

# Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 137

FEBRUARY 2020

Nonprofits: Stewardship  
and Return on Investment

Divorce...And Business

RBTC & RAMP

Carilion's Mike Dame

Woodsdale Group

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A close-up portrait of a woman with long, light-colored hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Nonprofits Still Need ROI

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# WELCOME TO THE FRONT

How do those local non-profits that ask for and receive millions of dollars in donations and grants annually spend that money? That's the focus of our cover story and the follow up this month. We invite you to check out the latest news on Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council and the RAMP regional accelerator in Roanoke. We talked with an attorney on how a personal divorce can impact you when you own a business. We'll introduce you to Carilion's Mike Dame. And we'll introduce you to the folks running a multi-small-business group in Fincastle.

We hope these features provide some food for thought as you read the February issue of the new-look Front.

**Tom Field**  
Publisher

**Gene Marrano**  
Editor

“ ”  
I saw how those things would work together.  
— Page 59

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# The Call for Stewardship

by Nanette Levin



“Have an honest conversation. — Page 20

Cover photography of Jeanne McCormack by Tom Field.



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Priscilla Richardson



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## Advisory Board

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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**Cory Crouser**



**Dan Dowdy**



**Mike Leigh**



**Nanette Levin**



**Gene Marrano**



**Nicholas Vaassen**



**Kaitlyn Van Buskirk**



**Sherri Winesett**

““  
 Roanoke has had a significant amount of growth in tourism as well as business travel.

— Page 33



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 Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport / transportation



**Lisa Clause**  
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**Mike Dame**  
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**Katie Gehrt**  
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““  
 I’m having a great time.

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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 29.

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# The Call for Stewardship

## Nonprofits appeal to a giving community

**Executive Summary:**  
*With plenty of social needs to be addressed and in some cases, donations slowing down, it's about reaching various target audiences effectively – and demonstrating a good Return on Investment.*

By Nanette Levin

Area not-for-profit leaders recognize they're fortunate to be operating in Western Virginia, where residents have a generous nature. Nationally, many donation-driven organizations are struggling to survive. According to GuideStar, "Around 50 percent of the nation's nonprofits are operating with less than one month's cash reserves." In the Roanoke region, charity staffs cite steady or robust giving, particularly from long-term donors. That doesn't mean they're not getting creative about how they appeal to their existing base while also striving to reach a new generation of benefactors.

With standard deductions doubling as a result of recent federal tax law changes some 501 (c) (3) organizations also have expressed concern that some donors would take that route and not itemize on their tax returns – meaning they didn't need write offs from donations. One of them locally was United Way of Roanoke Valley. Now-departed President and CEO Afira DeVries said last summer that's



Afira DeVries

why it was more important than ever perhaps to assure a good ROI as one way to keep the dollars flowing in. “Most United Ways fund individual programs. We fund collaboratives that are focused on solving for ‘X,’” she said then. “We ask the social services community to come together. We fund partnerships. It is incredibly efficient and is incredibly attractive to [prospective] funders. It attracts resources to the community.”

## Million dollar endowments and more

The Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, founded in 1988, has close to \$80 million in assets that it spreads across 330 different endowment funds, according to Michelle Eberly, Director of Grants and Social Engagement. They also administer unrestricted and discretionary funds that donors support. Eberly says there’s another \$120-130 million in future estate commitments. “We’ve grown a lot within the past 10 or 15 years,” she states. “This is a very generous community. People want to help organizations. People want to help others.”

Board members and staff have identified two current focus areas, namely: education and youth, and cultural and community enhancement. Fund recipients reach north to Allegheny County and south through Franklin County to Martinsville. “When we see a need and we want to help and support that need, we’re very quick to respond appropriately,” states Eberly. “We recognize that a lot of local organizations, especially smaller non-profits, don’t have the staff (for complicated application and reporting requirements).” Grants range from \$100 to \$100,000 and more.

“There are a lot of long-term, long-standing not-for-profits in the community that we have supported for years,” explains Eberly. She also notes that smaller and newer organizations need more guidance and training. The Community Foundation also provides technical assistance including training on audit preparation, best governing practices, adopting smart internal controls and strategies for growth. With donors wanting to see their money make the most impact making sure the dollars are spent wisely is an imperative these days.

## Reaching younger donors

What’s worked for decades at local organizations isn’t effective with most millennials in the community. Lee Clark, CEO of the Rescue Mission, says “We are thoughtful about how we utilize social media. How do we engage a younger group of donors and volunteers? I think we’ve made some headway there. I think we have more work to do.” Clark sees offering an app for volunteering online as “something I think is in our future as we look forward. We already do a lot of that with giving.” He notes “it’s important to teach



Michelle Eberly



Lee Clark



Anna Semonco

our children to be selfless with resources . . . including time and money.”

Anna Semonco, Executive Director of Ronald McDonald House in Roanoke (which provides shelter for the families of children in town for medical care) says they’re trying to appeal to a “younger group that, of course, are using the online giving platform.” She adds there’s “still a great majority of people who send in a check.” Semonco says her challenge is to support all the different giving platforms in a way that speaks to each donor. This includes social media, direct mail, Facebook ads and other digital campaigns, direct deposit offerings and processing mailed checks.

“We track all of our donations and where they come from,” says Semonco. “Over the past couple of years, we have seen an increase in online donations. We have seen an increase in that a lot of corporations, if they are doing employee giving, want to do direct deposit. We’ve seen an increase where people hold Facebook fundraisers. But we still have the greatest majority of our donations come in with a check. Direct mail is still a huge part of our giving as well.”

“We’re still trying to find ways to reach out to young people,” states Michelle Eberly with the Community Foundation. “The majority of our donors are a bit older, but we’re constantly trying to seek out and find potential board members that are in that younger crowd. It’s just a completely different generation.”

## Keeping money local

“People that were born in Roanoke, moved away, came back . . .there’s always just something in them that they want to support this area that they’ve grown to love,” says Eberly. “The majority of them, if they’re from here and live here, want to keep the money in this community.” Captain Jamie Clay of the Salvation Army in Roanoke also recognizes that it’s important for her donors to support neighbors. “Everything that they give stays local in the area or where they designate it.” She notes even the national website recognizes local billing codes and awards that donated money accordingly. “The biggest thing that’s important to people is to know that their donations are used locally,” says Semonco of the Ronald McDonald House. “Their donations stay here 100%. That’s been our message this year more than ever.”

## Collaborating for better results

“In the past five years, I’ve seen a shift now where the community is starting to realize that working in silos is not the most efficient way to address the needs of our



The greatest majority of our donations come in with a check.

## 21 Entities Working Together

The Blue Ridge Continuum of Care is the region's local planning group working to end homelessness. The lead entity for the Blue Ridge Continuum of Care planning process is the Blue Ridge Interagency Council on Homelessness (BRICH). This leadership group includes twenty-one members, drawn from the general public, seven local governments, mental health programs, state and federal programs, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and colleges/universities throughout the Roanoke region, including a formerly homeless person. The BRICH serves as the facilitator and coordinator of the community's efforts to prevent, treat and end homelessness. For more information visit: [www.endhomelessnessblueridge.org](http://www.endhomelessnessblueridge.org) —*Nanette Levin*



**The Earl D. and Carrie Leigh Doran Fund grant recipients (L to R): Dina Hackley-Hunt with SARA, Inc.; Daria VanRavestein with DePaul Community Resources; Marie Muddiman with Family Promise of Greater Roanoke; and Christina Hatch with Children's Trust. The purpose of this fund is to support organizations that help individuals and families who are confronting catastrophic, life-altering circumstance and to also support organizations that provide shelter, care, and assistance to battered women.**



**LovABLE Services, Inc. receives a grant of \$75,000 from the Foundation's unrestricted Community Catalyst Funds to support its efforts in the completion of their comprehensive training program as well as the opening of their job site, Chris's Coffee & Custard. This unique shop (slated to open sometime this year after construction delays at its 9th Street SEW industrial park location in Roanoke) will offer gainful and meaningful employment for individuals of all walks of life, focusing on those with special abilities. The shop will have on-site support staff who will provide training, and supervision in the day-to-day operations and help bridge the gap between the community and those with special abilities who are integrating themselves in the workplace and everyday life. Pictured L to R: Cindy Shelor, Community Foundation Board Chair; Beth Woodrum, Executive Director of LovABLE Services, Inc.; and Chris Woodrum.**



Jeanne McCormack



We're able to be a real powerhouse.

community here in Roanoke," says Jeanne McCormack, Executive Director of ARCH (Advocate | Rebuild | Change | Heal). "And there's a big push for collaboration between different partnering agencies in the community."

McCormack cites the Blue Ridge Continuum of Care as an excellent example of local groups banding together for better results (see sidebar). While she notes the group has been in existence for about 10 years, "It hasn't been until recently that we've really been working on strategies to eradicate homelessness."

The group gets together for monthly meetings to identify the most chronic homeless cases, then creates a strategy with combined resources to get these individuals off the streets more permanently. "Each [agency] has their own special needs, but when we put it all together, we're able to be a real powerhouse." This might include providing immediate shelter, recovery assistance, longer term housing solutions and more. McCormack, who holds a master's degree in public health, sees the group as working much more efficiently with the help of state and federal input on the groups' strengths and challenges. This provides fresh ideas culled from success stories developed outside the region.

ARCH in fact is the result of Bethany Hall and Trust House merging in January of 2016, McCormack explains. "Two heads were better than one. It was easier to apply for grants when the needs for homelessness and the opium epidemic combined was pretty significant." Today, the agency is focused on helping the most vulnerable in the community by stemming chronic homelessness, drug abuse, alcohol addiction, and serving those in crisis situations. McCormack sees mental illness, homelessness and substance abuse as a triad that causes the most trauma.

Others weigh in on how to make the best use of their funds: "we really rely on our professional advisors," say Eberly. This



ARCH Trust House



ARCH Bethany Hall



includes estate planning attorneys and financial planners. "We absolutely collaborate with others," says the Rescue Mission's CEO Lee Clark. "For us that means working with our homeless assistance network. Health care, mental health care, resources for housing the homeless, all of us together can make a safer, healthier community."

## This goes for the cultural community as well

Arts and culture-based non-profits have to show they have a good plan in place as well these days. Roanoke City public arts coordinator Doug Jackson says organizations asking for more than \$25,000 as the budget process rolls around again have to submit a business plan and go through a certified public audit. "That's a large grant for us," says Jackson, who succeeded Susan Jennings at the end of 2019. "We look at the financial records for all [applicants]. It's a rigorous program; this is public funding." The volunteer Roanoke Arts Commission helps vet those cultural groups seeking public funds; Jackson also oversees the Commission.

Meanwhile the Roanoke Cultural Endowment is striving to raise 20 million dollars over the next ten years – then give away a million annually off the interest earned. "There will be a process at least as [rigorous] as the Roanoke Arts Commission" says RCE executive director Shaleen Powell. Once grants start to be issued, they'll be given out in three-year cycles so "it's also predictable [for better planning purposes]. There will be an accountability component as well."

## Events prove critical for cash flow

The Ronald McDonald House relies heavily on third-party initiated events. "When people decide to hold a fundraiser for us, that's something they do to give back," says Semonco. These are usually organized by people who have stayed at the House. "We have a third-party fundraising agreement," she explains. "People come to us and work with us." Businesses get involved too. Semonco cites One Earth selling Christmas trees and a Homestead Creamery spaghetti dinner and a gala held at Smith Mountain Lake as examples. Hearts of Hope is another big fundraising event that includes schools, churches, restaurants and other businesses. "People have gotten really creative about making a huge heart out of all our Hearts of Hope," she says. These placards sell for \$1 donations during the Valentine's Day season.

