

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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SEPTEMBER 2020

Sunbelt Business Brokers

Sugar Magnolia

West Salem
Collision & Frame

Elder Care Solutions

Tim Bradshaw,
Roanoke-Blacksburg
Regional Airport

Prescription Costs

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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Welcome to the Fall (soon enough), although it's been sort of a mishmash all year long with the seasons – did anyone really remember that we even had a Spring? COVID-19 and the uncertainty as to when it will fully loosen its grip on the world also makes it a challenge to focus in on specific business sectors for us. But we soldier on; this month we offer a grab-bag of smaller businesses that are doing the same. Coronavirus seems like it targets the weakest among us with compromised health – and for many in business sectors that perhaps didn't have the best survival mechanisms in place, some fell prey as well. We've also got a story that will probably exasperate some - about how prescription drugs are priced. Onward.

Tom Field
Publisher

Gene Marrano
Editor

“”
We would be thrilled to support
your local business. — Page 24

“”
Holy cow, Dave! That's a cool mask!
— Page 37



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It's Still Business As Usual for Buyers & Sellers

by Nanette Levin



“ We pay more so the rest of
the world can pay less. — Page 16

Cover photography of Mike and Jeannie Keen by Cory Crouser.

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P.O. Box 1041
Salem, VA 24153
(540) 389-9945
www.vbFRONT.com

Staff

Publisher / Creative Director	Tom Field tfield@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Editor	Gene Marrano news@vbFRONT.com
Advertising	Dan Dowdy (540) 797-7943 ddowdy@vbFRONT.com ads@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Graphic Design	Nicholas Vaassen nvaassen@berryfield.com
Office Administration	Emily Field info@vbFRONT.com
Production	Berryfield, Inc. PO Box 1041 Salem, VA 24153 (540) 389-9945

Departmental Contacts

Advertising	ads@vbFRONT.com
Subscriptions	info@vbFRONT.com
News / Releases	news@vbFRONT.com
Admin / Ops	info@vbFRONT.com

(540) 389-9945
vbFRONT.com
morefront.blogspot.com

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SEPTEMBER



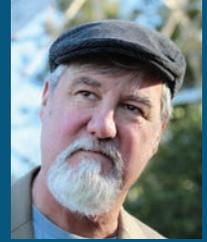
Michael Abraham



Ally Bowersock



Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Gene Marrano



Michael Shelton

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.

2020 CONTRIBUTORS



Jennifer Poff Cooper



Cory Crouser

“ “
Ice cream was
at the top of
the list. — Page 26



Mike Leigh



Nanette Levin

“ “
We are seeing
both sides
moving in
the positive
direction. — Page 13



Nicholas Vaassen



Tim Bradshaw
Roanoke Blacksburg Regional
Airport / transportation



Lisa Clause
Richfield Living /
senior development



Mike Dame
Carilion Clinic / healthcare



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Virginia Tech / culture



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finance – credit unions



Brian Powell
Wine Gourmet / retail



Amy White
Virginia Western Community
College / education

Biographies and
contact information
on each contributor
are provided on Page 52.

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Villa Appalachia sale, brokered by Sunbelt Business Brokers

It's Still Business As Usual for Buyers & Sellers

By Nanette Levin

Mike and Jeannie Keen of Sunbelt Business Brokers break down what a business broker does—even in a turbulent economy.

Helping small business owners buy and sell companies is big business for Sunbelt Business Brokers. Owners Mike and Jeannie Keen, a husband and wife team, purchased the company in 2016. Since that time, they've sold more than 30 businesses for purchase prices totaling more than \$13 million. The company had 29 active listings as of late July.

Mike is a retired fraud investigator with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Office of the Attorney General. He's also a Certified Main Street Business Broker and a Certified Fraud Examiner. Jeannie holds a license in Clinical Social Work (LCSW), a Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification and is a Certified Main Street Business Broker (CMSBB).

"Selling your business is probably one of the most important and complicated things you'll do in a lifetime," says Mike Keen. "It's a daunting challenge for anyone." Adds Jeannie Keen: "we are currently providing a free Broker's Opinion of Value for business owners who want to understand what their business would sell for on the open market."

What does a business broker do?

Sunbelt Business Brokers markets properties on industry websites, screens buyers, and helps complete contracts. "We can provide input on how to structure financing," says Jeannie of her company, which operates out of Roanoke and Lynchburg (and occasionally out of state). "We can refer to a potential lender for prequalification and we can also refer buyers to potential lenders." In addition, the company draws from a prospect database of interested buyers.

"In terms of screening [buyers], we ask for some personal financial information so that we're certain, if we're calling a business owner, that we have a viable candidate," Jeannie states. "We also work as part of that team as the intermediary between accountants and lawyers, particularly as it gets closer to closing. All of that frees up sellers to continue to grow their business. Our marketing is customized as well, so

Mike Keen, CMSBB, CFE

““”

There's a lot of opportunity right now for a younger generation that wants to own their own business.



Cory Crouser



Cory Crouser

Jeannie Keen, CMSBB, PMP, LCSW

we'll create a plan based on what makes sense for that listing."

Another advantage in working with a business broker is confidentiality, notes Jeannie. Most owners don't want vendors, competitors, and their own employees to know the business is for sale. It's almost impossible to keep a sale quiet when owners are handling it themselves. Screening and vetting potential buyers while you're "still trying to keep your foot on the gas pedal and run your business" is extremely challenging. Purchase offers are highest when business income is on the rise. That's hard to do when time is split time between running a business and trying to sell it, says Keen.

"You want to make sure you got somebody that has the knowledge, first of all, to be able to run a business . . . and that's where we come in to play, sitting down with these folks and asking 'what's your interest; what have you done in the past; what do you have a passion for?'" Mike Keen asserts. Part of his matchmaking role includes educating potential buyers on what the business is actually doing. This includes discussing equipment being utilized, pricing strategies and logistics in a way that, for example, a chemical engineer considering a plastics company purchase can know if he's knowledgeable enough to jump in and make a profit.



Screening and vetting potential buyers while you're still trying to run your business is extremely challenging.



SNAPSHOT: Sunbelt Business Brokers Inventory

(As of late July 2020)

CURRENT LISTINGS

- Steel Fabrication and Manufacturing
- Ornamental Furniture Manufacturing & Powder Coating
- Towing Business
- Historic Trinkle Mansion B&B
- Putt Putt Franchise w/ real estate
- National Furniture Restoration and Refinishing
- Party Supply business
- Pet Store
- Computer Services Business
- Jewelry Store
- Screen Print and Sign Business
- Plastics Manufacturing
- Pre-cast Concrete Business
- Fencing Business
- Plumbing, Heating & HVAC Business
- Subway Franchises
- FedEx Routes



- Retail Vitamin and Supplement Health Business
- Ben & Jerry's
- Pizzeria
- Salon & Spa
- Fashion Boutique

Total inventory = \$17,305,849

SAMPLE OF BUSINESSES THAT HAVE SOLD

- Business Services Company
- Tomahawk Mill Vineyard & Winery
- Health Spa
- Custom Screen Printing & Embroidery Business
- Plumbing Business
- FedEx Delivery Routes
- Manufacturing & Distribution, Tipton, MO.
- Automotive Garage and Repair Business
- Upscale Restaurant
- Fiber Milling and Processing Business
- Motel and Restaurant
- Convenience Store
- Industrial, Commercial, Electrical Contracting
- Motel, Colorado
- Winery and Residence
- Grocery and Convenience Store
- Automotive Industry Services Business



McCalls Candles

Getting ready for a sale

Jeannie cites the significance of creating systems that ensure the business can function without the owner. She also notes the value of policy manuals to help new hires and documenting accounting practices. "For business owners, we always want to convey the importance of planning ahead for how they're going to exit their business," Jeannie says. "Every business owner will exit their business one day, and we want it to be on their terms, not someone else's."

