social changes embraced by this model create a climate for each household of about 19 residents that embraces decision making," says Lisa Clause, Richfield Living's Senior Director of Marketing and Philanthropy. Residents decide when to eat, bathe, and sleep. So, if they want to sleep in, they can get breakfast when they want with the help of team members. As a small community (like members of a family living under one roof), residents can decide to

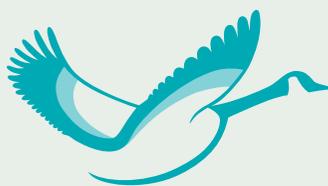
have a party, adopt a pet, or come up with an activity. LaFave says “this model empowers residents and team members to make decisions on what enriches their lives.” By honoring the wishes and desires of each unit’s residents, strong bonds and relationships will be forged among the residents and team.

Residents have their own bedrooms and private bathrooms, and there’s a large living room with comfortable furniture for lounging and watching TV. Each unit has its own entrance and décor theme as well as a front porch and a doorbell to further replicate a home environment.

All models will be supported by a clinical coordinator (charge nurse), another nurse, three CNAs (certified nursing assistants), a household coordinator (who oversees vibrant life activities), and a homemaker (responsible for meal preparation and cleaning). By working in shifts, team members essentially live with the residents providing round-the-clock family-like care. LaFave points out that there will be one

CNA caring for seven residents—much lower than the more typical one to ten ratio at most retirement communities in this region.

The first building on the Salem campus housing the Household Model of Care will be ready in September 2020. It will contain four households of 19 residents each, totaling space for 76. This model also will be offered at Richfield Living’s new facility opening in Roanoke City off Orange Avenue in Spring 2021.



## Richfield Living





## ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*Remote working might  
be a necessity... or  
an advantage.*

## Our remote awoke-aning

I've worked remotely for most of my working life. My full time on location employment includes stints and assignments that account for only 7.5 of my 39 years on the job. And even during those gigs, I maintained a home office/studio for freelancing after onsite hours.

Today, as I pen this column, more people than ever are working solo from the "home office," some—for the first time officially. Even my own children are all working remotely at this minute... one, full time (already was remote); one, flexible (remote 3/5 days per week); and one full time (as a college student, suddenly converting online 100%).

A few observations have occurred to organizations and members with this transition.

- A lot of our jobs really can be done from remote stations, whether or not that's the corporate culture or preference.
- Productivity can be maintained if not increased from remote offices, or, to put it another way, the same tasks can be accomplished in fewer hours.
- Strategic decisions and many operations can be conducted with more efficiency with remote offices if the right systems are in place.
- Remote employees are often fitting in personal tasks and activities during working hours without reducing output (when operations are measured and compared to onsite work).

Remote work is not plausible or possible for many businesses. But it's interesting how quickly some of our most conventional organizations have been able to transition and adapt when the model was thrust upon them primarily due to a forced disruption.

When the principal measurement of "getting our work done, and doing it properly" is lifted to the highest point—well, it's like a green light goes off for owners and management. Sometimes, as if they've never thought of that objective before!

But that's how progressive workplaces come into play. That's why creative shops begin popping up in the market. That's when we get new products and services that are vast improvements over the old ones.

It shouldn't take a global pandemic to force us to adjust to new ways. But it's encouraging to see our smallest and largest businesses advance through a challenge rather than retreat.

If more individuals engage a challenge like the ones we write about in this business journal, month-after-month, year-after-year, decade-after-decade... we're going to come out stronger on the other side.

Even if we have to video-conference our celebration. 🍷

## Living and working in the age of coronavirus

All major sports league seasons suspended or delayed. Local minor league baseball seasons putting off season openers. The NCAA's March Madness canceled. Colleges and Universities shutting down their campuses and putting classes online. Local events canceled – the popular St. Patrick's Day Parade in Roanoke, the Cork & Fork Festival in Blacksburg, fundraisers, community theater. "Social distancing" urged and large crowds banned. Broadway going dark, the travel industry canceling flights, and cruises and laying off employees.

The stock market taking two 2,000-point dives in the same week – twice triggering a "circuit breaker" that temporarily halted trading until cooler heads prevailed. A built-in safety mechanism that hadn't been tripped in over 20 years. Retirement accounts at least temporarily taking a beating. Complaints about a lack of testing kits and a slow federal response to the outbreak.

Welcome to the world as we know it now where the coronavirus – COVID 19 – attacks the very old and the very young, a deadly form of the flu with no vaccine and no immunity among the populace in place. Questions about major events planned this spring like the Blue Ridge Marathon and the Ironman Triathlon.

What about the business world – was it ready in the US to handle a pandemic? At an event staged by the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, Chris Turnbull with Carilion Clinic urged those listening to have a two-month pandemic plan in place to deal with supply disruptions, fewer workers on site; to ID critical functions and workflow. "What can be done offsite?" asked Turnbull, who is the director of operational continuity for Carilion. Specify HR policies to deal with a pandemic like COVID-19, but "think through those policy implications."