Then there is the Roanoke Valley Gives event in mid-March (see the Good Work Column elsewhere in this issue), which benefited some 160 non-profits in the area last year. The Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia organizes this event, which takes place over a 24-hour period online. For the Rescue Mission, the Atlantic Union Drumstick Dash



Doug Jackson



Shaleen Powell



Rescue Mission volunteers serving dinner to guests

5K race on Thanksgiving morning has raised over \$3 million during its 14-year run. More than 10,000 show up every year to run or walk the downtown Roanoke course. During the past three years, the organization has also planned a concert event in July, the Rescue's anniversary month, designed to help raise awareness and funds during a typically slow giving time.

## Caring goes both ways

"Years ago, the Salvation Army was pretty popular at a kettle stand [during the Christmas season]," states Jamie Clay with the Salvation Army. "Donors would drop change in and give until the cows came home, in a sense. In the last few years [we've found] people are busier; therefore, they don't volunteer as often. [It's] a younger generation that would prefer to stay disengaged and prefer to do things electronically. What we've done as an organization, at least at the kettle stand, is we've adopted a new Google Pay, Apple Pay system." This allows donors to pay by phone.

"We're constantly telling our story in the public as to how people can help," she continues. This includes educating children on how due to their generosity the money raised in kettles is going to help feed a family at Christmas. "Relationships with our volunteers is really important," states Clark. "Inviting input, keeping them informed, communicating the values that we hold in both our donors and our volunteers and just how critical they are to us in being able to successfully fulfill our mission."

"We have to raise over \$540,000 a year [for Ronald McDonald House]," says Semonco. "That is our operational budget. For us to do that it is always a challenge. I think what's most important to find is what speaks to the person. No matter what time of year it is we still have families that



Relationships with our volunteers is really important.

— Lee Clark

are coming here needing a place to stay. If it wasn't for their donor support, we wouldn't be here." Semonco reciprocates by includes sending out thank you notes, scheduling face-to-face time, making grateful phone calls and underscoring what an important role the South Roanoke facility offers at emotionally charged times for families.

## Greater leverage with collaboration

Like her predecessor, the new President and CEO for United Way of Roanoke Valley – Abby Verdillo Hamilton, who has actually been with UWRV for 18 years in various capacities – is big on collaboration. "It's going to take more than one program, one agency to get [people in need] out of a situation. It will really require everybody working together – recognizing that we are all tackling the same problem. Adds Hamilton, who was named to succeed Afira DeVries last month after serving in an interim role since last summer, "there are greater opportunities to leverage grant funding. Truly the whole landscape of philanthropy focuses towards collaboration – greater leverage opportunity for grants, more resources for the community, eliminating duplication while making sure we have more effective solutions for the families we are trying to serve."

"In our community, there is a tremendous group of people that are really compassionate, and they want to help, and they want to make a difference in people's lives," says Clark. Which is why it's more important than ever perhaps to reach a range of target audiences most effectively – and to spend those precious donated dollars wisely. 

–Gene Marrano contributed to this story

“ ”

It's going to take more than on program, one agency... It will require everybody working together... We are all tackling the same problem.

—Abby Verdillo Hamilton

Abby Hamilton





# GRANTS FOR THE GREATER GOOD

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

---

**There's plenty of giving in the New River Valley – where they also keep a close eye on how those funds are spent.**

The Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) began in 1994 with a group of local people pooling cash. Unlike some other organizations, community foundations keep the donations meted out targeted for a specific geographic area. "It really was a grass roots effort," said Jessica Wingau, Executive Director. Twenty-five years later, the scale and intensity of the CFNRV has increased, with \$11 million in assets and 200 endowments. One of its main functions is donor services: the foundation helps people who want to give back to their community by making giving easier and more enjoyable – in part because they can rely on the CFNRV to choose grantees that are doing exceptional work.

CFNRV then sees that the money is "put to good use," said Wingau. Non-profits may apply for up to \$5,000 in programmatic support or \$3,000 in operating support. Wingau said that non-profits probably feel that standards are tough because CFNRV asks for a "good deal" of information. The upside is that the average grant size has increased, because more money is available as the invested endowments grow over time. The foundation tries to fully fund as many projects as possible, since this make a greater impact.

A distribution committee of 15 people from across the New River Valley vets applications using a scoring system.



They first prioritize based on quality, then line up those applications with the funding sources. "It's like a puzzle," said Wingau, adding that they have to make sure grants match the intents of the donors who are often "deeply invested." Wingau may also participate in the process of reading applications. CFNRV is able to fund about half the number of requests that they receive. At the 2019 grantee luncheon,

the foundation distributed checks to 45 projects for over \$143,000.

In order to ensure good return on investment, CFNRV requires grantees to submit evaluations. Questions include how the money was used, what the challenges were, how the project changed over time (Wingau said the foundation strives to be nimble enough to evolve

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offer needed items. This year the money went for girls' bras. It is one of the most asked for items in our teen department. With this grant, we will buy as many as possible and they will all be gone by the end of our shopping week. That demonstrates the great need."

Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley received \$5,000 for their Skill Up NRV program, which helps adults achieve success in the workplace. Though 160 volunteers dedicate their time and talents to adult literacy through the organization, said Linda Jilk, Executive Director, this funding goes toward additional staffing to strengthen partnerships with other organizations that support local literacy and to provide

with the project), and what outcomes resulted from the grant. Grantees report on metrics. This data goes into promotional literature to other potential donors or is distributed in news releases as part of the foundation's "storytelling," said Wingau.

## Stories like ...

The Montgomery County Christmas Store was a \$4,000 grantee at the 2019 year-end luncheon. Volunteer Molly McClintock said in an email, "every year, the Christmas Store buyers suggest a special project for the CFNRV grant. In the past, we have done children's underwear, men's shoes, women's underwear, and bras. These are all things we cannot afford to purchase in sufficient quantity for every shopper. The grants allow our extremely thrifty shoppers to squeeze maximum benefit from every dollar and

training and ongoing support for successful tutoring. To gauge its return on investment, the non-profit tracks the number who achieve job-related goals and the number of participants (240 adults last year versus 167 the year before), as well as retention, which is important to long term success. "An investment in literacy is an investment in the economy," said Jilk, noting that job success increases these adults' ability to be consumers and lessens their need for government assistance.

The foundation is constantly improving the process, Wingau said. It provides somewhat of a training ground for small non-profits to learn how to write grants so that they may use the skills to apply for bigger grants from other sources. Concluded Wingau: CFNRV's evolution is true to the founding group's goal, to support the local community in a variety of ways. 



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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Lesa Hanlin

**Executive Summary:**  
*The skills that create exceptional educators can also help in a business setting. So says someone in the know.*

*Lesa Hanlin is the executive director of Roanoke Regional Initiatives and works for Outreach & International Affairs at Virginia Tech. Reach her at [lesa@vt.edu](mailto:lesa@vt.edu).*

# What I learned about life by being a school teacher

As a recovering schoolteacher (no offense intended) here are some lessons I have successfully applied to the workplace:

### 1. If students aren't responding, change your approach.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. If you aren't getting the results you want, change your approach. Read that book, find a mentor, have an honest conversation. The results you want may be on the outside of your comfort zone.

### 2. Students will remember less of what you taught them and more of how you made them feel.

Think about your favorite teacher. They were likely encouraging, supportive, and held you to high standards. They made you feel something positive. How do you make people feel? Do people want to work with you or ask you for advice? Self-reflect on how you make others feel. If you don't like what you discover, do better.

### 3. You are a professional. Strive to project that image at all times, even when you think no one is looking.

It's like seeing a teacher in the grocery store, dressed casually with a cart full of groceries. It's almost shocking. They have a life outside the classroom! I never want to run into someone not at my best. What if the president/CEO of the company drops by? Always be professional. Always be ready.

### 4. It's not as much about learning styles as it is about learning experiences.

People remember experiences. How can you create experiences for your customers or colleagues? Our staff read the book *Surprise* by Tania Luna and LeeAnn Renninger, an inspiring read that will have you intentionally creating experiences in no time.

### 5. There is a degree of entertainment to teaching.

I learned to have stories, cartoons, and physical items on hand. What props could you integrate into your next presentation? What could you bring to a meeting that makes a point?

Teachers impart more than just knowledge. Lessons you learn from favorite teachers can inform you in the workplace. After all, "teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions" (unknown). What did you learn from your favorite teacher? How could you apply that today? 

## Valentine's Day is expensive

While fewer people are celebrating Valentine's Day, those who do are finding ways to go bigger. They're giving not only to significant others, but also to children, parents, friends and coworkers. "Those who are participating are spending more than ever," says National Retail Federation President and CEO Matthew Shay. The average amount is almost \$162, up 13% from 2018 and topping the record set in 2016. Total spending in 2019 was estimated at \$20.7 billion. That's a tidy sum by anyone's standards, unless, of course, you're the federal government. Men bear the brunt of the expense, with an average \$229+ spend. Women's Valentine's Day spending at \$97.77 pales in comparison, but it's still too much.

If you view Valentine's Day as a Hallmark Holiday, you're getting closer to the majority. An estimated 51% in the U.S. continue to celebrate. That's down from a 63% high in 2007. Sadly, those who tend to have little or no savings, are jumping in with the biggest spend. The millennials rule with those 35-44 leading at about \$279, closely followed by ages 25-34 shelling out close to \$240. Sure, the first group is comprised mostly of Generation X, but who even calls themselves that anyway? Point being, there are better ways for cash-poor adults to spend money. Maybe we can all agree the 20% who spend \$886 million on their pets for the "holiday" are going overboard?

### Spend wiser for a better gift

I'm a numbers guy, so I'm always thinking about what seemingly wasted dollars could buy. Is that candy really good for anyone? Can you purchase a \$10 bouquet instead of an \$80 arrangement? Maybe your pet might enjoy some extra loving more than a Valentine's gift? That \$200+ spend, invested annually, multiplies with compound interest. Let's say you're a younger millennial dumping \$240 on each Valentine's Day. Take \$40 for a token spouse treat with some left over for your kids and co-workers if you wish. People appreciate thoughtful gifts more than amount spent anyway. That \$200 compounded annually at 8% for 20 years is almost \$11,000. That's a year's worth of mortgage payments for a nice Roanoke house. It's three years of car payments on a good used vehicle. It's almost four years of utility payments for a 3-bedroom house.

Before you shell out tons on February 14th, consider a more thoughtful long-term strategy for your money. Call me at (540) 562-0123 if you need help. Author's note: Valentine's spending figures are from a 2019 National Retail Federation survey. 

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



## FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

### Executive Summary:

*Its not just those overpriced roses and the obligatory box of chocolates either.*



**Nanda Davis**

Marissa Yi/Bella Muse Photography

# Divorce, Business Style

By Gene Marrano

**When you think of Splitsville, the kids, the house and even the dog might come to mind. But what if there's a family business as well to consider? Maybe not the most "fun" article you'll ever read, but good to know - just in case.**

Nanda E. Davis, Attorney at Law, practices from an office on Campbell Avenue in downtown Roanoke. She is a 2012 George Mason University School of Law graduate. The Davis Law Practice specializes in all aspects of family law. "There are a lot of issues," when couples that own a business call it quits, she starts out by saying. When they make it to divorce court a judge decides whether that firm is marital or separate property belonging to just one of them. Or it could be a "hybrid," that belonged to one spouse before they were married, but when the couple tied the knot the other spouse contributed to the business. If it is a "marital hybrid" the court gets to decide how to slice up the pie. Presumably that's where the attorneys for each party would come in. Does one get to buy the other out? Could there be an offset from a retirement account as compensation? Trying to put a dollar figure on issues like the goodwill one party generates in running the business is also hard to quantify, notes Davis.

A business CPA may be called in to help make evaluations like that. Davis advises to have that done if it's a bigger company "where there's a lot of money," at stake as well. Cash flow and assets (i.e. commercial ovens in a restaurant) are all in the mix. But be ready to spend \$10,000 or more for one of those assessments Davis warns. For the "average, smaller" businesses her clients often own, she tells them it's not worth the expense. Expect to have all business records subpoenaed as well – that's what Davis says she does. "Anything that shows where there is money in the business."