"Nothing breaks our heart more than when a business owner comes to see us, and often times they're prompted by an external event – death, divorce, disillusionment or declining sales – and we have to say 'I'm sorry, we can't help you.'" She refers these people to consultants, the SBDC (Small Business Development Center), the Advancement Foundation in Vinton, or SCORE, a nonprofit organization and resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

She also recommends business owners "be proactive in thinking about what their exit plan is. That doesn't necessarily mean it's 12 months from now, but if it's five years from now and I'm going to sell my business to my brother-in-law, that's what you need to be heading toward."

Operating in today's economy

"We have been very fortunate in this industry in that in many ways it's been business as usual," says Jeannie. While Main Street businesses may be facing challenges, other sectors are not. "A lot of it depends on the industry," says Mike. "There's a lot of restaurants and retail stores that are struggling right now just because they've had to be shut down for the last four months and they're just getting back to doing some business." He adds that machinery plants, steel manufacturers, and logistics companies haven't felt the worst impact of COVID-19.

"I can't say that COVID is impacting anything either in the sale or in the buying process; we are seeing both sides moving in the positive direction right now. A lot of listings — good listings — and a lot of good potential buyers out there that are qualified to purchase as well." For businesses forced to shut their doors, the company can do auctions to sell off equipment. Mike Keen is also a licensed real estate agent.

Finding opportunities

"There's a lot of opportunity right now for a younger generation that want to own their own business, to purchase a [company] that has been thriving for 30 years," says Jeannie. "A business already making good net profit every year, and all of the sudden some fresh blood, a younger person coming in who has probably more ideas than I ever thought of to grow it and take it to the next level." Upgrading technology is one area often targeted for quick improvement, she cites.

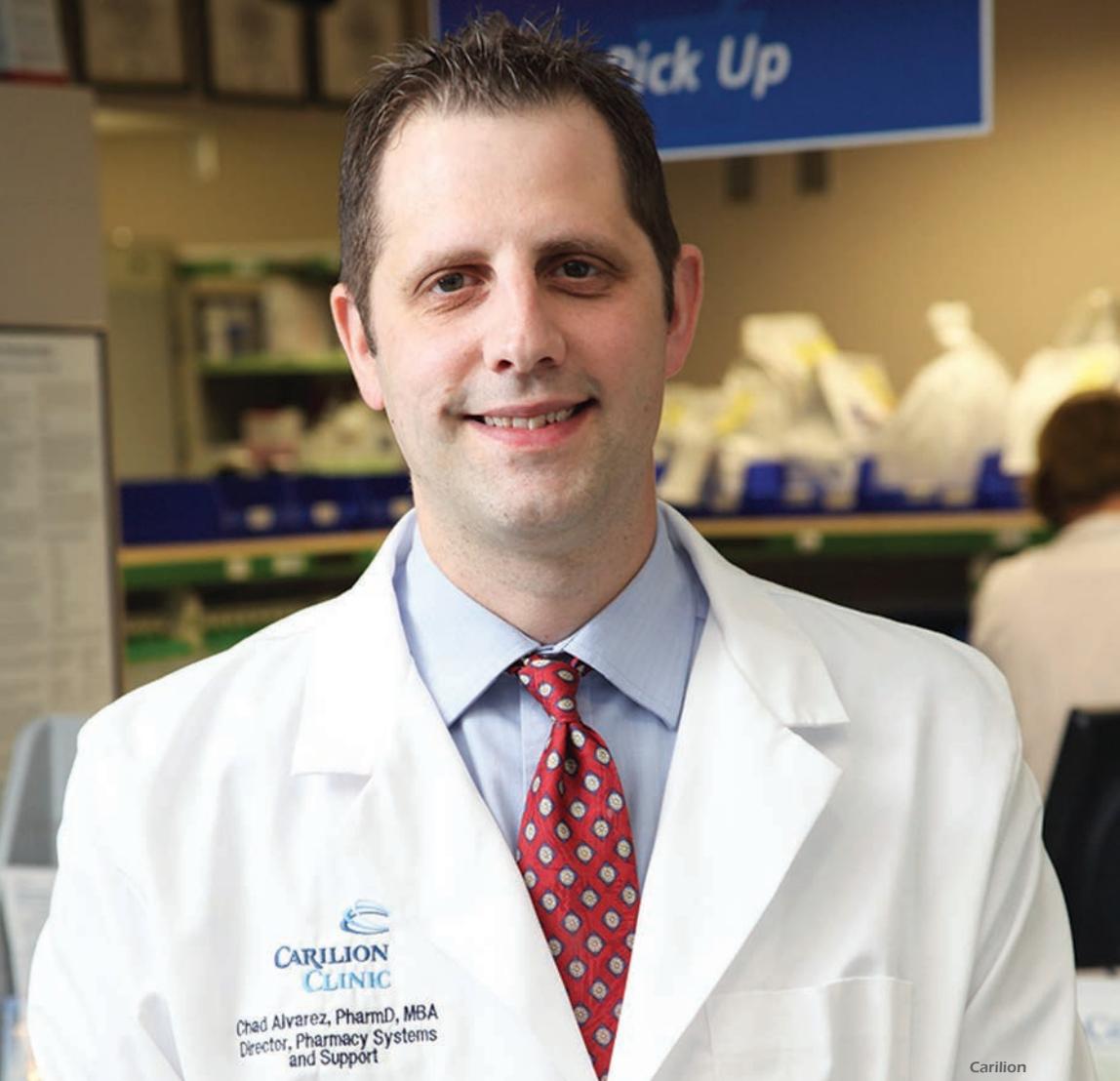
The transaction can be a win-win: "you can't think of selling your business too soon," says Jeannie Keen. "As serial entrepreneurs ourselves, we find great satisfaction helping owners sell their business and reap the rewards of years of hard work, while simultaneously helping buyers realize their dreams of business ownership." 

Villa Appalachia



“ ”

Every business owner will exit their business one day... we want it to be on their terms, not someone else's.



Chad Alvarez

Carilion

The Dilemma of Prescription Drug Costs

By Michael Abraham

A look at the hard-to-fathom and seemingly unexplainable world of how Rx is priced.

“

There is an unholy relationship between big pharma, pharmacy benefits managers, health insurance companies and stores.

So, let's say you need a new supply of Viagra. Well, not you of course, but someone you know. How much will you have to pay for it? Just about whatever you want. Ten years ago, you may have paid \$100 for 100 pills at your local pharmacy. Five years ago, you may have paid \$50 for 100 pills at an on-line Canadian Pharmacy. Now it's \$16 for 100 pills using a GoodRx coupon. What gives? Brace yourself: You are entering consumer hell when you have the unfortunate situation of needing a pharmaceutical.