Safeguard organizational assets, prepare to deal with any damage to a company's reputation and find ways to maintain productivity. "Get these elements in place," advised Turnbull when devising a pandemic plan. It may be too late for the coronavirus – or maybe not – since at press time there weren't any bold predictions on when the number of confirmed cases in the US would start waning. "Businesses that do not have plans have a much more difficult time recovering, following some sort of incident, than those that do have a plan," Turnbull added.

Regional Chamber President and CEO Joyce Waugh says there may be one silver lining – more of an emphasis on teleworking, online schools, and remote meeting technology. "One of the things that makes our region so great to work from is that it's a beautiful place and now with the technology most people can work remotely." Small consolation perhaps for those that have been or will be impacted by COVID-19, but food for thought as the business community looks past this crisis. 



Gene Marrano

# THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

**Executive Summary:**  
*What started in China and now has spread worldwide hits home.*

## FRONTReviews >

**Readers and patrons of the business journal are invited to submit reviews (along with an optional photo) to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto:news@vbFRONT.com). We've expanded our reviews to include books, music, art, performances, culinary—with a preference for local productions. Reviews must be original, include the author's name and location, and should be brief, under 350 words.**

### *Directives for daughters*

*Dads for Daughters* (Mango Publishing Group; 2020) by Michelle Travis is an excellent resource when delving into the subject of equality in the workplace. The format—issue clarified, followed by solution and response examples from individual and organizational advocates, followed by what you can do as an individual (dad)—per chapter—is an excellent way to tackle this challenge. Travis has compiled an incredible treasure chest of resources. She does provide extensive notes at the end, but if you don't have a pen in hand, be warned, there is no master chart or single bibliography for easy reference. You're going to have your trigger tripped so often, I doubt you can write down just one source to check out.

When we understand "feminism" to be, at its simplest term, pro-woman, pro-girl, this book follows suit. There are a few times where our arguments slip over the line where it puts a dent in credibility in the effort to champion, but those instances are a fraction of the case, and are as much overstatement as anything. (What are those infractions? The US Soccer team player pay disparity; the unsubstantiated claim that female Uber drivers make less; the statistic that men get pay raises when they have children; the notion that females are blocked from entrepreneurship; the desperate need for non-gendered toys and gender-neutral language; and the last chapter that is essentially a diatribe against Trump and how he's not the dad we're talking about.) That sounds like an impressive list of misdirectives, doesn't it? It's not, really. Compared to the wealth of positive actions and proactive observations, *Dad's for Daughters* charts a course worthy of engagement. Many of us get caught up in the advocacy and exceed the boundaries of reason and objectivity from time to time. Travis is correct in her central thesis: the best solutions for equality for women in the

workplace does—and will come—from fathers. I would invite anyone to listen to what this book has to say. Our daughters deserve it.

—Tom Field

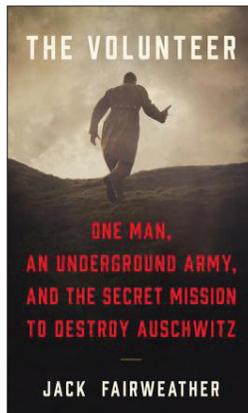
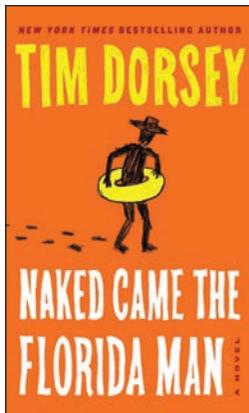
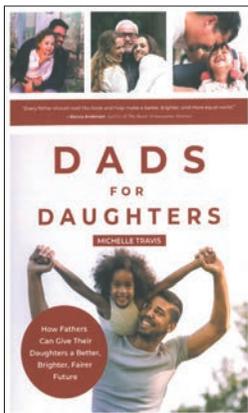
### *I mean, it's Florida, right?*

Tim Dorsey's *Naked Came the Florida Man* (HarperCollins; 2020) is simply a quick, fun, diversional road trip through one of our states with the stereotypical reputation of eclectic headliners. In one sense, it's very much a travelogue of South Florida—with towns and regions, legends and legacies sporting names as colorful as the lives and culture dotting the waterways from coast to the interior. Yes, we have a decent little vigilante storyline maintained in our pseudo-Ripley's Believe It Or Not brochure here, and our guides are interconnected (through time and place as strongly as the ever present natural and manmade canals)—but mainly, our trip here is recreational, much like a Netflix series (Better Call Saul more than Bloodline) than a deep dive into the human condition. Grab a six pack, jump in the muscle car, roll the windows down, and just ride.