Sometimes people don't want to turn over financial records – maybe everything hasn't been done quite by the book – and Davis says the thought of lawyers going over everything "with a fine-tooth comb" often leads to deal making as a more prudent alternative. She asks what each spouse contributed while married – was it financial? Or sweat equity,

perhaps years working the front counter or keeping the books? How much one party gets in a business settlement can also impact spousal support.

What about a prenuptial agreement that hammers out the details on business ownership? Davis says for couples later on in life where one is coming into marriage when the other spouse has a well-established firm, that makes sense. (That also makes sense she says if you're getting married/remarried for example at 55 and want to protect a retirement account.) For younger couples just starting their life together, and where they may need to lean on each other as a business gets off the ground – someone has to watch the kids – "I caution people against that. Chances are they'll be working together for this business."

A business one spouse may start and run solely may not be all theirs when divorcing however, since Virginia is an equitable distribution state, notes Davis. What happens during the union – good (a thriving company) or bad (debt) – is "presumptively marital," she adds. The split may not be 50-50 however, and could be weighted towards a spouse who did the heavy lifting.

Davis referenced everything from the viewpoint of a married couple, and there's a good reason: Virginia is not a Common Law state, no matter how long you just live with someone, and "at that point if [a business] is not titled together, there's nothing a court can do." With emotions often running high and both parties wanting their pound of flesh perhaps, she says getting past that leads to a better meeting of the minds. "Let go of the things that aren't important," is her sage advice. "It's really hard when you're young and you haven't thought through some of those life scenarios," says Nanda Davis. That's where family attorneys like her come in. Contact Davis at [www.davislawpractice.com](http://www.davislawpractice.com) 



## BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

**Executive Summary:**  
*The victim mentality.  
Sound familiar? Don't  
use it as an excuse.*

## Don't be a victim

One of the most common skills I help leaders develop is an attitude of greater personal responsibility. We all like to think we have this attitude, but many leaders instead have a victim mentality, and it's holding back many organizations from greater success. Let me explain.

Having a strong attitude toward personal responsibility means holding yourself accountable for the level of success you have achieved. No excuses. No blaming others. No blaming the economy. No blaming tariffs. No blaming referees. You see, when leaders blame a lack of success on some outside influence, they are telling themselves (and others) that they can't do anything about it. In other words, they are a victim of their circumstances. In many cases there are outside factors that do influence short-term results, but it's critically important that leaders never use those factors as an excuse. By doing so, a victim mentality of having no control is developed and achieving greater success in the future will be elusive.

Many organizations suffer from this syndrome, but the most successful ones do not. The Kiwanis Club of Roanoke celebrated its 100th anniversary this January. At a time when most civic organizations are shrinking, this club is thriving. A couple years ago, they did some strategic planning and successfully developed new goals and programs to continue to be relevant in the community and grow their membership.

From that planning, the club developed an updated grant program to provide funds for students pursuing workforce credentials at Virginia Western Community College. Several local manufacturers (Plastics One, Integer, Graham-White, Medeco, Optical Cable) are partnering with the club to guarantee interviews to these students, and if hired, reimburse Kiwanis for the grant money provided. Those funds are then re-invested into more grant money. Instead of having a victim mentality, these organizations are being proactive to help overcome the challenge of a lack of skilled workers in our area.

Don't be a victim! Achieve greater success in 2020! 

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

““ Having a strong attitude toward personal responsibility means holding yourself accountable.

## Three Things2Know

In real estate there's an old saying: only three things matter – location, location, location. It's funny how that same adage has an application in the world of marketing and advertising as well. So many creative shops and ad agencies focus on the messaging – maybe even exclusively – with little thought or fanfare concerning where the material will run, when it will run, and how it will be rotated.

You have a bank on the south side of town and you run a billboard promoting it up in the northern suburbs. Your company's really fun radio commercial is in the sixth spot of a seven-commercial break. Your TV commercial created to target upscale homeowners is running right in the middle of the afternoon soaps. Location matters – in real estate and in marketing.

## How You Can Make It Work4You

You should pay attention to the messages you are creating and how you are putting them into the marketplace. That's a huge part of successful advertising and in the ultra-competitive landscape of 2020, it's really important you get that piece of the plan right. Do yourself a favor, though, and hold the placement of the outreach you are doing in equally high regard. Think before you lock in that annual agreement, sign up for that on-sale package, or decide about the billboard or newspaper advertisement. Even the best, most well-crafted ad has to be seen and heard by the right audience to create the momentum and branding you are hoping to gain. While it may seem simple and logical, you'd be surprised at how often I see or hear something that is way out of alignment or sorely out of position. So remember, placement is to advertising like location is to real estate. 🏠

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

“Location matters—in real estate and in marketing.”



## A LITTLE INSIGHT

By **Bruce C. Bryan**

**Executive Summary:**  
*Its an old saw – but hey it still holds true.*



John Phillips

# RBTC & RAMP LEADERSHIP

By Gene Marrano

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**Army colonel, entrepreneur, economic development officer, business mentor – John Phillips is now putting all that to good use with RAMP.**

For John Phillips, coming on board as president of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council last Fall seemed like a great fit. Phillips, who attended Virginia Military Institute and then earned an MBA at Virginia Tech, led the Economic Development Office at Tech as it got off the ground – connecting the university to companies looking for help as they grew. The retired Army Colonel helped launch the KnowledgeWorks program at the Corporate Research Center and has spent years mentoring entrepreneurs, also assisting them in the pursuit of investment capital.

Now under one roof on South Jefferson Street in Roanoke at the former Gill

Memorial Hospital building it's all there: two cohorts of 5-6 small high tech startups take up residence every year for about four months under the RAMP Regional Accelerator Program, where some of the 250+ RBTC members provide mentoring. Phillips describes RAMP as a program "within the RBTC;" the City of Roanoke – which owns the three-story RAMP building – and Virginia Western Community College, which offers some business basics programs there, are also partners. The Valleys Innovation Council, Virginia Tech and even potential investors are also on campus. "We want this to be hub of entrepreneurial activity."

Phillips says the ability to take a concept

or a fledgling high-tech startup through the RAMP program in 4-5 months and grow it “intro a true company with a business plan,” not to mention more employees, financial backing and the like – is the goal for all parties involved. Ultimately, it’s also about job creation that helps attract and retain the best and the brightest. Phillips, a retired Colonel and Iraq war veteran, has been an entrepreneur himself, so helping the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council seemed like a natural step. “Technology companies are looking for the opportunity to connect to the community, to find resources like financing [and] access to talent.” RBTC members can share their expertise – many of them were once in the same boat.

Phillips says the RBTC has a proven twenty-year track record and has helped create many of the 25,000 or so high-tech jobs in the two valleys. Partnering with

organizations like the Roanoke Regional Partnership to help grow that number is one of his objectives. “We also want to create [more] entrepreneurship opportunities and provide the opportunity for networking. (RBTC holds events like Technology and Toast to do just that on a regular basis.) Going forward he would like to increase the number of “learning opportunities,” that can help RBTC members grow as well.

There are a number of business accelerator-type incubators and shared work spaces in the region now, like CoGro at Virginia Tech’s Corporate Research Center (profiled here last month), the Advancement Foundation’s Gauntlet, the CoLab in Roanoke’s Grandin Village – and one the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion may get off the ground centered around life sciences. Phillips says the RBTC may partner on that one. It’s a portfolio of incubators that



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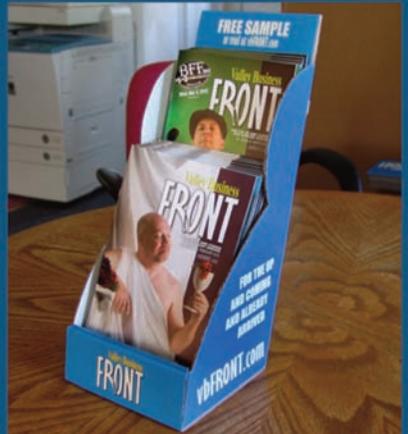
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Mary Guy Miller

appeal to several business sectors, and that's a good thing he says.

In mid-January RAMP was preparing to send the City of Roanoke a letter stating they had met a goal set out three years ago when the program received a grant: create at least 15 new jobs from cohort companies. That milestone – reached in less than the 5-year period agreed on – will help ensure additional funding from the city and Virginia Western Community College, demonstrating that the concept behind RAMP was solid. Now it has a track record. “I’m having a great time,” says Phillips, who plans to take advantage of the business relationships he’s cultivated over 30 years, to grow both the RBTC and the budding high-tech companies that come through the RAMP program.

**Latest cohort:** the next cohort arrives on campus in May. Meanwhile the last group was officially done last September, but then there was the Demo Day held for stakeholders and a send-off reception last month. Some may linger on site until the next cohort arrives. The latest group included a new event ticketing platform, a soil testing company and Fincastle-based

Micro Harmonics, which produces high frequency systems for telecommunications, security, testing and other markets.

All of the graduates to date “are continuing to move forward pretty significantly,” says Mary Guy Miller, RAMP director, adding though that “all of these companies struggle with growth.” The biggest challenge she adds is making sure cohort members are focused on the right market sector. “We [also] try to select companies that are beyond proof of concept ... and they have had enough customers, the early adopters, who say ‘this is pretty cool.’”

Three cohorts have gone through the RAMP program so far. Miller says it’s all about “focus and validate. What we bring to the table is surround you with the experience and support [needed] ... to help you make the next best decision.” As a past president herself of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, Miller says what John Phillips and RBTC brings to the equation is the “expertise and support,” of high-tech companies in the region. “As you grow, your people are right there in the RBTC – the kind of people you want to get to know.” 

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

**Bruce C. Bryan** is proprietor of the award-winning advertising and marketing agency, B2C Enterprises, located in downtown Roanoke. [bruce@bzcenterprises.com]

**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.

**Jennifer Poff Cooper** is a senior correspondent for FRONT, and a graduate of the RB Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Hollins University. She is a native of Christiansburg, where she lives and writes in her family's home place. [cooperjp91@gmail.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]

**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]

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**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 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.

**Priscilla Richardson** is the author of *Speak Don't Freak: Six Secrets of Mastering the Fear of Speaking* and a long time

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**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]

**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 [sheri@sheriwinesett.com]

**Steven Zegarski** is the vice president of corporate real estate for The Branch Group. Steve is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio and completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Dayton. After completing his graduate studies from Virginia Tech, Steve moved to Roanoke and has enjoyed a career path that has included teaching, youth ministry, pharmaceuticals and real estate. Steve and his wife, Kirsten, have three children and enjoy family vacations and home improvement projects.



FiftyCentLove Photographie

## MINDFUL BUSINESS

By Beth Bell

### Executive Summary:

*Raise your hand if you are a "social introvert" trying to network. Our columnist has some icebreaking tips.*

*Beth Bell is now 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).*

## Being authentic

You've decided to add networking to your agenda this year. You're planning to attend a new event or group, but you're not sure what to do when you get there. As the gregarious, "social butterfly" mom, but sort of a social introvert - I know it can be one of the most terrifying things to think about: conversing with strangers, much less stepping into a whole room full of strangers. Here's the good news - once you make that initial connection, any future meetings can be over a cup of coffee, 1 on 1, where you may be more comfortable.

Have a wingman/wingwoman: do you have a friend or acquaintance who you think is a good networker? Ask to be their guest. If they attend a networking event or group regularly, they are probably already versed in introducing you, and hopefully, to someone you should know. In addition, they are actually expected to invite guests to help the group grow, so you'll be helping them.

It's cheesy to have to say it, but be yourself. Being authentic is the only way to spark a connection with someone that may become a long-term business relationship. If you're trying to fake it till you make it, this will raise red flags for someone with a strong intuition to connect. I'm one of those people, and if I feel like you're hiding something that could hurt my relationships with the connections I've built, I will not be interested in helping you.

Be ready with a list of icebreaking questions. Here are a few suggestions:

- Did anything exciting happen today?
- What's a current challenge you're facing with your business?
- What are you passionate about?
- How did you get started in your field?
- What is something you need help with?
- Is there a book you'd recommend to help with [insert your challenge here]?
- What do you like to do when you're not working?
- What would you be doing if you weren't here right now?
- Do you have a favorite app you use daily for business?