Most products work on supply and demand. That large pizza you want for dinner may cost \$10. Maybe you can find one like it for \$9.00. Maybe you can find a 20% off coupon and pay \$8.00. But generally, the restaurant factors in the parts (cheese, crust, sauce, toppings, box) plus labor to make it and then a profit. Simple. (Of course, you can choose to fix ramen noodles instead.)

You can throw that logic away when you talk about drugs, because all notions

BY HOW MUCH?

List prices for brand-name drugs shot up 159 percent between 2007 and 2018, a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA 3/3/20)* found — that's 9.1 percent per year. After accounting for rebates and discounts, the net prices of these drugs still soared 60 percent during the same 11-year period, about triple the rate of inflation. (from AARP report, March 2020)

of supply and demand don't work. The pharmaceutical that may be saving your life, sitting inside a plastic container on the shelf of your bathroom, plays by different, complex rules, generally not designed to either save you money or make you healthier.

Chad Alvarez, Senior Director of Retail Pharmacy at the Carilion Clinic in Roanoke says there is an unholy relationship between big pharma, PBMs (Pharmacy Benefits



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Managers), health insurance companies and stores designed to maximize their profits. “The PBMs are separate companies that work the formularies (lists of approved medications) the insurers will consider appropriate for prescribing and paying for. Behind the scenes, [pharmaceutical manufacturers] pass rebates to the PBMs to preferentially prescribe their products. That particular drug may not have the same efficacy as what your doctor prescribed, but it’s what the insurance company will cover. Invariably, the savings are never passed to the consumer. Americans spend more on pharmaceuticals and health care in general than most industrialized nations, yet our outcomes are often worse. Spending more doesn’t always equal better value.”

Formularies are like restaurant menus, Alvarez explained. Taking the example further, a given restaurant may have a relationship with Pepsi

consumer, often too expensive even for people who have insurance.

Carilion’s Chad Alvarez suggests that pharmaceutical companies feel they deserve profits for the risks they take in bringing a drug to market, the R&D, clinical trials, USDA approval, and so forth. But that doesn’t explain why they can sell quantities of drugs to pharmacies in Canada that can re-sell to consumers in America at less cost than the consumer can buy locally. American consumers pick up that tab.

“We pay more so the rest of the world can pay less,” he said, ruefully. “Coupon programs like GoodRx actually end up costing retail pharmacies money because they must pay to submit a claim. We accept GoodRx coupons. We make a small margin on all prescriptions, best case.” A recent survey of independent pharmacies



Many generic medications cost only pennies per dose to make yet can cost hundreds of times more to the consumer, often too expensive even for people who have insurance.

and carry their products, so they won’t sell Sprite, a Coke product. “You will have access to medications but not every one of them. The PBMs are the middlemen. They get rebates [from] the manufacturers by adding specific drugs to the formularies—kickbacks. The consumer pays higher prices because the PBMs keep the ‘spread.’ Insurance companies try to reduce their own costs but not to improve value or outcomes to the patients, their customers.”

There are typically six major players in every transaction: the drug manufacturer, the drug wholesaler, the pharmacy, the PBM, the health insurance company and you, the consumer. The PBM and the manufacturer look to be the biggest winners in this. The combined profits of the American pharmaceutical industry last year were around \$744 billion. They spent about 60% more on marketing than on research. It may be hard to tell what if anything PBMs add to the mix, other than being a middleman in the supply chain. Many generic medications cost only pennies per dose to make yet can cost hundreds of times more to the

showed that 58% expect to be forced out of business within three years.

“Essentially, the manufacturer, who often has patent protection on their drugs, can charge whatever they want, with prices changing weekly. In other countries, governments negotiate prices to protect consumers. Not here. It’s life and death for people. It’s not like a widget that you can take or leave. If you don’t get your drug, in some case you risk dying,” notes Alvarez.

“In our [current] environment, not everybody is aligned to the same goal,” Alvarez continues on a subject he has been pondering. “Everybody’s right and everybody’s wrong. The patient should be at the center and the outcome should be the goal. Everybody should be reducing cost and increasing value and sharing risk. We are not aligned in that journey. We need to be aligned around a central value point, all sharing risk for the outcome of the patient. Instead, everybody’s in it for themselves. The patient gets left out.” 



**Congratulations to
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Monica T. Monday,
for being chosen
as one of the most
influential leaders for
the VIRGINIA 500
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BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Beware - an owner's tunnel vision can be harmful long term.

Send your questions
or comments to Mike@
OpXSolutionsllc.com

Small business growth

The life of an entrepreneur and the path of a small business owner is a perilous one. At the start, it's all about getting enough revenue to survive. The owner doesn't wear many hats but wears all the hats. After long hours, sacrifice, and good decisions, one day the business arrives! For me, it was at the 18-month point when I realized that I could make a living and be successful.

Many small businesses have reached the stage of being sustainable. The business might be a one-person consulting business, a machine shop, or a small restaurant. Sure, there are still perils and risks, but the owner knows that critical start-up stage is past. Now what?

For many, this stage is good enough. The business provides a lifestyle the owner wants, and maybe becomes self-sustaining and profitable enough to sell someday.

For others, however, the motivation is different. The owner wants to scale the organization and create an entity that goes beyond a small business. The reasons can vary, but the desire is growth.

Which path is best?

There is no wrong answer, but the owner must decide.

The risk for the owner is that the entrepreneurial skills that enabled success in the past may hurt a business trying to achieve growth. In a Harvard Business Review article by John Hamm titled *Why Entrepreneurs Don't Scale*, there are four tendencies small business leaders need to be aware of that can impede the growth of a small business.

- Loyalty to comrades – the small dedicated group that got the business through start-up may not have the skills for large growth. These employees can become liabilities.
- Task orientation – laser focus to the job at hand may have helped at the start, but too much attention to detail can cause the owner to lose the big picture.
- Singlemindedness – Entrepreneurs often focus on a single product or service, or a single function (engineering, marketing, etc.) But this tunnel vision will be harmful if the owner cannot expand to address all business functions.
- Working in isolation – To successfully grow, introverted entrepreneurs must present their company to the outside (clients, suppliers, investors, etc.) which can't be done by staying in the office.

For the small business that wants to achieve significant growth, identifying and overcoming these tendencies is critical to success. 

Back to . . . do we even know where we're going?

Traditionally, this is back to school time in the US. We're in a whole different world these days, though. Shopping this year isn't about clothes and notebooks, but instead about buying electronics and furniture. According to the National Retail Federation, we're set to hit over \$101 billion for K-12 and college spending this year.

That's a new record and the first time crossing the \$100 billion mark. A big reason for this is additional distance learning costs. There's also the confusion factor. At the time of this study (mid-July), parents didn't know what they needed to shop for. In many ways, they still don't. We're wavering between virtual and physical classrooms, still unsure of how pandemic movements will affect our lives as we used to know them. Remote learning isn't cheap.

Record spending on back to school

According to the annual survey by the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics, parents plan to spend almost \$790 on their kids in grades 1-12. That tops last year's spending by almost \$100. It also breaks a record set in 2012. College students cost more, with back to school spending projected at over \$1000 per family. That cost sets a new record too.

Where are they spending? The survey says 36% on laptops, 22% on speakers and headphones and 17% on non-computer items including desks and chairs, calculators, and workbooks.