—Tom Field

### *Beethoven birthday bash*

Most of the 2019-2020 Roanoke Symphony Orchestra season will be over by the time you read this – the pops concert featuring the music of Sting and The Police on June 19 is one notable exception, but the RSO paid its dues in February with a birthday bash for Ludwig Von Beethoven at Jefferson Center. The Happy Birthday, Beethoven! concert opened with Beethoven's only opera, Fidelio, which he



rewrote several times over a decade – including four overtures that remain in the symphonic repertoire according to the program handout. The Beethoven bash was sandwiched around a Cello Concerto in D minor by Edouard Lalo, loved by cellists (again according to the notes) because it is a “true virtuoso display piece,” as demonstrated by the guest cellist that night, Kelley Mikkelson.

After intermission it was the signature Beethoven work – Symphony No. 5 – you know, da da da dummm, maybe the one masterwork that more non-classical fans can identify than any other. It was written during the Napoleonic Wars and Beethoven infused that tragedy-to-triumph motif into a piece that took him several years to compose. Conductor David Stewart Wiley and the pared-down orchestra at Shaftman Performance Hall were at the top of their game (Mikkelson sat in again on cello) as the 250th birthday salute for Beethoven wrapped up – surely he’s on the Mount Rushmore of classical composers alongside Mozart, for starters.

—Gene Marrano

## Cries for help unheeded

It’s not a new story and it persists today – calls for help as tribes, those of certain ethnicities, religions etc. are rounded up, imprisoned and often purged. It happened on a massive industrial scale in the millions in Europe of course during World War II and one brave Polish resistance fighter saw it all firsthand – and reported on it. *The Volunteer: One Man, An Underground Army, And The Secret Mission To Destroy Auschwitz* by veteran war reporter Jack Fairweather (HarperCollins, 2019) is a vivid and often raw tale based on notes about the concentration camp that grew into a death

factory for Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Nazis. The Final Solution soon led to an even bigger operation at nearby Birkenau, where even the crematoriums couldn’t burn the dead fast enough.

Pilecki – somewhat protected from the immediate threat of being shot or marched off to the gas chamber because he was not Jewish, allowed himself to be captured and sent to Auschwitz, where he organized an underground network and sent messages out via prisoners occasionally released - cries for help and for bombing campaigns to destroy the camp, which would also allow surviving prisoners to escape. But Winston Churchill and the other Allies deemed a bombing run that far inside Poland too risky, or not a priority – defeating the Germans in the war came first. In some cases, they believed the accounts of death camps overblown or even incredulous.

Now through Pilecki’s notes, hidden diaries, recently declassified files and survivor accounts, *The Volunteer* brings the horrors and unheeded calls for help to life. Camp mug shots taken by Nazi prison camp operators bring the Auschwitz dead back to life. Witold Pilecki remained a patriotic resistance fighter for his beloved Poland until the very end of his life. Escaping from Auschwitz after almost three years he wound up fighting against the Soviet occupation of Warsaw as World War II ended – until he was captured, sentenced and executed in 1948 - spurning an offer of exile with his family in Italy first.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT.



## Never too early >

**North Cross School** has held its career symposium for upper school students for more than two decades - but this year they expanded the event to include younger students in grades through 2 through 7 with a program called Future Forward. Besides guest speakers from fields like legal, health and management, more hands-on career paths were featured - like welding and woodworking from the Making Foundation (Aaron Dykstra featured in photo). LeeAnn Hamlin is the director

of counseling at North Cross: "part of our job is to help expose students to career fields. We thought this was a great way to make it a full day. Its never too early to start exposing students to different career paths."



## Hoist the flag-again >

**Burns & McDonnell** has been selected by Fortune magazine and Great Places to Work as one of the 100 Best Places to Work For – for a 10th time. In 2019, the 100% employee-owned engineering, construction and architecture firm experienced another record year of growth. Burns & McDonnell opened its Roanoke office in 2015 with just six employee-owners. The firm recently expanded its presence in Roanoke, with plans to more than triple the size of its local workforce within the next three years.

## Broadband Authority looking for partners >

The **Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority** has installed about 100 miles of high-speed fiber underground, with a focus on connections to business and local government clients. Now it wants to target valley residential customers. The RVBA is surveying local residents in its service area about interest in a high-speed internet connection and about their current service. Until now the authority has signed up business and local government customers connecting to that 100-mile trunk line. Now RVBA president Frank Smith says they will seek private internet, TV and data providers to build that "last mile" to a new customer base. Smith also says smaller metro areas like Chattanooga and Bozeman that Roanoke competes with for talent have taken this step - and Roanoke needs to step up, offering more competition for residential high-speed service. "It's an economic development driver, quality of life. It's making a difference [elsewhere]."