If someone looks familiar, say it. Roanokers are seriously only separated by 2 degrees - I haven't actually done the math, but I believe this. It can be fun to connect the dots. At any point in the conversation where an a-ha moment occurs, a spark, a connection, ask for a business card and set a time to meet to further the conversation. If you're looking for a good group or event to join, feel free to message me. I'd be happy to learn more about you and who you're looking to meet. 

## Start 2020 with a Bang!

**The Gauntlet** is Virginia's largest business program and competition that kicks off February 4th (late signups okay). Over 100 businesses participated last year and received help from community partners to develop a business plan. It is a 10-week course and has locations in the Town of Vinton, Town of Buchanan, Alleghany County and Rockbridge County. Businesses must be starting or expanding in Alleghany Highlands, Botetourt County, Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Rockbridge County, Town of Vinton, City of Buena Vista, City of Lexington and/or the City of Salem. Over \$300,000 in cash and prizes are awarded to participants. Participants also have access to \$275,000 in grants and low interest loan funds. There is a \$25 application fee and \$179 fee to participate in the courses. You can find more information and apply at [www.theadvancementfoundation.org](http://www.theadvancementfoundation.org)

**Innovation Mill** is currently seeking applications for its fourth cohort. These services are for entrepreneurs in the proof of concept stage. If you are trying to validate your business idea, product or service and need help, the experts at the Vinton-based Innovation Mill can help you engage industry, higher ed, professional service providers, and community stakeholders to help you do so. Entrepreneurs typically receive Innovation Mill services for 3-6 months. There is no fee to apply or work with Innovation Mill business coaches and experts. You can go to [www.theadvancementfoundation.org](http://www.theadvancementfoundation.org) for more information and to apply.

**RAMP**, the region's accelerator. The 12-week program begins in May 2020. Interviews will be scheduled for March. RAMP's mission is to propel high-potential high-tech startups to expand and create jobs in the STEM-H fields. They help you learn how to grow your startup. They also offer \$20,000 equity-free seed money, if accepted. When applying be prepared to explain what problem your company is trying to solve, the solution you provide to what size market and why your team is positioned to address the problem. This is a great opportunity to connect you to accomplished mentors and surround you with the support you need from across our region. (see story on RAMP elsewhere in this issue). You can find out more information and apply here [www.rbtc.tech/RAMP](http://www.rbtc.tech/RAMP)

Get your applications in and take your business to the next level! Make 2020 your best year in business ever! 



## SMALL BUSINESS TOOL KIT

By Sherri Winesett

**Executive Summary:**  
*t's a new year and there is no time like the present to make 2020 your best year in business ever. Here are some programs that are getting ready to launch to help businesses grow in 2020. Find out which one is the right fit and apply today.*

*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)*



## World War II behind the lines >

Well-known local environmentalist **Diana Christopulos** has been outspoken on many issues, including preservation of property along the Appalachian Trail, land conservancy elsewhere and the Mountain Valley Pipeline's impact on the environment. She's also very proud of her late father James, who was a combat engineer during World War II in both the German and Pacific theaters. His unit's specialties? They could rebuild bridges had blown up lightning quick – often within hours, not days. “[Patton’s army] would capture all these Germans who wanted to know how they caught up with them, but they would never tell them about it.”

They were also explosives experts who used that skill to clear mine fields safe for Allied Troops, including along the French Riviera. James Christopulos – who survived the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium – also penned a two-volume memoir that his daughter has now winnowed down to one, with photos taken by her father. “He took the stories on the ground from the little guy,” says Diana.

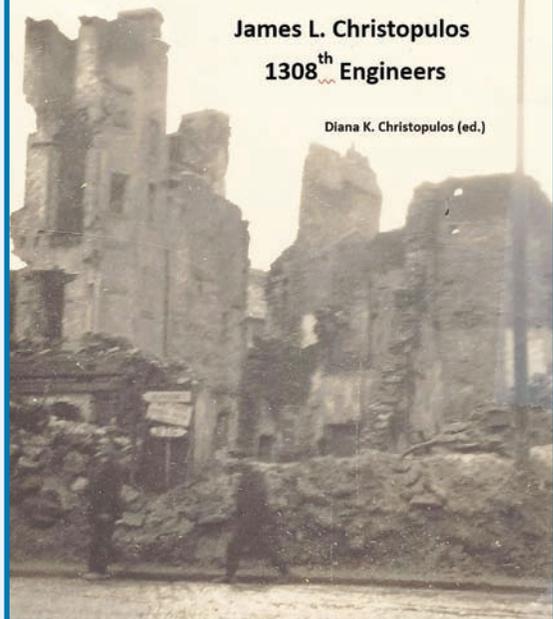
*Combat Engineer: A World War II Memoir* features James Christopulos with the 1308 Engineers. Diana says she was asked to make presentations over the years about her dad – later an Air Force officer – and decided it was finally time to condense his book into a tidier memoir she's added notations and footnotes to. *Combat Engineer* is available at Book No Further in downtown Roanoke and online at Amazon Books. “I just needed to go ahead and publish this,” Diana Christopulos (a history major) remembers thinking, “I’ve got all the original snapshots in Europe ... and then in Okinawa.”

## Combat Engineer

A World War II Memoir

James L. Christopulos  
1308<sup>th</sup> Engineers

Diana K. Christopulos (ed.)





## Trust developers team up with the Dawgs >

Fairfax-based Savara Development purchased the former Liberty Trust Bank building on South Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke almost two years ago, looking to turn what had become office space into a boutique hotel with 54 rooms and a restaurant/lobby bar space on the ground floor. That work on what will become the **Liberty Trust Hotel** (near the Amtrak station) began with demolition late last year. That's where Black Dog Salvage comes in – the Salvage Dawgs TV show on the DIY network filmed as the Dawgs crew explore the Liberty Trust building from top to bottom. Pulling out architectural elements they may repurpose and sell – and others that may be restored and put to use at the 1909 property. A pair of heavy safe doors from the old vault there may wind up in the hotel lobby for example. The Liberty Trust building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Savara principal Vishal Savai says the Liberty Trust Hotel should open sometime late this year after what he calls a "full historic restoration." He envisions "a destination property" for visitors and a place where Roanokers can also gather for a meal or cup



of coffee. As for that Salvage Dawgs episode featuring Liberty Trust, it debuted on DIY in early January and no doubt can be found in repeat airings. Savai makes a cameo appearance as the Black Dog crew did their reconnaissance. Balzer & Associates in Roanoke is working with Savara Development on the renovations. Savai also says his company had been looking for a downtown Roanoke property "for some time." They also have two other boutique hotels in Richmond and Blowing Rock, NC. "We feel like Roanoke has had a significant amount of growth in tourism as well as business travel. The downtown area has gone through a significant revitalization over the last decade or so. A few years ago, we started looking around the city."



Mike Dame

# CHANGE AGENT

By Cory Crouser

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**Mike Dame oversees marketing and communications at Roanoke's largest employer and top economic powerhouse for the entire region as it positions itself to lead the new economy.**

Valley Business FRONT welcomes Michael Dame as a 2020 advisory board member representing the region's healthcare sector.

"Healthcare marketing was never a career goal for me," says Mike Dame, Carilion Clinic's VP of Marketing and Communications, with an ironic chuckle. It really wasn't."

But things change, and more than a decade into his tenure at Carilion, Dame—who began his career as a sportswriter—is quick to point out that Carilion's Marketing and Communications team—a prodigious collective, nearly 50-strong—does a great deal more than simply market a healthcare system. Or

perhaps, by Dame's estimation, they do less.

Dame might consider Carilion's eminent brand equity a byproduct of his team's prevailing mission: Connection.

"We're just working hard to connect people," explains Dame. "It's most important to us that we introduce people to Carilion's services and providers; that we help differentiate Carilion (from other healthcare systems) as a true partner in wellness."

Carilion's Marketing and Communications department works tirelessly to facilitate these healthcare partnerships, partnerships which empower patients through digital health tools and other resources to prioritize wellness, to pursue it.

"Ideally, patients are equally invested in their own wellness," says Dame. "When that happens, that's a true partnership [between patient and provider]."

True partnerships, Dame believes, are dynamic, mutual investments.

"For a long time," explains Dame, "the narrative's been 'you go to the doctor when you're sick; the doctor tells you what to do; you do it...' We're trying to rewrite that narrative, to tell a different story."

To that end, Dame's team takes a multifaceted approach to fostering these provider-patient connections. "[In addition to patients], we're also marketing to

## "IN BRIEF"

**NAME:** Michael "Mike" Dame

**POSITION:** VP of Marketing and Communications

**COMPANY:** Carilion Clinic

**HEADQUARTERS:** Roanoke

**BACKGROUND:** Graduate of University of Florida (BS) and Rollins College (MBA); sportswriter for Orlando Sentinel; web communications—Virginia Tech; married (Valeria); enjoys golf, guitar, friends, cheering on the Gators

**TAKEAWAY:** There's power in narrative

[Carilion's 13,000] employees," says Dame.

"Well-informed, engaged employees will provide the best service and care to [the nearly one million residents of Carilion's service area]."

Dame credits each and every team-member's individual talents for the department's overall success in rewriting the narrative, in shifting the long-standing provider-patient paradigm.

"We've got a team of videographers that rivals local TV stations," says Dame, smiling proudly, his eyes glimmering. "We've got storytellers; photographers; graphic designers; public relations professionals; digital specialists..." The list, he says, goes on. 📺

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## Roanoke Valley Gives is back next month

Since 1988, Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia has been enabling people who love their community to easily give back. Whether your passion is arts and culture, the environment, helping students reach their educational goals, or something else, you have a philanthropic partner and steward in the Community Foundation. With more than 350 permanent endowment funds, the Foundation has awarded over \$50 million dollars in grants to support community institutions.

Five years ago, the Community Foundation designed and implemented a 24 hour online day of giving called Roanoke Valley Gives. This initiative was created to unite the community by raising awareness of the many deserving nonprofits in the greater Roanoke Valley. Since its inception, Roanoke Valley Gives has raised over \$2.6 million dollars! Last year alone, 164 local nonprofits brought in over \$820,000 dollars in just one day. Donors can make contributions for as little as ten dollars each to the non-profits of their choice. Click-throughs on the [rvgives.org](http://rvgives.org) website allows visitors to take a look at organizations they may want to consider giving to.

The Community Foundation provides the giving infrastructure, marketing assistance, technical training and also awards out special incentive prizes to some of the participating nonprofits (excluding itself). Incentive monies are made possible through sponsorships and are awarded to eligible participating nonprofit organizations throughout the giving day and at the after event awards luncheon.

Carly Oliver, Community Foundation Chief Operating Officer, noted "our goal is to help nonprofits raise significant amounts of dollars for their organization in a very short period of time, to expand their donor base, and to provide them with a platform to share their story. We do this work solely to benefit this

## GOOD WORK

By Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

**Executive Summary:**  
*In keeping with the theme of this month's cover story on non-profits, here's another chance to give*



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Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia invites everyone to stand together and support any of these worthy nonprofits that positively impact the place we all call home. Anyone can donate and track the progress of their favorite nonprofits from midnight on March 18th through 11:59 p.m. by visiting our new website, [rvgives.org](http://rvgives.org). So, grab your friends and family members and let them know that they can make a big difference on Roanoke Valley Gives Day! 🏠



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

“”  
The [rvgives.org](http://rvgives.org) website allows visitors to take a look.



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## ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*Positive or negative conditioning; either is better than none.*

## You can / can't do it!

A funny thing happened on my way to the workshop.

As I pen this column, I was invited to present at two workshops this coming week; five days apart from each other. For the first one, I have to submit my topic. I decided to “take the low road” and make it all about all the things we don’t want as an audience. The product or service or actions that just don’t connect. “No thanks,” we say (sometimes politely). “What you’re doing just doesn’t trip my trigger.”