Think about taxes now

What a lot of people aren't considering as they scurry to gather supplies, are tax strategies to help lessen the burden of kids learning from home. There are creative ways to deduct things like childcare costs. If you're forced to work from home, your home office expenses can offset taxes owed. It all depends on how you set things up.

At a time when our world is changing in ways we never would have imagined, it's a good idea to reassess your tax planning strategies. There are creative approaches for tax deductions that may help you recover at least some of the costs of this new normal. Of course, that requires sitting down with your tax advisor now, so you can be strategic about how you plan for the 4th quarter. 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:
Remote learning isn't cheap. But get used to it.

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



BIG SHOP-SMALL SHOP-FULL SHOP GUY

Photos and story by Cory Crouser

West Salem Collision and Frame is a business story about brand, capacity, quality, and workflow.

“”

I like the feel of the metal, the sculptural element of repairing a smashed panel... trying to determine the energy of an impact...

Marc Fly's background didn't exactly have him heading in the direction of working in an auto body shop one day, much less owning it. He found himself on a baseball scholarship at East Carolina University, until he discovered his eyesight was too impaired for depth perception to excel (even as a solid pitcher). No one gets a line drive harder and quicker than the player on the mound.

"My brother shot me in my eye with a .22 when I was ten years old," explains Fly, 54, owner of West Salem Collision and Frame in Salem. "So, I moved on to art school at VCU."

"My first year there, I got to talking with my RA (resident advisor) and realized that, best case scenario, I'd be making like \$30,000 annually with a fine arts degree. Hell, I was making twice that already working at Maaco... so I left. Went down to Florida."

Still a teenager, Fly quickly established himself as one of Maaco's preeminent specialists, claiming a good deal of the records and awards available for technicians.

"Since then, a lot of the kids I trained have taken my records. But that's what you want, really. You want to train people well enough that they can beat you someday."

Soon thereafter, Fly was promoted to a management position with oversight of nearly forty Maaco locations.

"A lot of the older guys were like, 'Hey, I'm not listening to some corporate kid,'" Fly recalls. "But they did listen." Fly was one of the most successful person of his age in Maaco's entire corporate structure.

However, disenchanted by the administrative responsibilities which

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inspired
 by its mission

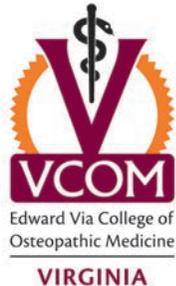


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seemed, each day, to pull him further and further from his passion—hands-on body work—Fly left Maaco after 12 years on the job. He opened his own shop in Charlotte, N.C.

"That shop was really successful. We were doing volume work with some really lucrative contracts. But eventually my ex-wife decided she wanted half of the business, and I figured since half of nothing is nothing, I'd get rid of it."

In a short while, Fly found himself in Roanoke, Va. sought out by Caliber Collision, where he opened the first shop and then developed the region for Southwest Virginia.

Additionally, Fly frequently stayed late to assist technicians with their repair work, demonstrating skills and instructing in best-practices. Occasionally, Fly would surreptitiously do someone's repair job for them. "It kept me sharp," he says, "kept my hands working."

Fly left Caliber Collision after realizing,

again, that the corporate life just wasn't for him.

"I like working on cars. That's it. I like the feel of the metal, the sculptural element of repairing a smashed panel; I like trying to determine how the energy of an impact propagated through a vehicle's frame, its body. I knew I needed to start my own place again."

Fly and a partner purchased an existing shop West Salem Collision and, eventually, Fly took sole proprietorship of the business. "I really valued the brand equity of the name West Salem Collision, so I added & Frame to the name to make it mine, and here we are."

"My shop is committed to performing repairs correctly, by the manufacturer's book, and I'm proud to say that since January 2020, we've already worked on more than 270 vehicles."

That's saying a lot, considering the shop is staffed by just Fly and an occasional technician at the moment. Fly states that he wants to mold his younger protégés into a "monster in the shop."

"Eventually, I could see myself with five or six employees," says Fly. "I know how to grow a business, but I don't want to grow as big as I've been in the past. I just want enough people around to serve our customers well. That's the most important thing to me: the customer."

"I know what it's like to be unsatisfied with a service or repair, to be let down by a service provider, and I'm not



going to do that to my customers. I don't care if you have a '72 Pinto or a 2020 Bugatti," Fly insists, "you're the customer and I'm going to treat you the same."

"I do everything I do, each repair, according to the manufacturer's workflow; I don't cut any corners. If West Salem repairs your vehicle, we're repairing it correctly." 

“ ”
I know what it's like to be unsatisfied... I'm not going to do that to my customers.



Martha Parrott
Stroke recovery

from sudden stroke to SINKING PUTTS!

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



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WELLNESS

By Ally Bowersock

Executive Summary:
Wellness takes on many forms. Like local small businesses supporting each other through stressful times.

Ally Bowersock is the Co-owner of RunAbout Sports Roanoke. Contact her: runaboutroanoke@gmail.com

Learning new tricks in 2020

School looks different this year for many families, and regardless of where learning will occur, it's never too late to learn new things. We have all been forced to LEARN new ways of conducting our daily lives, whether its for our jobs, our families, or now our schools, but through it all we can at least say that we have learned new ways of living perhaps in ways we never thought possible.

As our kids resume some sort of learning, businesses must continue to adapt in this uncharted territory of COVID-related policies and procedures for our staff, customers, and future business endeavors. In many cases, as is true with our small business, our staff is juggling virtual learning at home with working an ever-changing retail work environment. Times are stressful and unpredictable, and we are asking a lot of our team on a regular basis as well all navigate these unprecedented times together.

While we are missing a lot of what normally helps our business grow, like local running races, regional community events, and charitable fundraising events, we are again always LEARNING new ways to connect with other local businesses and hope that you would join us in sharing in this learning endeavor.

If you are a fellow small-business owner and wish to collaborate on a shared social media promotion activity, please reach out to us and let us know. We have made an effort to post on social media channels about our support of local restaurants on Tuesdays (#takeouttuesdays) to highlight takeout and contactless payment during the lockdown and help promote them. We have connected with local business professionals who have invested in gift card donations for their patrons.

In exchange for our promotion on social media, we help each other in reaching a potential new customer base by connecting with each others' followers on said channels. Again, we are constantly trying to learn new ways of engaging a new audience while minimizing spending and finding mutually-beneficial ways of helping support local economy.

We would be thrilled to support your local business in the ways we have mentioned above but also am happy to entertain other ideas as well. We are always up for LEARNING new ways of connecting with our community and our fellow small businesses—so please reach out to us and let us know if you want to collaborate. It's win-win, we have learned, to support others through good times and bad. Until we can get back to better times, let's help each other out, the only way out is through.

Please feel free to email runaboutroanoke@gmail.com to connect or send ideas! 

The great outdoorsy opportunity

Roanoke Outside Foundation shows off the best of our Roanoke Region and Virginia's Blue Ridge by "leveraging natural assets to attract investment and talent." And even as a relatively new kid on the block (okay, it launched in 2013, but has grown so exponentially in seven years, that the draw still feels brand new), people from far away—as well as right here in the Valley—are discovering the best of what our region offers through outdoor recreation.