## VWCC judges dig in for a worthy cause on campus >

Someone had to do it: **Virginia Western** held a recent chili cook-off and cookie bake-off, with the leftovers being sold after the judging took place to raise money for the Student Co-op food pantry. Virginia Western Community College president Dr. Bobby Sandel (at top center) helped judge and score the homemade cookies. Meanwhile another group of judges (including Valley Business Front Editor Gene Marrano and Roanoke Times columnist Dan Casey) went through 13 chili samples running the gamut in taste, texture and spiciness. Faculty, staff and students submitted the entries. The student pantry opened last year and provides food to VWCC students having a hard time making ends meet. Kroger mid-Atlantic helped get the campus-based co-op off the ground. Natasha Lee is the Student Activities Coordinator at Virginia Western: "there really was a response I wasn't expected, to see how much the students need it- more than I even realized."



## Roanoke Valley Saves Week >

Saving for a rainy day via a bank account and budgeting is always a good idea. That’s the idea behind Roanoke Valley Saves Week, wherein **United Way of Roanoke Valley** enlists local financial institutions and other partners including the City of Roanoke in a campaign that encourages residents – especially the “unbanked” – to take positive financial action. The 2020 campaign in late February included a proclamation read by Roanoke Vice Mayor Joe Cobb designating “Roanoke Valley Saves Week,” and a class given by the local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office on nutrition and budgeting.



## Eggs and Economics >

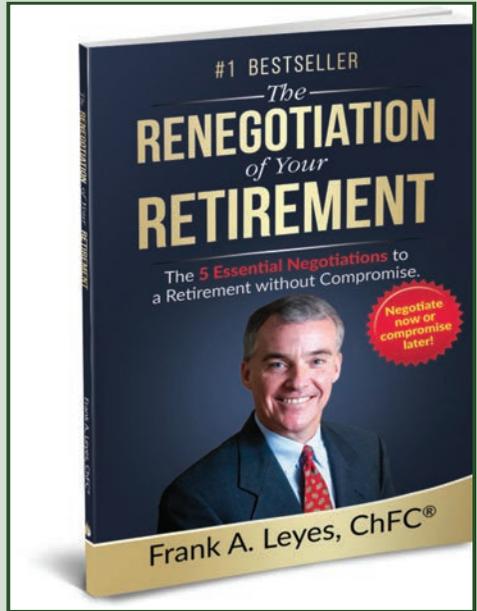
Valley Business FRONT editor Gene Marrano moderated a panel discussion at a **Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce** breakfast in mid-February at Hotel Roanoke. Topics included recent economic development wins, attracting more jobs to the area and how an accurate 2020 census count impacts business growth. Panel members included Tom Rowley, Economic Development Roanoke County, Melinda Payne, Economic Development City of Salem, John Hull, Market Intelligence, Roanoke Regional Partnership, Daryn J Warner, Regional Manager, US Census and Catherine Fox, with Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge, who also showed off the new Wayfinding signs for each locality that will start appearing soon, pointing the way to local attractions and outdoor amenities.

## Pinnacle Financial opens new HQ >

**Pinnacle Financial Partners** has opened a new regional main office at the corner of Campbell Avenue and Williamson Road in Roanoke. It officially opened in mid-March with associates moving from offices on Church Avenue to the newly constructed 25,000 square



foot, three-story building with onsite parking underneath. "This is the first new construction downtown Roanoke has seen in decades, and it's a beautiful addition," said David Allen, Pinnacle's regional president for Western Virginia.



## No time to panic says wealth manager >

With historic drops in the Dow in mid-March tied to COVID-19 fears and an oil glut initiated by the Saudis and the Russians, a local expert in managing retirement accounts for his clients reminds the skittish that the 100 year history of the Dow Industrial Average and the stock market is bullish. The average person with a retirement account - say a 401k or an IRA for example - would be wise to stand pat says **Frank Leyes**, a private wealth manager in Roanoke County. "The average person should just keep their head down and keep plowing money away for retirement – and let the markets do what they do."

As for the more adventurous "in the investing period of their life" - this might be a good time to buy stocks impacted by the coronavirus (including teleworking technology-related companies.) "When the markets go on sale ... it's a time to bargain shop." Leyes, who moved to the valley from Indianapolis, has written several bestselling how-to guides on managing money. He also warns that the markets "adjust quickly," so act quickly to find those true stock bargains.

*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.*

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## EDUCATIONAL FRONT



Edwards

**Dwayne Edwards** is now the head of the Virginia Tech Department of Biological Systems Engineering, which is in both the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Engineering. Edwards most recently was a professor of biosystems and agricultural engineering at the University of Kentucky and has a background in watershed-scale hydrology and water-quality protection.

Radford University has hired **Anthony Graham** to serve as Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Recruitment and Director of Admissions. Graham will lead the Office of Admissions



Graham

by administering all elements of the freshman recruitment and admissions process. He most recently served in a variety of roles at Emory & Henry College, including Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Director of First-Year Admissions.