For the second presentation, the topic was handed to me. This one... is the high road, I discovered. Let’s have some instruction on how to connect with your audience. The product or service or actions we respond to enthusiastically. “Yes, sir. Yes, ma’am,” we say (sometimes with a smile). “Give me whatcha got!” Or, “May I have some more?”

Yep. Pretty much opposite workshop topics.

I didn’t mean for that to happen. But as it always does, it forces me to address what truly motivates us.

I’m convinced (and I do have proof) that we are motivated by both forces—positive and negative. There are developments I’m afraid that you might find disturbing, though. Usually, the most efficient, effective, thorough, and desired results—come from negative conditioning.

It’s okay, though. The ugly path leads to the most inspiring vistas.

I first learned this from an ex-military enemy interrogator. Seriously. At a conference. Decades ago. He demonstrated that in any pursuit (including our routine day-to-day activities from sales to writing ad copy to just getting on with our lives) the ratio of our responses to “avoid a negative” versus “achieve a positive” is almost 10:0... maybe nine-to-one if we’re being generous. You see...

We don’t REALLY want that red sports car because it’s fast, fun, symbolizes success, and attracts women. We just don’t want to look like a failure; a loser broke down on the side of the road.

We don’t REALLY want a person in charge (CEO, manager, president, parent) to give us everything we want. We just don’t want her to be disappointed in us; to look at us with any disfavor.

That’s the real motivation. That’s why some coaches are often the hardest on their best players. And sometimes,

continued on Page 40

## Give a little – It’s not that difficult

Never been much of a philanthropist? Don’t carry cash anymore and have to avoid eye contact with the Salvation Army bell ringer when you pass the kettle at Christmas time (guilty)? Just don’t “think about it” much, the myriad of causes and non-profits in the region that struggle in many cases to raise enough money, not only for their worthy causes but also to hold on to talented and underpaid staff members for as long as they can? Here are several easier ways to get started - and remember if itemizing on tax returns you can take a deduction for charitable contributions. For one, warm up your debit card on Roanoke Valley Gives day in mid-March, an event that has grown towards the three million-dollar mark in donations made since its inception a few years ago.

What’s neat about Roanoke Valley Gives day is that participating non-profits (more than 150 last year) are all accessible on one page, where visitors can click through to their websites and see what they are about. For some of the smaller non-profits the exposure and even the 10-dollar contributions they take in are most welcome. Then there’s another recent addition to the Christmas season pseudo-holiday list, “Giving Tuesday,” which comes on the heels of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday.

Towards the end of the year is also a good time to look at your tax situation and decide whether it’s prudent for the bottom line to be giving on that Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Don’t have a lot of dough to spread around like the rest of the 99 percenters? Do what I do, send smaller amounts to more organizations. And yes, I am late to this party as well; wish I had started years earlier. So many people do not make donations, even if they believe in a cause – be it a social service mission or an arts organization. Or both.

Here’s another way to give and feel better physically at the same time – sign up, train and then run one or more of the many 5k, 10K or longer road footraces in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, which most often benefit a local non-profit (does anyone say charity anymore?) For some of the smaller non-profits, like The Least of These that puts on the “Hustle for the Homeless” 5K every spring, the dollars brought in and the exposure can be huge. Few of these races approach the Rescue Mission’s Drumstick Dash size-wise, that’s for sure.

Often the real significant donations come from race

continued on Page 40



Gene Marrano

## THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

**By Gene Marrano**

**Executive Summary:**  
*Giving to non-profits that help the less fortunate – or to cultural organizations – might be easier and more fun than you think. Even good for your health.*

## Letters

### Editor,

I have been impressed with the improvement in FRONT's content for the past few months. Your stories have been informative, illustrated well, designed with considerable thought (as always) and the overall impact of

the magazine has been impressive.

**Dan Smith**

**Roanoke**

*Freelance Journalist, Author,  
Virginia Communications Hall  
of Fame, Founding Director,  
Roanoke Regional Writers Conference*

Send us your feedback in a letter with name and where you live – good or bad: [news@vbfront.com](mailto:news@vbfront.com)

### Field / On Tap

from Page 38

the ugly truth is, that's why individuals improve more quickly from threats and fear and negative conditioning. Ugggh. I know, right?

We'll do some things to get pleasure, for sure. But we'll do ANYTHING to avoid pain.

Whether we agree that one approach is preferred over another; we do ourselves a disservice if we insist all conditioning has to be uplifting and inspirational at all times. We produce a society of weak members when there is no pain on our path to progress.

Sergeant Willis, US Army, walked up to me as I was boarding the bus after my long, tortuous basic training in Ft. Leonard "Lost-in-the" Wood, Missouri, summer of 1983. I expected him to send me off as the worthless loser I was. He ingrained that notion into me (physically, mentally) for eight grueling weeks. His right arm came up by his side, I flinched, and then he shook my hand.

The bastards test us. All the time. Every day. Relentlessly. They test us.

We can make something out of that. 

### Marrano / There's something

from Page 39

sponsors, but those who register do their part to draw attention to the cause. The Least of These (TLOT) for example is mainly a wife-husband team that has outfitted an old ambulance with clothing and other supplies for the homeless in Roanoke. They

are on the streets of the city several nights a week. With non-profits looking to run leaner and more efficiently than ever as they compete for donor dollars (see our cover stories), think about lacing up those running shoes for a good cause. 

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“ True partnerships are dynamic,  
mutual investments. — Page 35

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## Books @ the FRONT >

**Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto:news@vbFRONT.com)**

### *Influential influencer*

Megan Angelo has written about women and television for *Glamour*, youth activism and social media for *Elle* and reality TV for the *New York Times*. In her debut novel, *Followers* (Graydon House; 2020) she uses those topics as fodder for her explosive imagination. The shrewd and surprisingly moving result is a darkly prophetic novel that takes an incisive look at women, fame and the future of social media stardom. In chapters alternating between the two time periods, Angelo unspools a dual narrative that carries the current confluence of social media, entertainment and advertising to natural but frightening conclusions. Comparisons to the British television drama *Black Mirror* naturally spring to mind throughout the story, but perhaps nowhere more so than in Angelo's imagined future.

Although fast-paced, *Followers* will make rich discussion material for book clubs, raising hard questions about the price of celebrity, the ethics of technology use and how much of today's entertainment contains subtle commercials. At the same time, its core sings with emotion. Angelo's high-concept plot hangs gracefully on the framework provided by the interesting chemistry between her characters. Somewhere in the characters' complicated history lies the answer to the mystery unfolding for the reader. An excavation of a complex female friendship as well as a deep dive into the direction social media is pulling the U.S., Angelo's first outing is sharp, perceptive and ultimately hopeful.

—Jacki Fulwood

### *Soul bearing and funny*

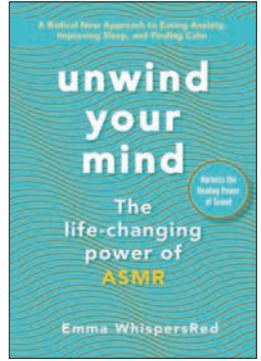
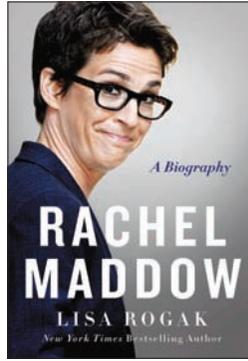
Elton John – currently in the midst of what he calls his farewell tour – has written a heartfelt, very personal and often funny autobiography. *Me* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019) goes from the difficult relationship Reg Dwight (yes, his real name) had with his parents growing up, to playing piano in various bands – dirt poor for the most part – and then meeting the man who would change his life, lyricist Bernie Taupin. In fact, as John left an audition where he didn't get the gig someone handed him an envelope of lyrics to look at, from a then unknown Taupin. Soon they were a team – Bernie wrote the words and Elton would put it to music. He's now a six-time Grammy winner with 26 gold and 38 platinum albums to his name.

John's smash American debut in Los Angeles soon turned him into a superstar and with his seminal double album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* (now *Sir Elton John*) scaled the highest heights, even playing outdoor stadiums. But there was also a suicide attempt for the *Rocketman*, substance abuse problems with cocaine and alcohol, and friendships with Queen's Freddie Mercury and George Michael. Mercury and other friends who died from AIDS led John to create a foundation that has raised over \$450 million to fight HIV/AIDS. Not to mention holidaying with Versace and singing at Princess Diana's funeral. The first true pop star to follow The Beatles also was one of the first high profile artists to come out as gay in the 70's. John then slogged through various failed relationships and one nighters until he met his soul mate in Atlanta. It's all here in a page turner filled with humor and some English (as in England) language colloquialisms readers will have to adapt to. *Me* is well worth the effort.

—Gene Marrano

### *Captivating coverage*

Emmy Award-winning news host Rachel Maddow once said, "I am a childless, middle-aged, potbellied lesbian, and I don't have that much to be excited about in my life other than having a great job." But prolific biographer Lisa Rogak has created a breezy and compelling biography (Thomas Dunne Books; 2020) by



detailing captivating facets of Maddow’s workaholic nature. Her hour-long MSNBC TV show airs five nights a week, 50 weeks a year. “It takes me a good solid ten hours to prep an hour of TV,” Maddow reveals. “I live what I think of as my own life between two A.M. Saturday morning and seven A.M. Monday morning.”

Maddow’s love of news started early. Her mother remembers three-year-old Rachel teaching herself to read by reading the morning newspaper. After college, she became a regular contributor on Tucker Carlson’s MSNBC TV show. After ratings rose when she substitute-hosted *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* several times, MSNBC created *The Rachel Maddow Show* for her in 2008. Rogak periodically veers away from the all-consuming TV show to peek inside Maddow’s private life. She and her partner, photographer Susan Mikula, have been together since 1999. When they met, they were both dating other people. Rogak also discusses the cyclical depression Maddow has had since puberty but only recently made public, when she realized that it could help others suffering from depression.

Fans of the political commentator will discover new aspects of Maddow’s life on and off camera in this first-rate biography that constantly showcases Maddow’s deprecating, droll wit.

—Kevin Howell

## *The secret world of ASMR*

This is going to sound weird to some and 100% relatable to others... Ever experienced a calming, tingly sensation in your brain from sight, touch, or sound? See? I told ya. Never have I encountered such a polarizing topic

due to a recent obsession of mine — ASMR (otherwise known as Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response).

Emma WhispersRed (a popular YouTube ASMRist) in *Unwind your mind: the life-changing power of ASMR* (Harper: 2019) provides real-life examples of this for those of you who are completely confused right now. Remember as a child having someone trace letters or shapes on your back while you guessed what they drew? Or your friends playing with your hair? It seems touch is a “less strange” way for people to accept ASMR due to specific activities like massages being accepted in many cultures. So why are visual or audio so difficult to accept?

This book delves into the details of this widely unknown, therapeutic, and seemingly magical underground world that is taking the internet by storm. She provides testimonials from ASMR fans and coping mechanisms for stress, anxiety, loneliness, etc. With an open mind, not only can it improve your sleep and decrease your stress; it will progress your overall happiness and contentment from practicing the described daily exercises.

If you’ve experienced this tingly sensation and never knew others did or what it was called — then first, I recommend you research ASMR on YouTube and second, grab a copy of this book!

—Kelsey Monahan

The reviewers: **Jacki Fulwood** is a reviewer for Shelf Awareness; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT; **Kevin Howell** is an independent reviewer and marketing consultant; **Kelsey Monahan** is a technology sales account representative in Salem.



## Reindeer games >

Some Christmas spirit inside the windowless **Carilion Transfer and Communication Center** on Brambleton Avenue in Roanoke where the crew tracks all of the health system's helicopters and ambulances. On one screen at the CTaC they also watched the NORAD Santa Claus tracker during shifts on Christmas Eve. For over 60 years families have been listen to Santa's progress via radio or now online via the annual NORAD public service. On Christmas Eve a few children of Carilion employees were also on hand to track Santa Claus's progress.