In mid-August, ROF launched "Project Outside," a \$100,000 fundraising campaign that includes support for key outdoor capital improvement projects, maintenance of outdoor assets, and help for outdoor businesses impacted by COVID. Funding will come from advocacy stakeholders, individuals and corporate contributions (Roanoke Regional Partnership, Anthem, Carilion Clinic, Freedom First Credit Union, Haley Toyota, Hydro Flask, Member One Federal Credit Union, and Orvis have already pledged). See www.roanokeoutside.com/project-outside/ for more information and to get involved.

During the past six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, ROF Director Pete Eshelman says local outdoor recreation areas have experienced upwards of 200% increase in use. "We have to ensure that we don't love our outdoor assets to death," Eshelman says. "Parks, rivers, greenways, and public spaces don't bounce back on their own." The region needs to invest in these areas and capitalize on our community strength. Furthermore, says Eshelman, our level of attraction for outdoor recreation and the culture we're creating, "is catching the eye of a new type of employee: the remote worker."

Roanoke Outside is all about branding and applying measures that will attract businesses to this region that employ folks who enjoy our outdoor amenities. The organization is part of the Roanoke Regional Partnership, and also manages events such as the Blue Ridge Marathon, GO Outside Festival (GO Fest) and Go Cross Cyclocross Race.

Eshelman points at COVID-19 as the greatest economic and health crisis of our time; but then immediately points at "our mountains, greenways, waterways, and trails... [here] lies the great opportunity for the Roanoke Region to gain momentum in economic recovery." An "outdoorsy place that can draw remote workers, businesses, young talent, and tourists." 

GOOD WORK

Executive Summary:
ROF. Rather than let ROF stand for "rolling on the floor" why not take the fun outdoors and go with Roanoke Outside Foundation?



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Submitted photos

Sugar Magnolia literally rose from the ground up. Located between London Underground and the old National Bank of Blacksburg building, it was dirt when the Raubs leased it. It later expanded to include some of the NBB space. Sugar's conference room is in the old bank vault.

Making Sweet Memories

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

The concept is unique – a seemingly disparate combination of ice cream and paper goods in one retail space. Yet market reaction has been positive for that premise at Sugar Magnolia in downtown Blacksburg.

The idea “grew out of things already going on in town,” said Tom Raub, co-owner with his wife, Michelle. The couple had opened the small T.R. Collection gift shop down the street in 2015 and realized that greeting cards, note cards, and planners were top sellers. This sparked the idea that a full-scale stationery store might work well in Blacksburg.

Meanwhile, Michelle was President of the Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. (DBI) merchants’ association, which was conducting focus groups to learn what residents wanted to see downtown. Ice cream was at the top of lists for every age category. Who will fill that gap? Michelle wondered. When it occurred to her that ice cream and paper goods were two of



Michelle Raub wanted Sugar Magnolia to have a Charleston, South Carolina, feel with the decor she carefully selected, including brick walls, open ceilings, and crystal chandeliers.

her favorite things, the idea for Sugar (the founders / owners' nickname for the store) was born. They opened the doors on June 8, 2018.

The Raubs envisioned "Sugar" being a local hub, much like the soda fountain in a drugstore in bygone days. Pairing past with the future, both in the product mix and the architecture evoked the nostalgia

they were seeking. Michelle's description of the store is "all things comfort." For Tom, it is about the "old soda fountain concept, reimagined for the modern era." (Sugar Magnolia is also the name of a Grateful Dead song, for those who don't know.)

The underlying mission has been building community. Tom said even their workforce, with 25 or so employees of mostly high

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Confections and ice cream are two of Sugar Magnolia's food offerings, which also includes gourmet popcorn



Michelle and Tom Raub

school and college students, he treats like his own children. Customers come from “across the board,” said Michelle – young families, teens whose parents feel safe allowing them to congregate there (pre-COVID-19, of course), and even a couple in their 80s that visits Sugar Magnolia for their monthly date night. The gift side has a more specific

demographic, with paper goods appealing mostly to women.

Michelle wanted customers to have the “feel of walking down King Street in Charleston,” which she aimed to achieve with the architecture design (a warehouse look, studded with crystal chandeliers)





and the color palette. The décor is so popular that people will ask the names of colors. The gray paint was custom mixed by Valley Paint to match the countertop, and now is just called “Sugar Magnolia gray.”

The business has evolved into event planning as well. Sugar Magnolia is on The Knot wedding website and does custom wedding stationery. The Raubs added a mobile ice cream cart that includes gourmet popcorn and a chocolate bar for corporate events, birthday parties, and wedding receptions.

Marketing has included some paid advertising, but mostly not. The Raubs knocked on doors introducing themselves, developed a website, and found partnerships within the community. For example, DBI would end

Virginia Tech orientation leader tours at Sugar Magnolia, where leaders received free ice cream – and would inevitably share the experience with their freshmen mentees. “Sugar” has also found opportunities to connect with the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center for events. Word of mouth has been the best publicity, in addition to social media that includes the expansive Virginia Tech parents’ page.

Not surprisingly, COVID-19 has been the Raubs’ biggest challenge. T.R. Collection is temporarily closed (its small size would not allow for social distancing), but much of its gift and stationery inventory moved up the street to Sugar Magnolia. Fifty-seven events on the 2020 books turned into one. “COVID crushed the event business,” said Michelle.



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Sugar Magnolia's retail section contains an eclectic mix of local memorabilia, unique greeting cards, and upscale gifts.

The Raubs are actually fine with that, and will only consider small, outdoor events for now for safety reasons. Fortunately, most of the larger bookings have been rescheduled for 2021. COVID-19 has “forced us to get creative,” said Michelle. An example is their Sundae Bar To Go, which features all the

fixings for an ice cream sundae bar packaged for take-home.

The Raubs are extremely careful about the health and safety of customers and employees. Sugar considers itself still in Phase 2 even though Virginia has moved to Phase 3.



The demand for high end stationery was a catalyst for Sugar Magnolia's retail side.

There are only four tables inside and one outside. (The Town of Blacksburg put further restrictions regarding the wearing of facemasks and crowd sizes in place as of mid-August). Curbside pick-up and delivery remain popular options. Sugar has partnered lately with Grubhub and Uber Eats, adding to its own ongoing delivery service (parents of Tech students often want treats delivered to their students).

One delivery vehicle is unique. On December 18, 2019, Sugar Magnolia was the first small business in the United States to have a product delivered by drone. Through a partnership with Christiansburg-based Wing, Sugar is participating in a pilot program to assess the feasibility of future drone deliveries. Tom read about the idea and “a lightbulb went off,” he said. Because he had a “grand vision” to expand their market, and Wing delivers to Christiansburg, the Raubs asked for consideration, were vetted, and got the nod. The delivery area is small, so sales are not the biggest advantage – exposure is.

“There was crazy media coverage,” said Tom, including NBC Nightly News and overseas outlets. Sugar Magnolia catered the first day media event.

Sugar Magnolia was also named the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce’s 2019 Small Business of the Year, and its ice cream won WSLs-TV’s best ice cream award. There is, of course, uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 moving forward. On the day we interviewed, Michelle was trying to buy products for Christmas — with no clue what people will want. But the Raubs feel they are well-positioned to come out of the pandemic standing tall. In fact, they are planning to expand with a second Sugar Magnolia store in Roanoke.