Drake

**Joshua Drake** is now an assistant professor of human nutrition, foods, and exercise, one of a number of new faculty members recently hired in the

Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. New positions were identified in focus areas including food, health, the environment, and the economy.



Lane

**Heidi Lane**, associate professor of interprofessionalism and senior director of clinical skills assessment and education at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, has been promoted to assistant dean for clinical skills assessment and education. Lane joined the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in 2012 and developed a clinical skills teaching and testing program

**Matt Hulver** will join the Fralin Life Sciences Institute at Virginia



Hulver

Tech as executive director, effective May 10. Hulver was previously assistant dean of health sciences and the head of the Department of the Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. Hulver is also one of the leaders of the Center for Transformative Research on Health Behaviors located at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC.

The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) at Virginia Tech has named **John Lucas**, DO, as the new Senior Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Administration. Lucas

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has previously served as a faculty member of VCOM. He then accepted a position as the Division Vice President of Graduate Medical Education for the HCA South Atlantic Division in Charleston, SC.

## Have a career announcement?

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



**Bovay**

**John Bovay** has been hired recently as an assistant professor of agricultural and applied economics, at Virginia Tech in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Bovay received a bachelor's in mathematics and politics from Washington and Lee University and a doctorate in agricultural and resource economics from the University of California at Davis.

**Aaron Betsky**, an author and critic on



**Betsky**

art, architecture, and design, has been appointed director of Virginia Tech's School of Architecture + Design in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. Betsky comes to Virginia Tech from the School of Architecture at Taliesin (formerly known as the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture), where he has been president since 2017.

**Charlotte Emlinger**, assistant professor of agricultural and applied economics,



**Emlinger**

is one of a number of new faculty members recently hired in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. Emlinger received a bachelor's in agricultural sciences and a master's and doctorate in agricultural economics all from Montpellier Supagro in France.

### DEVELOPMENT FRONT

**Ryan Watson**, Architect, has been



**Watson**

named an Associate at Balzer and Associates. Watson graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from Virginia Tech and is the Architecture Department Head in the New River Valley office. He currently a member of the Radford City Planning Commission and has been an employee at Balzer and Associates for fifteen years.

“I love what I do. — Page 27



Member  
**FDIC**  
LENDER

NMLS #476841

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Tom Ashton** is an attorney in Roanoke and author of *Virginia Family Law for Non-Lawyers*. [tom@ashtonlawoffice.com]

**Beth Bell** is the president of FemCity Roanoke, a 300-member business networking community for women. [Roanoke@femcity.com]

**Bruce C. Bryan** is proprietor of the award-winning advertising and marketing agency, BzC Enterprises, located in downtown Roanoke. [bruce@bzcenterprises.com]

**Cory Crouser** is a graduate student at Hollins University earning his MFA in creative writing; from Portland, OR, he's a writer, photographer, producer, and enjoys film and acting. [corycrouser@msn.com]

**Tim Bradshaw** is the executive director for the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport. A native of Roanoke who returned to the area in 2014, Tim has an Aviation BA degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and a Master's in Public Administration from Western Kentucky University. He lives in Troutville on a small farm with his wife Janee. His daughter Jessica and son-in-law Matt reside in Roanoke. Tim is an avid outdoorsman.

**Lisa Clause** is senior director of marketing and philanthropy at Richfield Living. She is a recent MBA graduate with distinction of Liberty University and has a bachelor's degree in marketing and minor in professional and technical writing at Virginia Tech. She began her career at the Roanoke Times, moved to WSET television rising to national sales manager. She co-owns Fine Line Interiors with her husband, and enjoys gardening, bike riding, and church activities.

**Mike Dame** is the vice president of marketing and communications at Carilion Clinic. A graduate of the University of Florida, he spent nearly a decade as a sportswriter for the Orlando Sentinel before transitioning to a career in digital

communications that landed him at Virginia Tech in 2005; he joined Carilion in 2008. Mike lives in Roanoke with his wife Valeria and enjoys golf, guitar, spending time with friends and cheering on his beloved Florida Gators.

**Dan Dowdy** is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (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 40 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

**Katie Gehrt** is the director of marketing and communications for the Moss Arts Center and the Center for Creativity, Arts, and Technology at Virginia Tech. She holds degrees from Virginia Tech and West Virginia University. She's an avid equestrian who loves to travel and lives in Blacksburg with her husband and potcake dog.

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

**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]

**Frank Martin** is a senior associate broker and the top sales agent for Hall Associates, Inc., the oldest commercial real estate brokerage west of Richmond. He specializes in Sales and Leasing for office and industrial properties in southwest Virginia.

**Mary Ann L. Miller** is vice president of business banking and community relations at Bank of Botetourt. A graduate of Bridgewater College, she has been in the banking industry for more than fifteen years and currently serves on the board and executive committee as past-president with the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce, a board member with the Daleville Institute, and is vice chair of the board of with the Botetourt Family YMCA. A native of Botetourt County, she resides in Daleville with her husband, Matthew and their son Ira.