## New TV show in the works >

A proposed television show based in the New River Valley - powered solely by renewable energy sources - hopes to get off the ground within two years. First comes a fundraising drive, which is coming down the home stretch. **Chris Valluzzo** is the creator and executive for **Penny P's Backyard**, a TV show pilot he will pitch to networks like Disney Plus, Amazon, Netflix, and PBS. It's a fictional story about a girl and her three friends who make videos and animations about the world around them. "I like to say this is not a children's educational show, it's a family show that also has educational content," notes Valluzzo.

A fundraising campaign for a Penny P's Backyard proof of concept episode Valluzzo plans to produce next year - for an airing in 2021- was close to securing a \$3000 challenge grant in late 2019 from the Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology and Virginia Tech - which has already donated to the project. Penny P's backyard will celebrate Appalachia - the music, the outdoors and more. See the Facebook page for more details and search for Penny P's Backyard on the indie go-go dot com website to make a done towards that Virginia Tech challenge grant.





## Second location for burger joint >

It took a bit longer than anticipated with issues concerning the building and permitting to be resolved, but **Farmburguesa** has finally launched its second and much larger location than the original spot in Vinton, on Memorial Avenue in Roanoke's Grandin Village. Farmburguesa is best known for its gourmet burgers. Jimmy Delgado is a co-owner: "Vinton was a proof of concept. Being able to open a second location starting from such a small place is such a great feeling."



## Illuminights shatters attendance target >

The numbers are in for the Illuminights holiday display at **Explore Park**. 43,097 paid to walk through the light show trail that was also a joint fundraising effort from Roanoke County Parks, Recreation & Tourism and Center in the Square. The initial year attendance target was 25,000. Jim Sears with Center in the Square wants you to come back next time. He says the initial target marker set in conjunction with Illuminights partner Roanoke County was on the conservative side - but in any case, it was shattered. "We'll spend some more money next year and probably add more depth to the lights. We'll fix areas for actual selfies and photographers. There's a number of different things that we're looking at to improve it." Center already invested about 500K for the light show; Roanoke County gets to store it and set up/break down as part of the multiyear initiative that is also bringing more people to Explore Park.



## Botetourt Y celebrates anniversary >

One year old and counting as of last month. A six-year planning, fundraising (about \$10 million) and construction span culminated on January 1, 2019 with the opening of the **Botetourt Family YMCA**. There are now more than 5200 members and about 500 people show up on a daily basis. YMCA of Virginia's Blue Ridge President and CEO Mark Johnson says the latest branch for the Roanoke-based Y draws from a larger swath of more-rural Botetourt than does its sister facilities in Salem and Roanoke. "We've got members out all the way as far as Eagle Rock. [Initially] you want them to think what would our community look like with a Y? The goal is not long after you open you want them to say, what would we be like without a Y? What would we do without this thing?"

## Miss America is VT graduate and STEM advocate >

Virginia Tech alum **Camille Schrier** was crowned Miss America 2020 in December. She shined the spotlight on science during the talent portion of the pageant and hopes it will inspire many other young girls to explore STEM opportunities. Virginia Tech College of Science Dean Sally C. Morton said afterwards, "we are delighted to see a Virginia Tech science alumna shine on the national stage and we're even more thrilled that she is using her success to showcase the value of STEM education for kids and as a catalyst to encourage young girls to study science and do science." Schrier, who entered the pageant as Miss Virginia, is a 2018 graduate with a double major in systems biology and biochemistry. During her year-long reign as Miss Virginia, Schrier worked to promote science, technology,

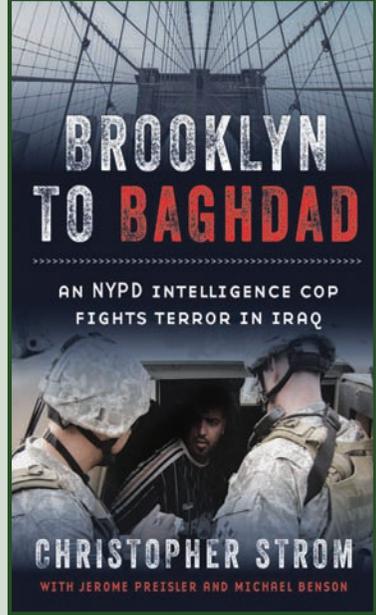


engineering, and math education and careers in schools throughout the state, with a focus on attracting girls to STEM fields. "I want to be that role model for them," said Schrier, who chose a chemistry demonstration for the competition to showcase what she could bring to schools during her reign.



## New building at Radford >

Governor Northam has allocated \$101 million in his proposed biennial budget for construction of the **Center for Adaptive Innovation and Creativity** at Radford University. "I am excited to see it help shape the future of Radford and Southwest Virginia," said Northam when making the announcement. The allocation will first have to be approved by the Virginia General Assembly as they hammer out the biennial budget over the next few months. The CAIC would replace several existing buildings on campus and will create interdisciplinary student spaces for the Waldron College of Health and Human Services, and the Artis College of Science and Technology. "I remain optimistic that our vision for the Center for Adaptive Innovation and Creativity will come to life," said Radford President Brian Hemphill.



## Brooklyn to Baghdad – and now Roanoke >

Actually, retired New York City Police sergeant **Chris Strom** was already relocated to the foothills of southwest Roanoke County when he was recruited for a well-paid, 15-month sojourn in and around Baghdad, where he put interrogation skills learned in New York as an intelligence cop to good use. In 2008 the former Marine arrived in Iraq, where he spent the next year-plus as a contractor gathering intelligence from captured terrorists and talking to Iraqi civilians about where IED's – improvised explosive devices - might be buried. He also took notes and a decade-plus later the result is his new memoir, *Brooklyn to Baghdad. An NYPD Intelligence Cop Fights Terror in Iraq*. "Once we started having acceptance from the actual Army units we supported we really crushed these people," says Strom, not sounding too far from the streets of New York City, "from once day or every other day or even two a day we had two 30 month periods without a single [IED] event." That saved American and local civilian limbs and lives. *Brooklyn to Baghdad* (Chicago Press, 2020) is available at local retailers like Book No Further and online.

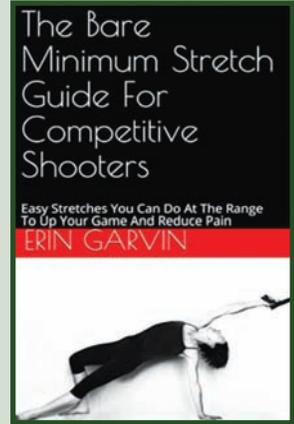


## Repurposing with a purpose >

What was once a grocery store under several names in Roanoke's Southeast Community near 13th Street and Riverland Road – including a Piggly Wiggly – is now the second location in the valley for **Centra Rivermont**. The private school under the Centra healthcare system serves students with autism, behavioral, learning and developmental disabilities. The new location made its debut last Fall.

## Better stretching means better ... shooting? >

20 years ago, **Erin Garvin** wrote a book about a mountain bike ride she undertook from Mexico to Canada on a Western US trail – the first women had completed the 2500-mile trip. Now the Roanoke County yoga and Pilates instructor is back with her second book, *The Bare Minimum Stretch Guide for Competitive Shooters: Easy Stretches You Can Do At The Range To Up Your Game And Reduce Pain*. When Garvin started competitive shooting at mostly male high-level events, she noticed some others had a hard time holding a certain position while they shot, often causing them to miss their intended target. So, she wrote *The Bare Minimum*. "You have to get down low like a squat position [sometimes] ... or they do prone shooting where you get on your belly. That's where I really saw the guys were struggling." Garvin says certain stretches can help relieve the repetitive stress nature of competitive shooting. Her book is available at Amazon online and at Safeside Tactical in Roanoke.



## Spot on >

**The Making Foundation**—profiled here a few months ago—kicked off a welding class in early February.

*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.*

## FINANCIAL FRONT

The merger of equals between BB&T and SunTrust, now complete under the new name Truist, twenty-four regional presidents have been appointed in local markets. **David Camden** has been appointed as the Truist regional president for Virginia West, responsible for delivering the company's services to clients in the Roanoke area. Camden has more than 33 years of banking expertise, previously serving as Savannah regional president at SunTrust.



Mylum

**Paul M. Mylum** has been promoted to Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer at

National Bank. Mylum began his banking career in 1993 and has served with both regional and community banks in the New River Valley prior to joining National Bank as Senior Vice President of Loans in 2012. A native of Farmville, Mr. Mylum is a Virginia Tech graduate and resident of Fairlawn, Virginia. Founded in Blacksburg, National Bank is a community bank with 25 full-service offices and one loan production office located throughout Southwest Virginia.



Davenport

**Kimberley L. Davenport** has been promoted to Mortgage Loan Officer at Bank of Botetourt. **Sharon M. Cooper** has been promoted to Mortgage Loan Officer. Bank of Botetourt operates



Cooper

twelve retail offices in Botetourt, Rockbridge, Roanoke, and Franklin counties and the City of Salem, all in Virginia. Bank of Botetourt also operates a mortgage division, Virginia Mountain Mortgage and a financial services division, Botetourt Wealth Management.

## WELLNESS FRONT



Gibson

**Robert Gibson**, former global sales strategist and scientist at Salem-based Novozymes, has joined the Fralin

Biomedical Research Institute at VTC as its associate director of business development for LINK: Center for Advancing Industry Partnerships. He brings more than 20 years of experience in science and business to the research institute and LINK. Gibson is responsible for developing and nurturing partnerships between Virginia Tech scientists and companies seeking to introduce cutting-edge health science discoveries from the lab to the marketplace. Gibson's work is also expected to stimulate growth in Roanoke's biomedical start-up ecosystem, helping researchers form spin-out companies and commercialize intellectual property.

Friendship, a local senior living and rehabilitation provider, has announced the promotion of **Chuck Flynn** to administrator of Friendship Health and Rehab Center North, located on



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Flynn

Hershberger Road in Roanoke. Flynn has been serving as the administrator for Friendship Assisted Living since April 2018. In that time, he helped oversee the renovation of the building's lobby, made significant strides in census development, and has been co-leading Friendship's culture change initiative. A graduate of Radford University, Flynn joined the healthcare industry in 2015. He and his wife and two daughters reside in Salem.

**Audrey Ward**, PT has joined the Friendship Health North campus team in Roanoke. Ward has specialized in orthopedics and the physical therapy management during a career spanning more than three decades.

*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.



Ward

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



May

**Zack May** is now a sales and leasing associate with Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group, specializing in the sales and leasing

of investment, retail, office, and industrial properties. Prior to joining Poe and Cronk, he managed his family's real estate holdings, including a 1,000-acre family-owned farm. He has handled the acquisition, management, and sale of commercial and investment properties for his family's own real estate portfolio.

## EDUCATIONAL FRONT

Ferrum College has hired **John Sutyak** as Director of Athletics after a national search. He has most recently been director of athletics and recreation at Wheaton College (IL), where he also earned a bachelor's degree in



Sutyak

2000. Sutyak knows sports well – he was a four-year baseball player for Wheaton and once hit two home runs in one inning, tying an NCAA record.