The Raubs attribute their success to the mixture of customer service, family atmosphere, and quality product. Tom said that even before COVID, with so much electronic communication, “society was realizing the value of personal connection.” That’s been Sugar’s mission all along. 

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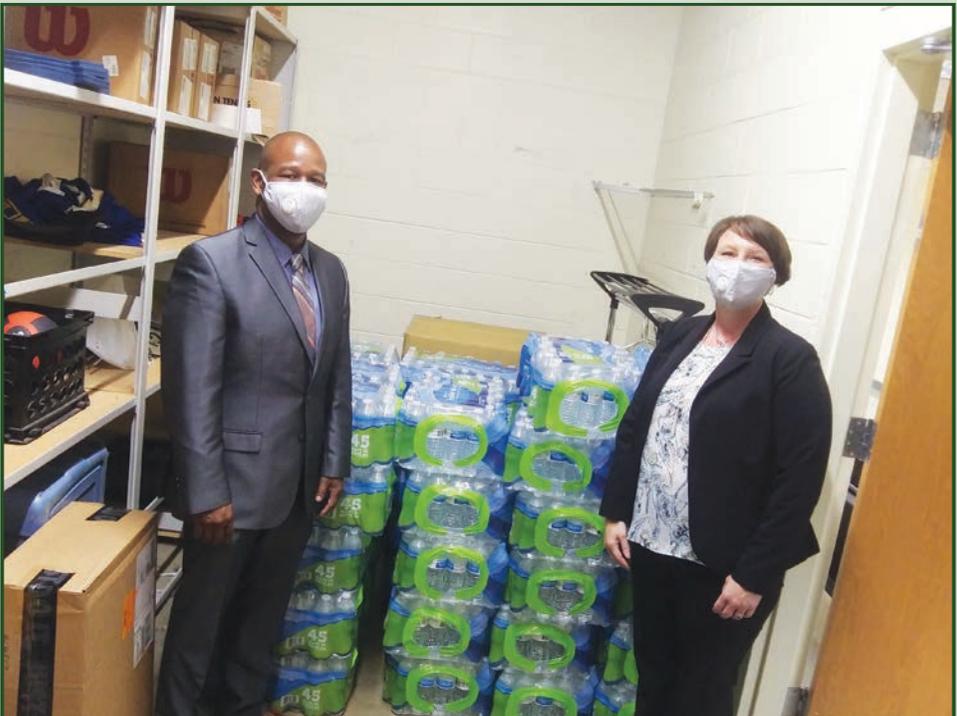




Gene Marrano photos

Local insurance agent comes through for the kids >

Roanoke City Public Schools will supply students with water during meals served on-campus - but water fountains this academic year will be turned off due to COVID-19. So local insurance agency owner **Betsy Thomas** (left picture) - who has children in the school system - has delivered ten-thousand bottles of water to several city schools that can be used for extra-curricular activities: "some kids will bring their own and some kids may forget," said Thomas (her office is in the Cave Spring area) after dropping off the final batch, "[the school system] suggested that water would be a very great need." Thomas delivered that bottled water to William Fleming and Patrick Henry High Schools, and to a school warehouse. **Ray N. Deskins** is an assistant principal at William Fleming High School, which received some of that bottled water; he says this school year it will take a "community effort" to make sure students get everything they need (standing with **Patricia Maxey**, below).

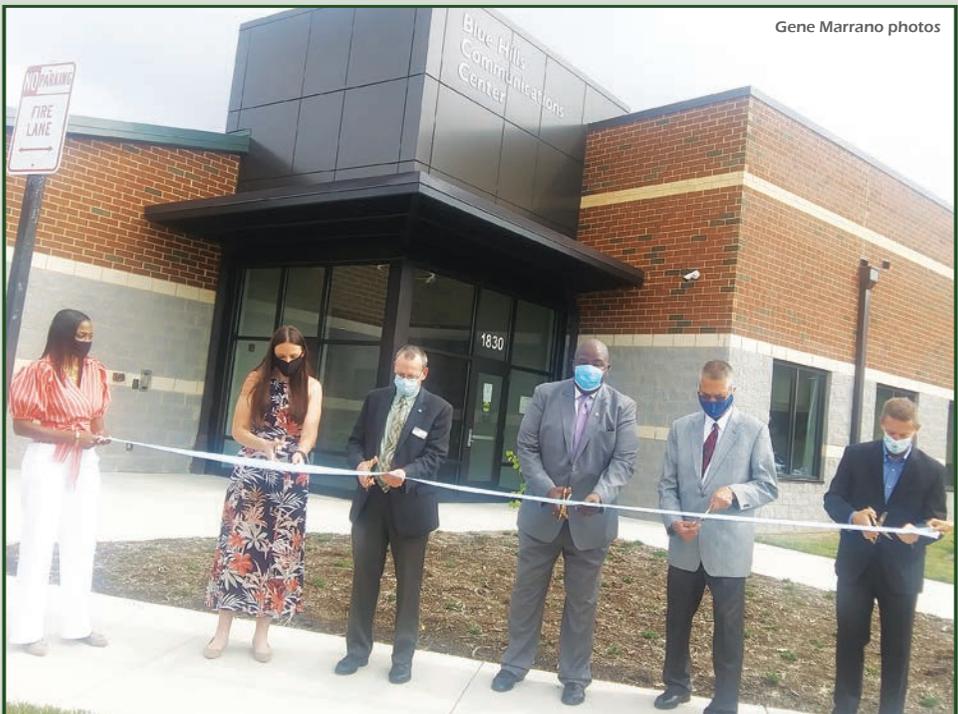
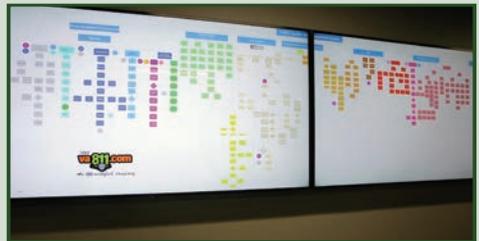


Public-private partnership leads to new call/dispatch center >

Roanoke City's E-911 call center moves in soon to the "Blue Hills Communications Center," but Virginia Utility Protective Services - Virginia 811 - was onsite at the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology late last year. For now, 811 employees are working at home due to COVID-19. Virginia 811 - some may have called it Miss Utility in the past - is what homeowners and contractors contact before they start digging deep - to ensure that they don't hit a utility line. Rick Pevarski retired recently as founder and CEO - but he led media tours in August of the new, 16-million-dollar communications center. So did Sonya Roman, who manages the E-911 center for the City of Roanoke. (Her husband Sam Roman Jr. is the Roanoke police chief.)

Virginia Utility Protective Services paid around 6 million dollars of that total construction cost. Balzer & Associates did the design work and Lionberger Construction built the 31,000 square foot building at the Roanoke Centre for Industry & Technology. Employee perks include E-911

workspaces with individual climate control settings, quiet rooms to unwind and a fitness center. So is a vista featuring Read Mountain that employees can see from many of the workspaces. "We wanted to make sure that our agents had the best view," says Pevarski. Virginia 811 is a not-for-profit organization created by Virginia utilities to protect their underground facilities. Pevarski retired in July as CEO, succeeded by former Vice President Scott Crawford. "The [new] building was a 50-year plan," says Pevarski; "we built everything in ... planning that far ahead, to make sure we had all the capacity for everything that we need."