**Paul Phillips** has served as the chief executive officer of Freedom First Credit Union for the last twenty years. Freedom First was chartered in 1956 as a federally-insured member-owned financial cooperative and currently serves residents and businesses through its ten locations in the Roanoke and New River valleys. Prior to moving to Roanoke in 1998 Paul and his wife Missy lived in Cheyenne, Wyoming with their three children. A resident of Fincastle, Paul enjoys numerous outdoor activities, travelling and spending time with his two granddaughters.

**Brian Powell** is the owner and operator of Wine Gourmet in Roanoke Virginia. Brian moved to Roanoke when he purchased Wine Gourmet in 2011. Brian attended Virginia Tech and is an avid Hokie Fan! A member of the Guild of Sommoliers, Brian resides in Roanoke and enjoys time with family and friends.

**Michael Shelton** writes a column on financial management for FRONT. He owns 360 Tax Solutions and 260 Financial Solutions, and holds his Series 6, 63 & 65

licenses and received the prestigious Chartered Financial Retirement Counselor designation. [michael@discover360Financial.com]

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

**Nicholas Vaassen** is a graphic designer with 19 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 non-profits 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]

**Amy White** is the Dean of STEM (School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) at Virginia Western Community College. She has a Bachelor's degree in biology from James Madison University, a Master's degree in microbiology and immunology from Virginia Commonwealth University, hails from Botetourt County, and has worked at VWCC since 2003.

**Sheri Winesett** is currently the Chief Innovation Officer at the Innovation Mill in Vinton. She is also adjunct faculty for Virginia Western Community College teaching Business, Entrepreneurship and Leadership. Reach her at 202.253.2830 or [sherif@sheriwinesett.com]

“One-hundred percent of medical bills that come across my desk have overcharges, redundant fees, and errors. It's ungodly.

— Page 59

## WELLNESS FRONT



O'Malley

**Susan O'Malley** has returned to Friendship as administrator for assisted living. She served in this same from 2005 to 2012. A graduate of Virginia Baptist Hospital School of Nursing, O'Malley was named Assisted Living Administrator of the Year by the Virginia Health Care Association (VHCA) in 2012.



Hartman

Richfield Living has announced the selection of **Scotti Hartman** as Director of Community and Development. Hartman, a graduate of

Roanoke College, has been a member of the Richfield team for 25 years. She has served as Director of Campus Admissions and Administrator of the T. Stuart Payne Center.



Grisso

Richfield Living has announced the selection of **Cherie Grisso** as Chief Executive Officer. She had acted as the interim CEO prior. Grisso has been with Richfield Living since 2015.

## NON-PROFIT FRONT



Turner

**Kim Turner** has been appointed as Director

of Development for Jefferson Center in Roanoke, bring thirty years of nonprofit fundraising and management experience to the organization. Turner also has background in arts and culture, as well as education. Most recently, Turner has worked as a nonprofit fundraising consultant; before that, she held senior development positions for the Taubman Museum of Art, North Cross School, and Guilford College.

**Lisa Uhl** is the new Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Salem-based Feeding Southwest Virginia.

## MUNICIPAL FRONT

**Barry Thompson** will retire as Town Manager in Vinton effective January 1, 2021. Thompson was appointed to that position in 2016. He previously served as Finance Director and Treasurer since coming to the eastern Roanoke

County town from the City of Bedford in 2004. In all Thompson will retire with 30 years of service in local government.



Robertson

**W. Brent Robertson** has been named Assistant City Manager for Community Development for the City of Roanoke, replacing Brian Townsend upon his retirement at the end of June 2020. Since October 2019, Robertson has been serving as Accounting and Systems Manager in the City's Department of Finance. Prior to that Robertson was the Franklin County Administrator and a budget director in Roanoke County.

*Compiled by Gene Marrano*



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

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

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

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



DCJS #11-9804



Carillion Clinic's IRONMAN

*Ironman 70.3 still a go*

At press time the inaugural Carillion Clinic's **IRONMAN 70.3** Virginia's Blue Ridge was still on for June 7, although in a news release The Ironman Group said any decision to modify, postpone or restrict the event anticipated to draw around 2500 swimmers, bikers and runners would be "based on availability of community resources and ongoing event-specific risk assessment." The Ironman 70.3 was estimated to have an \$8 million-dollar economic impact according to Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge. The Blue Ridge Marathon (scheduled for April) has been canceled due to changing conditions concerning COVID-19 showing up in the Roanoke Valley, according to the Roanoke Outside Foundation. The BRM and related races are a major fundraiser for the Foundation.