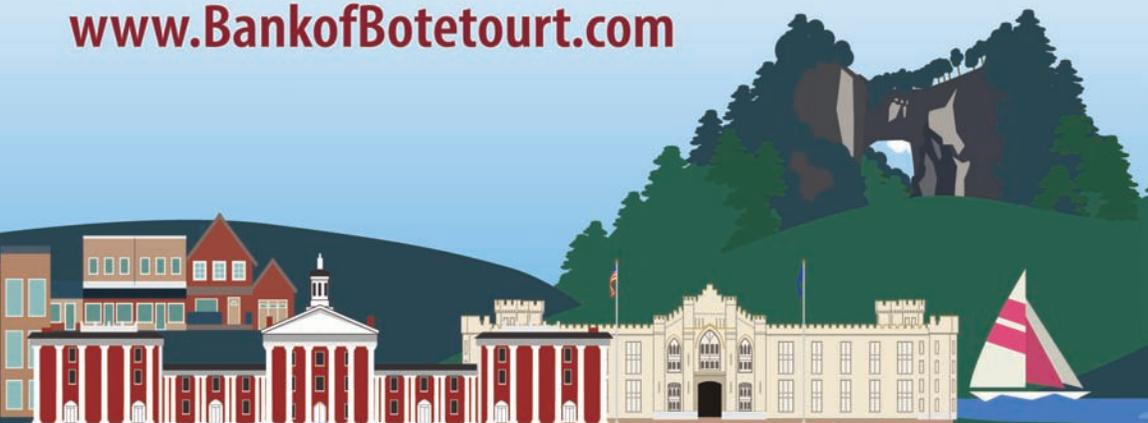


McCrery

**Ken McCrery** has been named chief of staff

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for Virginia Tech's Division of Information Technology. McCrery will provide guidance and oversight for administrative and operational initiatives, including recruiting and retention of personnel, performance management, and supervision of projects and technology services that support teaching, learning, and research, as well as the business and administrative functions of the university. McCrery has more than 15 years of service at Virginia Tech. His previous role was serving as deputy executive director of Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies, a unit within the Division of Information Technology



McCoy

**Andrew McCoy**, professor and head of the Department of Building Construction, associate director of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction, and the director of the Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech, has been named Yvan J. Beliveau Professor by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. It was established to support a professor in the Myers-Lawson School of Construction who demonstrates excellence in the field. A member of the Virginia Tech faculty

since 2008, McCoy's scholarship involves diffusion and commercialization of innovative projects in the construction industry. He is the main author of numerous books and more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers on the subjects of innovation adoption, diffusion and commercialization in residential construction, and construction safety.



Lally

**Lindsay Lally**, assistant professor of practice in the Myers-Lawson School of Construction at Virginia Tech, has been named Pulte Homes Professor of Practice by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. The Pulte Homes Professorship was established in 2003 by a gift from Pulte Homes to help with the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty members. Lally will hold the professorship for two years. A member of the Virginia Tech faculty since 2018 and an alumna, Lally has more than 12 years of experience in the design and construction industry and holds a professional engineering license in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Aleksandra Graff**, assistant professor of practice in the



Graff

Myers-Lawson School of Construction at Virginia Tech, has been named Pulte Homes Professor of Practice by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. A member of the Virginia Tech faculty since 2017, Graff came to the university with five years of experience in the construction industry working as a staff engineer and project manager. Her areas of expertise include building construction, geotechnical and materials engineering, and project management.



Lepre

a national search by Radford University as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, effective July 1. She will report to Radford President Brian Hemphill. Lepre has spent more than a decade at Marist College, based in New York City, with previous tenures as a professor at the University of Tennessee and California State-Chico.

## NON-PROFIT FRONTS



Miller

The Roanoke Higher Education Authority has appointed two new employees: **Jaime Miller**, Executive Assistant and **Jeremiah McMillan**, Director of Facility Services.

**Carolyn "Lyn" Lepre** Ph.D. has been selected after



Plaster

**Courtney Plaster** has been hired as Director of Education at the Science Museum of Western Virginia at Center in the Square in downtown Roanoke. Plaster returns to the Science Museum after serving the Virginia Museum of Transportation as Director of Education for 8 years. Prior to that she worked at the Science Museum for 11 years in the Education Department.

United Way of the Roanoke Valley search locally and nationally



**Hamilton**

but in the end appointed long time UWRV staffer **Abby Verdillo Hamilton** as its new President and CEO. Hamilton had served as interim president after Afira DeVries left to work for a London-based non-profit last summer. Hamilton had most recently been Vice President of Community Impact and has been with the Roanoke United Way chapter for 18 years. "I look forward to leading United Way of Roanoke Valley into a new decade of strengthened collaboration, expanded impact and committed service" says Hamilton, a 20-plus year veteran with non-profit organizations.

## OTHER FRONTS

**Richard Osborne,**



**Osborne**

CM, A.C.E., as Director of Planning and Engineering for the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission. He is responsible for organizing, planning, leading and managing the Department of Planning and Engineering as well as the Airport Operations team. "I look forward to opportunities that will continue to make ROA a regional catalyst for air service, cargo and economic growth. With several projects in process and slated for this year I'm excited at the opportunity to help position ROA for success into the future," says Osborne. He brings more than 26 years of airport leadership experience, most recently as the Director of Aviation Planning with Parrish and Partners, LLC, a full-service transportation consulting firm.

Previously he was the Airport Manager for the Greater Lafourche Port Commission, Airport Planning.

## MUNICIPAL FRONTS



**Taliaferro**

**Jay Taliaferro** has been named the City Manager for Salem, after serving in that role in an interim capacity after Salem City Council cut its ties with Kevin Boggess in January 2019. Taliaferro is no stranger to Salem – he's worked for the city since 1991 and his father James was a former mayor. Jay Taliaferro had been the assistant city manager since 2000. In that position the Clemson (bachelor's) and Virginia Tech graduate (master's) became involved with a number of key public works projects. He was selected over 42 other

candidates following a nationwide search. "We must stay current because that is the only way we can stay relevant. [Otherwise] the whole world will pass you by," noted Taliaferro when his promotion was announced.



**Lubeck**

Roanoke County has named assistant County Attorney **Peter Lubeck** to the County Attorney post on a permanent basis. He had been serving in an interim role since Ruth Ellen Kuhnelt stepped away due to illness; she has now retired. Lubeck was previously an assistant city attorney in Roanoke City as well.

*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.

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### *Higher Cigarette Taxes?*

With the biennial budget wrangling underway at the 2020 Virginia General Assembly session the **American Cancer Society** is calling for a higher cigarette tax hike than the 30 cents per pack initially proposed by Governor Ralph Northam when he laid out a two-year budget package in December. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network director of government relations for Virginia, Brian Donahue, said the 30 cents hike "won't make an impact on public health – it will fail to keep kids from becoming addicted to nicotine and it will fail to help adults quit." Donahue says the ACS CAN is calling for a \$1.50 per pack tax hike.

### *Home healthcare provider acquired*

South Boston-based **Team Nurse Inc.** has been acquired by Care Advantage and BelHealth Investment Partners. Care Advantage is a provider of home healthcare services in the mid-Atlantic states. Team Nurse currently 17 locations in Virginia, also provide home personal and skilled home health services, with a staff of 400-plus.

### *Jingle Bell run*

The annual **Jingle Bell 5K Run** in December – it's one of the longest running road races in the valley – raised \$36,000 for arthritis research through race registration fees and sponsorships.

That's according to the Arthritis Foundation Virginia Chapter. 599 people signed up to run or walk on December 14. "We were counting on you to bring the energy and holiday spirit and you delivered," said Laura E. Boone, Executive Director for the Arthritis Foundation Virginia Chapter

### *Design firm celebrates completion*

**SFCS**, the Roanoke based architectural and design firm, is cheering the recent completion of two STEM building projects it worked on. That includes the new building for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math classes at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, and the new Bioscience Building at Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave. "Both buildings provide learning on display, with flexible teaching and lab spaces," said Brenda Landes, Vice President at SFCS.

### *Ferrum College stepping up*

After a century of educating students first as a training school, then a junior college - and finally a four-year institution, **Ferrum College** in Franklin County will now offer graduate degree programs beginning in fall 2020, to be administered as online courses. The Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges has approved the addition of two graduate programs:

Specialist in Education (EdS) in teacher leadership and coaching, and a Master of Science in psychology. "This is an important and historic moment for Ferrum College," said President David Johns.

### *Advisory companies merge*

**Brown Edwards** has merged with Richmond based Gregg & Bailey, P.C. (G & B) effective January 1. The G & B partners Brad Bailey and Beth Llewellyn and their employees will become part of the Brown Edwards team and a significant number of G & B's clients are expected to also transition. Brown Edwards provides assurance, tax and business advisory services to a diverse clientele throughout Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee. The Richmond office will be the eighth office in Virginia and eleventh overall. That includes offices in the Roanoke and New River Valleys.

### *Top grades for LewisGale*

All four **LewisGale Regional Health System** hospitals were awarded an 'A' in the Fall 2019 from the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade, a national distinction recognizing achievements in protecting patients from harm and providing safe healthcare. The Leapfrog Group is an independent national watchdog organization committed to improving health care quality and safety for consumers and purchasers. The Safety Grade assigns

a A-F marks to general hospitals based on their performance in preventing medical errors, injuries, accidents, infections, and other harm to patients in their care. LewisGale Hospital Alleghany, LewisGale Hospital Montgomery, LewisGale Hospital Pulaski, and LewisGale Medical Center in Salem each received an "A" grade. Of the more than 2,600 hospitals graded nationwide, only 33 percent earned an "A" grade. "I'm incredibly proud of our Medical Staff and team of LewisGale associates for their commitment to our patients, as well as for the care they provide, says Dr. Steven Pasternak, an ER physician and Chief of Staff at LewisGale Medical Center.

### *Know your solar rights*

A Virginia nonprofit group and a Virginia law firm have announced a campaign to help homeowners in the Commonwealth install rooftop solar, even when such installations are opposed by homeowner associations (HOAs). **The Local Energy Alliance Program** (LEAP) and the law firm **ReisingerGooch, PLC** will provide free and confidential legal advice to eligible homeowners who want rooftop solar but are encountering resistance from their HOAs. The program's goal is to ensure that all Virginia homeowners can install rooftop solar if they so choose. Under Virginia law, HOAs may impose "reasonable" restrictions on rooftop solar systems but cannot

impose unreasonable restrictions or bar installations outright (except through recorded covenants, which typically do not address rooftop solar).

*Kaine, Warner urge higher THC threshold*

U.S. Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner (D-Virginia) are calling for changes in the **USDA Industrial Hemp Program**. In a letter sent to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue they call for a "more reasonable time frame" when it comes to the testing hemp farmers must submit to ensure that their crop has not produced too much THC – the ingredient that makes users of hemp's cousin, marijuana – high. Both Senators also called for a higher "negligence threshold" for the THC level found – perhaps 1.0% at least instead of the current .5%. Kaine said that number may be "arbitrary" and that the THC limit for industrial hemp should be based on science. Outside factors like weather conditions can grow a hemp crop with too

much THC – which could mean a financial pitfall for the farmer. 5th District Republican Congressman has also called for higher industrial hemp THC limits in recent months.

*Non-profit helping people find food access*

The **Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV)** has released The NRV Food Assistance Directory 2019-2020. Created as part of the Foundation's Thrive Initiative, this new guide provides a comprehensive overview of available food assistance programs and services in the NRV. Food security remains a serious challenge in the region, with 10% of families and one in five children in the NRV experiencing hunger or food hardship. The directory fills a critical need for information around food access opportunities. Started in 2016, Thrive is focused on expanding access to healthy food in the New River Valley. Over 90 organizations play a direct or indirect role in providing food access. (see story on CFNRV

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elsewhere in this issue)

serve the community."

*Angels thinking big*

With all of the rezoning and city-donated property now in place **Angels of Assisi** is in the public fundraising mode for a new \$3 million Pet Hospital and Adoption Center in plans to build in downtown Roanoke at the corner of Elm Avenue and Franklin Road. The new 16,000 square foot facility – which may take about two years to fund and then build – will feature surgical suites, a pet pharmacy, diagnostic rooms and the adoption center. Executive Director Lisa O'Neill says of the current Angels of Assisi center on Campbell Avenue, "we found ourselves at a tipping point ... the new facility will better

*Virginians bullish on real estate, especially sellers*

The most recent survey of Virginians conducted late last year by the **Institute for Policy and Opinion Research** at Roanoke College shows the "Virginia Real Estate Index" remains strong, with low mortgage rates, robust labor markets and consumer sentiment the drivers. In 4Q 2019 almost forty percent more respondents were positive about the real estate market than a year ago. Even with higher home prices the low mortgage rates are keeping more house hunters in the game. Despite all the noise about impeachment and tariffs, "consumer incomes and wealth are rising. People are

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extremely confident in the U.S. economy," says Dr. Alice Kassens, senior analyst for the Institute. 609 Virginians were surveyed by phone in mid-November 2019.