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Timothy Bradshaw

FROM COAST... TO AIR

Photos and Story by Cory Crouser

Valley Business FRONT introduces Tim Bradshaw, a 2020 advisory board member representing the transportation sector.

"The mission of the United States Coast Guard is to ensure our Nation's maritime safety, security and stewardship." – USCG

Keep that in mind. We'll circle back.

Daylight comes brightly through picture windows into an otherwise modest, corner office. Timothy Bradshaw, executive director of Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport, scoots back in his chair (ensuring social distance), unmask and smiles a small, contented smile. He gestures toward the window, toward the wide tarmac outside: a pristine plain of asphalt and patchy grass, stretching (it seems) all the way to the distant Blue Ridge. "That's McAfee Knob"—Bradshaw's squinting; he's tracing the contour of the prominent peak with his finger—"and that's Mill Mountain over there... This really must be the best view in Roanoke..."

In time, Bradshaw's gaze comes home, back to the nearer neighborhood and settles, admiringly, on an airplane just-arrived, a white behemoth taxiing slowly toward the gate. "Wana... Wana go outside?"

Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport isn't huge. Interrupted (rest assured!) by badge-swipes, code-ins and polite once-overs by airport security, it's only a short walk from Bradshaw's office to the facility's expansive tarmac. "We've got two runways," Bradshaw explains, flagging the driver of a nearby patrol vehicle, "One's longer than the other. We can accommodate some pretty large planes, big freighters. Although most of the passenger flights we have coming through are smaller. Regional."

The SUV arrives, lights blinking. "Hey, Dave," Bradshaw grins, as if greeting an old friend,

"Would you mind giving us a ride?"

Dave, who's presently patrolling the airfield's perimeter, clears the backseat of retrofitted SUV: he collects a few loose log-papers, stows a firearm and, back up front, dons a facemask.

"Holy cow, Dave! That's a cool mask!" (Dave's mask features the painted nose of a WWII fighter plane, an impressive rendition).

Bradshaw hops in the SUV's backseat without production, offering shotgun to his guest. To Dave: "Can you drive us over there, toward the hangars?"

Roanoke-Blacksburg's campus accommodates both commercial and private airlines. Airline operators, contracting with the Roanoke-Blacksburg, can erect facilities on leased, airport land. Some of these structures are significantly larger than others.

The SUV rounds a bend, revealing behind one of the airport's towering hangars a UPS freighter. "I was COO at an airport in Louisville, Ky.," Bradshaw volunteers, humbly, "UPS has their Worldport Air Hub there."

Following a stint with the US Coast Guard, Bradshaw, who earned business and administration degrees from both Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Western Kentucky University, has occupied leadership roles at several US airports (Louisville, Ky.; Owensboro, Ky.; Bowling Green, Ky.; Teterboro, N.J.; and Cedar Rapids, Iowa).

Today, Bradshaw wants a picture in front of the UPS jet, a glimmering monster of a machine.

"Ultimately," he says, "I'd like to see Roanoke-Blacksburg become a commercial hub. Imagine if we could get Amazon, say, to establish here. We have the space; we have the land available.

"Of course, we'd ensure this is done in a way that benefits the greater Roanoke community, the entire region."

Bradshaw operates according to five Guiding Principles (they're listed on his business card, black text on eggshell white).

- Safety and Security
- Customer Service
- Stewardship
- Optimization of Resources
- Regulatory Compliance

Does this sound familiar? We've circled back.

"I did six years with the Coast Guard," Bradshaw explains, "This was before they'd implemented the rescue swimmer program. I was up in the helicopter, handling the cable, directing the basket we'd lower down into the water for water rescues.

"When I was done with that, I went straight into airport administration, and I haven't looked back. I love it—it suits me.

"Anyway, Dave, can you drop us back at the terminal?"

Bradshaw, a Roanoke-native, has served as executive director of Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport since 2014, considering the job an opportunity to "come home again" after 34 years away. He lives in Botetourt County with his family, and he has no plans to leave. 

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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

We say we spotlight small business... but it's really a floodlight; small business IS the big picture.

Small business, big hearts

Our feature on business brokers reminds me why I like this topic so much. The stories of small business owner / operators are invariably the most interesting ones. Sure, we enjoy the big business headlines. The major corporate mergers and acquisitions. The big institutions that set up in our region, creating jobs and supporting our local economy. We all know the impact is worth celebrating.

But the small business stories tend to be more colorful. While we're sharing the figures and statistics on a big business contribution to our market, more often than not, those numbers are just about the last thing folks are interested in when it comes to a small business owner and his or her product or service. We want to know how the owner got started in business. How the owner built it. How the community or market has responded. And what happened with the product or service development all along the way to make this business—a story worth telling.

I've had the pleasure of working a spell with business brokers here in our region; and indeed, putting all those numbers down on a valuation report is a critical function. But just watch how all the other components flood in when the time comes to sell or buy a business. A broker has to navigate between the widest range of reality and perception when determining a price. Sometimes, the seller is a person who built up that "empire" from scratch. Or the business has been in the family for generations. Business owners often put their heart and soul, sweat and tears into this "occupation" they engage for years upon years... some of them, embedding the business into their daily routine from sunup to sundown. Most of the time, sacrifices are made that can seep all the way down into a person's family, finances, place and space, wellness, and lifestyle.

But the biggest, the strongest attachment most business owners have—is indeed, the responsibility itself. Being responsible for your own success or failure is both empowering and humbling. Taking on the risk is no small matter. Small business owners understand they really are building something—despite when a former US president proclaimed "If you've got a business—you didn't build that," right here in our own downtown Roanoke in the summer of 2012. That campaign attempted to retract and clarify that the statement simply meant folks had help along the way; which is certainly accurate. I don't know a single business owner who fails to recognize the help from others along the way. The truth is, individuals DO build businesses. Whether they want or seek the recognition or distinction or not. Essentially, a business-builder causes the wheel to turn that makes our American way of life possible. It really is that simple.

After interviewing, writing, and assigning stories on small business now for 30 years, I've amassed a collection of a thousand perspectives. And guess what? That's not enough.

continued on Page 40

Coming and going in the Roanoke Valley

Parents of teens or kids in their early 20's, maybe just finishing up college, know the mantra: "I'm ready to leave Roanoke; I want to move to a big city." The Roanoke and New River Valleys will never be a New York, a Chicago, or even a Tampa. The latter is where my 25-year-old daughter may be moving this month for a new job, three years after graduating from James Madison University, three years into a health care administration career path. "I love Roanoke and I may come back some day," she says, but for now she has heard the siren song of The Big City. I now may have kids in the Tampa, Boston and Atlanta areas; when my younger son gets out of the aerospace program at Virginia Tech next spring, he'd like to land a job in California or Colorado.

How are we doing in attracting or retaining talented young professionals and others to the area? Erin Burcham is the director of talent solutions for the Roanoke Regional Partnership: "we've been running a remote worker campaign for the past several months and it's been one of our most successful marketing campaigns. There's a lot of interest; we're running it in large markets, showing lifestyles in [this] region first. How you can spread out and have a really great outdoor lifestyle."