*RC Poll shows faith in economy*

The quarterly Index of Consumer Sentiment phone survey of 601

Virginians taken statewide in mid-February by the Institute for Policy and Opinion Research at Roanoke College, after the coronavirus arrived in the U.S. but just before it showed up in the Commonwealth, hit close to all time highs. That despite stock market volatility as well. The four-point spike in that index was fueled by "overall positive belief in the current and future U.S. economy," says Dr. Alice Louise Kassens, a senior analyst and professor of economics at Roanoke College. Just 7 of 601 respondents to that February survey cited the coronavirus as a major concern in their lives she adds.

*Esports: it's a thing*

**Roanoke College** will be competing in a national esports league in the fall of 2020 the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) with varsity and junior varsity teams in three titles: League of Legends, Rocket League and Counter Strike Global Offensive. Approximately 20 students had

committed to the Roanoke College esports team as of late February with room for additional players. Think this is just a college dorm room fad? There are professional Esports leagues and some individuals making six-figure livings playing digital games, where they can compete against others online.

*LewisGale expands*

**LewisGale Physicians**

has opened two new locations in Covington, for Primary Care and Otolaryngology (Ear, Nose and Throat) practices. Both practices are housed in a newly renovated building, located in Covington at 120 Main Street. LewisGale Physicians has also opened a primary care office in Floyd, located on Franklin Pike. "This is another important step that we are taking as we look to expand our footprint to better serve our patients close to home," said Michelle Peery, director of operations at LewisGale Physicians.

*More NS jobs leaving town*

Just months after announcing layoffs at its East End shop and Shaffer's Crossing facility, **Norfolk Southern** announced that its Roanoke Distribution Center will close and the Roanoke Locomotive Shop jobs will be transferred to Altoona, PA. In a news release Norfolk Southern corporate stated, "this decision follows a 48% decline in coal tons shipped since

2008. Norfolk Southern also has seen a 22% reduction in our locomotive fleet since late 2018, reducing the volume of locomotive maintenance and repair required to operate safely." The distribution center is slated to close this month, the locomotive shop next month.

*Lawrence expansion*

**Lawrence Equipment,**

a business division of Roanoke-based Lawrence Companies, has opened a new Case Construction dealership and service center. The purpose-built facility is located just down the street from the previous location, now located just off Route 11/Lee Highway in Roanoke.

*Roanoke College diving into STEM*

Pending final accreditation approval, **Roanoke College** plans to launch an engineering science major in the fall of 2020. The U.S. Board of Labor Statistics shows STEM career occupations are expected to grow at a higher rate than other occupations in the next decade. Roanoke College students who major in engineering science will be prepared for fields such as ballistics, electrical and computer engineering, materials analysis and testing, information science, data analytics and audio design/production.

*E&H to offer "unique" engineering program*

Beginning this fall, **Emory & Henry College**

will offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Science, giving students “a broad-based fundamental engineering education through exploration and application of engineering principles.” Successful students will be prepared says an E&H release for careers in a variety of engineering fields, or in positions focused on technical writing, marketing, project management, etc.

study as a first step. ROA spokesperson Brad Boettcher: “the master plan is about facilities, its not about air service. We schedule the public comments early enough in the process that they can be incorporated in the plan. We’ve gone through the initially planning stages [already].” The study will also forecast Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport passenger growth for the next two decades.

### ROA Master Plan

With airport traffic up 16 percent over the past two years this seemed like a good time for Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport to start updating its 20-year master plan. The first of three opportunities for the public to weigh in took place in late February and two more public sessions will follow as the updated master plan is crafted. Additional gates, longer runways for bigger planes, more parking perhaps are anticipated agenda items. An outside firm is crafting an airport

### Bank of Botetourt coming to Vinton

Meanwhile Buchanan-based Bank of Botetourt will expand into the Town of Vinton next year, after putting up a new building at 400 Pollard Street in the downtown area. The bank’s mortgage company, Virginia Mountain Mortgage, will also be based there. The new building will go up at the spot where High’s Ice Cream was most recently located. President & CEO G. Lynn Hayth III calls Bank of Botetourt (chartered in 1899) “the

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largest community bank headquartered in the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area,” after noting the mergers that have absorbed local financial institutions in recent years.

Bryan,” says the news release. It rolled out first in Virginia and southeastern states on March 2.

### Ready to take your money

Member One FCU held a ribbon cutting ceremony at their new Daleville retail facility, located in Daleville Town Center, in early March. The new credit union location officially opened its doors for business at the beginning of February. It is the 15th retail center for the Roanoke-based credit union, and the first in Daleville.