---

*Advance Auto acquires landmark brand*

**Advance Auto Parts**, formerly based in Roanoke but now headquartered in Raleigh, NC, has purchased the DieHard brand line of batteries from what's left of the Sears Company, through Transform Holdco LLC. The \$200 million cash deal also means Advance may extend the DieHard name into other product lines besides car batteries. "DieHard has the highest brand awareness and regard of any automotive battery brand in North America," says Advance Auto president and CEO Tom Greco.

---

*Warner supports USMCA*

Virginia Senior U.S. Senator Mark Warner has endorsed the new **United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement**, intended to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has had its detractors and supporters over the past two decades since it was enacted during the Clinton Administration. "I'm optimistic that this trade agreement will help American farmers, ports, manufacturers, retailers, and workers. This deal will address issues like digital trade that NAFTA couldn't fully anticipate and [it will] help decrease

market barriers to agricultural products that have been huge points of concern for Virginia farmers," said Warner in a news release. He also commended fellow Democrats for tweaking the USMCA, a pact championed by President Trump. "Overall, I'm hopeful that the agreement will provide the consistency and stability the business community needs," added Warner.

---

*Roanoke County plant suffers major damage*

The 600,000 square foot **Ardagh Corporation** manufacturing facility often touted as one of Roanoke County's more recent economic development "wins" was seriously damaged by a fire on December 27. At least one firefighter suffered minor injuries and the fire took more than four hours to extinguish. Roanoke County Fire and Rescue estimated damages to the packaging plant at 4 million dollars. The building suffered no major structural damage but machines, conveyors and the building exhaust system suffered smoke and water damage. The plant reopened in early January.

---

*Colonial Downs shares the wealth*

The **Colonial Downs Group**, which operates the Rosie's Gaming Emporiums in several locations around Virginia including in Vinton, is raising its minimum wage for most employees to \$15 per hour – more than twice the minimum

under current state law. (The minimum wage for "tipped" positions goes to \$9 per hour) Colonial Downs also announced a limited racing campaign for its track in New Kent County – 18 dates between July 23 and August 29. Rosie's in Vinton has already delivered more than \$600,000 in tax revenue from the Historical Horse Racing games patrons have been playing there since last May.

---

*Botetourt County in solid position*

**Botetourt County** says the auditor delivering its annual report noted the growing strength of the County's financial position. Broad economic growth, prudent budgeting practices, and Botetourt's overall desirability as a place to live and work were cited by Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates. In a release Botetourt County says since 2016 more than 1,000 new jobs and almost \$200 million of industrial or commercial investment "have put Botetourt on the map."

---

*Comings and goings*

It's had several different names; a one-time Sheraton, Wyndham and Marriott property for example - and what was more recently known as the Blue Ridge Hotel and Conference Center on Hershberger Road has been permanently closed and the property has been sold. Meanwhile a new restaurant has made its way to downtown Roanoke. The Cello Coffee House and

Café located on Campbell Avenue specializes in Mediterranean dishes including falafel, gyros and Turkish coffee. The restaurant's owner says he loves the downtown area. And the last Mick-or-Mack grocery store - in Roanoke's Grandin Village - has closed, with a buyer (reportedly Cardinal bicycle shop already earmarked for that property. The location on Winborne Avenue was the last store for the chain, that at its peak had a dozen across the Roanoke Valley.

---

*Major grant challenge*

**Blue Ridge PBS** has announced a substantial financial gift of two million dollars from The Secular Society. This is a matching grant is contingent upon Blue Ridge PBS raising a like amount over the next three years. The matching grant and the donations required will be used to expand the BRPTV education department. That includes innovative digital media technology, new local productions, and increased arts and cultural opportunities across Southwest Virginia.

---

*Help is on the way*

The **City of Roanoke** and **Virginia Career Works** have announced what is called a "new program" to help those laid off from Freight Car America, Norfolk Southern and General Electric in recent months as those companies cut back or shut down their local facilities. Career training, funds for those at risk of eviction or

utility shut-off, guidance for laid-off workers who want to start their own businesses. The Virginia Career Works-Blue Ridge office in Roanoke is offering those services and Roanoke City will offer its Financial Empowerment Centers as a resource for those that suddenly need help with issues like financial and retirement planning. Norfolk Southern laid off almost another 70 employees at its East End and Shaffer's Crossing shops last month.

*Sold!*

**Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group** has announced the sale of Springwood Park Retail Center in the Cave Spring Corners area of Southwest Roanoke County. The mixed use - retail/office building sold for almost \$2.9 million. "The purchaser is excited to own this marquis retail property, situated in one of the best locations in the Greater Roanoke Valley" said Bryan Musselwhite with Poe & Cronk. Meanwhile **Waldvogel Commercial Properties, Inc.** has announced the sale of The Oaks on Thirlane Road in Roanoke, a

two-building property providing a total of 20,000 square feet of office flex space. The property is occupied by US Cellular, Progressive Insurance, Johnson Controls, and C.H. Robinson Worldwide.

*Big numbers at MMT*

**Mill Mountain Theatre** producing artistic director Ginger Poole said thank you at the end of the year to supporters of Roanoke's equity playhouse when she also rolled out the 2019 stats: "29,000 Patrons passed through our doors, 11 Productions graced our stages, 41 Conservatory Classes and Camps held on site, 6,141 students taught through Mill Mountain Theatre Conservatory, 430 Volunteers helped guide patrons to their seats, passed out playbills, organized coffeehouse performances and more."

*Former Allstate building filling up*

**The Hanover Insurance Group** will occupy 13,655 square feet of the Metis Plaza building owned by Metis Holdings

and once home to the Allstate service center on Electric Road in southwest Roanoke County. This will bring occupancy in the renovated facility to nearly 80%. "The redevelopment project coincides with the County's Reimagine Oak Grove planning effort launched this year - an innovative planning and economic development process geared towards creating and redefining high-quality centers of activity," says Roanoke County economic development director Jill Loope.

*Brown Edwards Acquires Covenant Real Estate Services*

**Brown Edwards**, a full-service regional accounting firm with offices in the Roanoke and New River Valleys, has announced the acquisition of a majority interest in Covenant Real Estate Services, LLC. Covenant, a real estate title and settlement firm founded by Roger Kronau and Jerry Dunnivant. Jason Hartman, CEO of Brown Edwards says, "Real estate service offerings are a natural fit with our

goal of being a one-stop-shop and most trusted advisor for our clients." In addition to continuing in his role as President of Covenant, Dunnivant will assume the responsibilities as Director of Business Development for Brown Edwards.

*Former Roanoke Mayor releases historical book*

*The Roanoke Valley in the 1940's* is the latest of fourteen titles from **Nelson Harris**, another volume loaded with archival photographs and anecdotes from the current pastor putting it all in perspective. From the debut of the Mill Mountain Star to major league baseball exhibition games at Maher Field, big crowds at the American Legion Auditorium and the end of the streetcar era, Harris's latest volume from Arcadia Publishing and The History Press focuses he says on a time period that "has been largely unexplored until now."

*Compiled by Gene Marrano*

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# SMALL BUSINESS X 3

By Priscilla Richardson

**The Barkett family runs a trio of small business ventures in Fincastle and Botetourt County.**

*(Fincastle was founded in 1772 and named after Lord Fincastle, son of Lord Dunmore, Virginia's last royal governor. Population 353 after last census in 2010)* Tiny Fincastle in Botetourt County attracts many visitors. Those needing to do business with county departments or the courts, to say nothing of the many attorneys located there, fill its narrow streets by day. Those absorbing history come to take scenic tours past the many old houses and churches. Or go to the courthouse to look up their family genealogy. Others just enjoy the town's ambiance and architecture. The result: crowds looking for something

good to eat and drink. Serving those crowds? The Woodsdale Group, under the direction of Ginny Barkett, CFO. "I had no idea I'd be in the food and event business. It all came about by happenstance," she said. Now they've got a coffee house, a Pie Shoppe and a events venue for rent nearby.

"I had been looking for the former Pie Lady because liked her pies (as in chicken and a variety of other ingredients) and had used them, although I love to cook," adds Barkett, about getting into the deep-dish pie business. "When I found out her business was for sale after we had purchased the

event venue, I saw how those things would go together. Plus, my son Will needed a place to work on his skills as a chef and caterer.” He now does that at the Fincastle Cafe at 18 South Roanoke Street. It’s open from 7:30 a.m. until six p.m. Mondays thru Friday, then 8:00 until one Saturdays – you can visit the Cafe just across from the courthouse and the old original Bank of Fincastle. Light fare including specialty coffees, teas, and pastries tempts visitors. For those hungrier, more substantial items such as homemade soups, sandwiches and salads make for satisfying lunches. (To check on the day’s menu call 540-632-8099 or connect via Facebook.)

Next to the Café on the corner with Main Street sits the brand-new Pie Shoppe, opening in March. Carrying on a long-standing local tradition, it sells whole main dish pies, frozen and ready to take home to bake. Yes, the Pie Lady is back with many different kinds of chicken



Ginny Barnett

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pies: chicken and vegetable, chicken and mushroom, chicken and cheese, chicken broccoli and cheese, chicken bacon, spinach, and asiago, chicken fajita and chicken Cordon Bleu. Also, in season there are special Football Fan choices, including buffalo chicken. Dessert pies also tempt. Chocolate pecan, peanut butter and pumpkin start that list. Smaller pies of all kinds round out the offerings. All of the employees at the Café help make the pies. Ginny Barkett does her part: "I spend a lot of time searching for new recipes."

All these pies are created from scratch

in house and can be ordered for later pick up. Depending on volume of business, and how many flavors are available, you might be able to purchase just a slice. Many happy customers plan their weekend menus around a pie (remember these are meals), or two.

Another business run by the Barketts includes the Woodsdale Events & Wedding Venue located off Route 11 near the Mill Creek Baptist Church area, on Lee Highway. It looks like an old Virginia plantation style house of red brick with tall white columns, for a Gone with the Wind feeling. But never



feared, it has electricity and plumbing. Up to 300 guests can be accommodated, and the Group can supply catering for about any sort and size of party from a wedding to a business meeting. (See [woodsdaleevents.com](http://woodsdaleevents.com)). If your group wants to serve alcohol, Director of Hospitality Stephanie Payne can help with the ABC regulations.

The efforts of the Woodsdale Group under the supervision of Ginny Barkett, have emerged, recently with first the Café and then The Pie Shoppe, filling a retail void in the historic downtown district. Barkett herself is not native to Botetourt County, but attending a Fincastle festival stands out in her memory. She met her husband Eryn at a chemistry class at the University of Richmond; they have been married for 27 years. Living in Botetourt they discovered the event venue mansion because its property borders their own. Their children played in the neighbor's creek; their oldest child takes part in Attic Theater's drama program for young thespians. "I just love Botetourt," she admits. 



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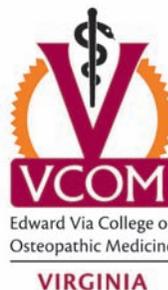


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“ ”

If it is a ‘marital hybrid’ the court gets to decide how to slice up the pie. — Page 23



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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.*

## Signs of a Heart Attack

If you have any of the signs of a heart attack, act fast to improve your chances for recovery.

Our Heart Alert program fast-tracks heart attack patients to lifesaving care, and our Emergency Departments and accredited Chest Pain Center are prepared to treat any heart condition.

**Always call 911 when you feel any combination of these symptoms. Do not wait or try to drive yourself to the hospital.**

**Cardiovascular Institute**

**CARILION CLINIC** 



Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital's Chest Pain Center is accredited by the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care.

800-422-8482 | [CarilionClinic.org/KnowTheSigns](http://CarilionClinic.org/KnowTheSigns)