### New beer brewing in Daleville

You can’t get a burger anymore at the former Ballast Point Brewing Co. tasting room and bistro, but they still make beer. Constellation Brands, now owners of (most of) the Ballast Point line, are now making a new American Lager “session beer” in Daleville, Two-Lane American Lager, “In collaboration with (country music’s) Luke

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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**ENTRÉ**



L-Pat Palmer, CEO R-Linda Mullins VP of Compliance Research

# The Quest for Better Medical Billing

By Cory Crouser

**Beacon HCI audits medical bills and serves as a consumer-patient advocate; Pat Palmer says she finds abuse everywhere, all the time.**

American healthcare providers are systematically robbing patients, and—according to Pat Palmer, founder and CEO of Salem's Beacon Healthcare Costs Illuminated (Beacon HCI)—it's no accident. "Healthcare systems are preying on vulnerable people," Palmer contends. "They're fraudulent, many of them, and abusive."

Referencing a Beacon HCI client's medical bill, Palmer explains that charge-masters (healthcare administrators tasked with pricing medical services and equipment) are a dubious bunch. "Here's a charge for a disposable towelette, \$33; here's one for a mucous recovery system—that's Kleenex, \$13. Many healthcare systems are running a 5,000 percent profit margin."

"Really, it's ungodly what we're allowing the medical industry to do," Palmer says fiercely. "These items aren't legally billable!" However, most patients never even see an itemized

bill, receiving instead only UB-04 statements from healthcare providers which function as generalized, nonspecific proofs of care.

"Nobody has a clue what they're paying for," Palmer explains. "One hundred percent of medical bills that come across my desk have overcharges, redundant fees and errors. Not 25 percent (as in years past), not 50—100 percent."

Palmer reminds that although healthcare providers are reluctant to provide itemized bills, they're legally obligated to provide them upon request. "Healthcare providers will oftentimes play the 'nobody asked for one' card or stall the process until people give up. But it's important people demand those itemized bills, scrutinize them.

"In no other industry is it okay to bill generally," Palmer laughs. "Imagine your grocery receipt says general meats, \$100.

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That's intolerable. "We have to [normalize], in America, a system [wherein] patients can scrutinize their medical bills prior to payment. It's that simple.

"If this were to happen, it's my opinion that we could cut 1/3 of all healthcare costs in this country." To that end, Beacon HCI—under Palmer's direction—has developed LumenEx, a proprietary, subscription-based 'scrutiny software'.

By cross-checking pricing against federal standards, LumenEx can identify and isolate illegally billed items in medical statements uploaded by clients. "It's a lawyer as well as a digital nurse," Palmer explains. "LumenEx can accurately value medical services and determine if billed services were necessary, if they actually took place."

The software then adjusts billable totals, and Beacon HCI's team verifies its findings. "That's the amount patients pay," Palmer

explains, "ours." Of course, healthcare providers can appeal Beacon HCI's findings. "But they usually don't," Palmer says. "Federal law requires they supply documentation supporting their case, and, of course, they don't have any documentation."

LumenEx is available nationwide to corporations and individuals, although Palmer says corporations, like insurers, are much likelier to take advantage of the service. "Insurance companies might have a few of their own people scrutinizing bills, but they're not equipped to do it as completely as us," Palmer states, "and oftentimes—not all the time—they're not really interested in adjusting totals."

According to Palmer, many insurers—though, again, not all insurers—have made "mutually beneficial" arrangements with healthcare providers, arrangements wherein they receive discounted services

in exchange for providing hospitals and clinics with clientele.

“Lots of [insurance companies] are already getting discounted services,” Palmer contends, “and they’re not interested in rocking the boat. Patients pay higher premiums, and that covers [the insurance company’s] loss.

“Medicare, on the other hand, sets their own prices, so they have no interest in policing healthcare providers’ pricing and billing. Medicare won’t do anything that doesn’t directly benefit Medicare.”

Individuals, Palmer says, might abstain from seeking treatment because they can’t afford medical bills or high premiums. “They’ll delay [treatment] a day, or a week, saying ‘maybe I’ll get better,’ hoping they will. But some of them don’t get better—they die.” Palmer pauses, collects herself, continues, “Because healthcare providers profit from systemic fraud, from abusive

billing practices, people are literally dying.”

In response, Hannah Curtis of Roanoke’s Carilion Clinic says, “Carilion Clinic takes its financial responsibility to patients seriously, including providing accurate billing statements.” Every situation is different. Each is individualized and complex. Carilion invests in its teams and technology in a multifaceted approach to billing that includes several checks and balances. “Those strong policies and procedures minimize error. Should an error occur, we correct it.”

LewisGale Physicians—Southwest Virginia’s other high-volume healthcare provider—declined the opportunity to comment.

According to Pat Palmer, only two percent of Beacon HCI’s determinations are met with appeal. “We’re simply advocating for fair and responsible pricing,” Palmer says. “It’s hard to appeal basic ethics.” 

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- 4** Shortness of breath
- 5** Heartburn, nausea or indigestion-like pain
- 6** Extreme fatigue or exhaustion\*

\* Women may experience signs that may not be as easy to recognize, such as fatigue or feeling flu-like symptoms.

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