The notion of not living in a more densely populated city, where we have seen COVID-19 infection rates spike in recent months (see New York City, Miami, etc.) is a draw for some says Burcham. "People are very interested in moving to our region." One recent study showed more than 10,000 remote workers in the area, and if nothing else the pandemic has allayed some company fears that employees working from home would not be as productive.

Burcham says Regional Partnership programs are working on "creative ways" to build a rapport with college students as well, hoping they "keep Roanoke on their radar." Not to mention also reaching out to young professionals, mid-careerists and those in senior level positions. Social media campaigns are a big component of that effort. You don't have to live in a large city to work for a large company is part of the pitch.

The potential "to move up quicker," and to network with people at a younger age in the Roanoke region is another selling point. "There are a lot of advantages to living and working here," adds Burcham. I understand some of the wanderlust my daughter also feels after having grown up in one place all her life. I went through that - and wound up in Colorado for 8 years. I'll leave the light on for my daughter, here in the Star City. Now ... where's that Allegiant flight schedule?? 



THERE'S
SOMETHING
HAPPENING
HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
There's still interest from those looking to relocate here – more open spaces and the ability to work remotely has something to do with it.

Letters

Valley asset

Editor,

Thank you for providing our area with a truly professional publication! The articles are always interesting and encouraging. I sincerely appreciate the positive approach taken by the Valley Business FRONT. I always

look forward to reading the entire magazine. I especially enjoyed the recent "Reviews & Opinions" article. The Random notes were very interesting and as usual, you were right on! The Valley Business FRONT is truly a wonderful asset for our valley. I hope you and the entire staff will keep up the great work!

Mayor Brad Grose
Vinton

Send us your feedback in a letter with name and where you live – good or bad: news@vbfrent.com

Field / On Tap

from Page 38

I still see new ideas. I still have questions. And I still form observations, such as the following:

"I can do that!"

One of my favorite business owners is the one who just saw another business and decided to get into the same thing. Mary loved an antique shop and decided to open her own. Jim had difficulty finding someone to weld a roll cage on his jeep, so he opened his own shop. Carl loved a restaurant he frequented when he was in college, so he brought the same model and cuisine back here.

"Thanks, dad!"

This one's fascinating as well. From family farms to retail establishments to restaurants to dealerships to dental practices, many businesses are handed down to the next generation. I kind of hesitate to say it, but oftentimes the second and third generations seem to lose a bit against the original reputation. Is it because the son/daughter/relative didn't start the business? This is why I really perk up when a generational business expands or becomes far more successful... the recipient proved he or she was fully invested in mom or pop's venture. A business tied to a family name around here embellishes a story that will be as unique as the family itself.

"Imma switcheroo!"

How many intriguing business stories do we get to tell about a person doing something

completely different from his background or trek? I lost count. The former bank executive who now runs a small bait shop. The senior technology account rep who opened her own online therapy practice. The award-winning creative director who left his agency suite, bought a pickup truck and some equipment, and started landscaping. These examples suggest downgrades in compensation; and indeed that happens. The popular mantra "do what you love and the money will follow" doesn't always ring true—though it is generally accurate if you accept the idea that you'll have the money you really need. Of course, we also have the stories where the transition resulted in overwhelming success or riches. Here's the deal, though: when someone makes a major career transition for a passionate reason, and it's a story we're going to write about—you can bet it was the right move at the right time for that individual. Because we are fortunate to happen to live in a space and time where we can pretty much decide what we want to do for the most part (that hasn't been the case for most of the entire history of the world, by the way), I would never recommend someone stay in a job that is unhealthy or completely unfulfilling. It's simply unnecessary. Switcheroo like your life depends on it.

My own small business—this very business journal—is possible and brought to you by small business. Thanks for sharing your stories. 

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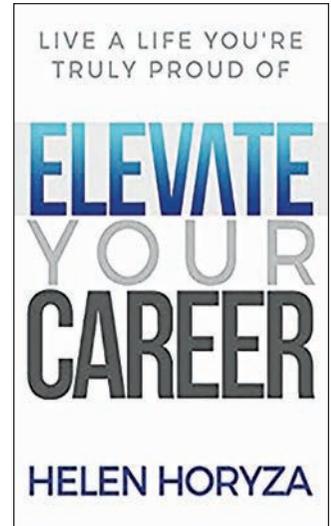


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Readers and patrons of the business journal are invited to submit reviews (along with an optional photo) to news@vbFRONT.com. We've expanded our reviews to include books, music, art, performances, culinary—with a preference for local productions. Reviews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



Up the ladder

Why do so many people stay in unrewarding careers? Fear of change? Lack of updated skills? Whatever the case, staying in an unfulfilling job prevents you from doing what you really want to do. The pandemic taught us that we can pivot and innovate faster than we ever thought possible, so why not restart your career with a renewed vision and a clearer path forward?

Elevate Your Career: Live a Life You're Truly Proud Of (Merack; 2020) from experienced career development coach Helen Horyza brilliantly demonstrates how you can design a career that aligns with your interests and talents by discovering what makes you truly happy. Through a series of true stories, Horyza illustrates how people from all walks of life and education levels can create a career that is literally a perfect fit—even if you don't know what your "passion" is yet.

In addition to these real-world examples, the book includes valuable tools that readers can use right away to reassess their career paths. First, the Elevate Career Cycle method, which is explained in the book, can help readers uncover their passion by pinpointing their interests and unique talents. Also included with the book is a coupon code for the Elevations Career Assessment, which synthesizes values, skills, interests and personality in the context of contemporary careers. Individuals who

complete the assessment receive a focused report complete with valuable decision-making tools. The result is a comprehensive model for smart and healthy career development.

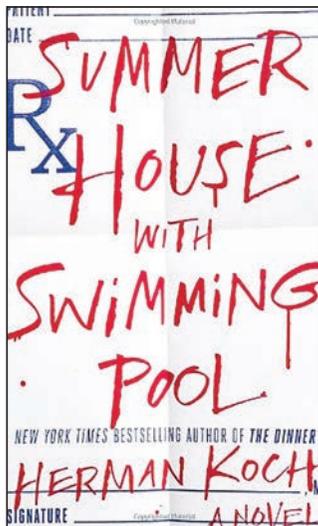
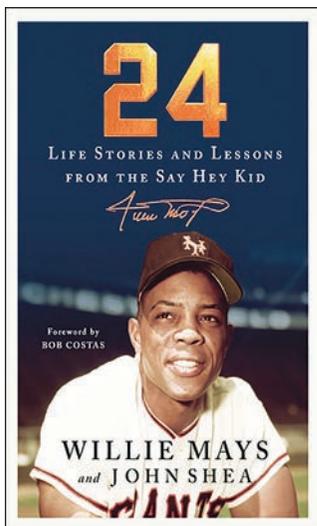
No matter where you are in your evolving career journey—college student, executive or someone looking to course-correct—this book will provide you with the tools and the momentum you need to elevate your career.

—Karen Anderson

On baseball – and life

Baseball fans of any age will enjoy *24: Life Stories And Lessons From The Say Hey Kid* (St. Martin's Press 2020), as Hall of Fame outfielder Willie Mays, with the help of San Francisco Chronicle reporter John Shea, tells his life story. From his segregated Alabama youth to a stint in the Negro Leagues and then roaming the spacious outfield at the Polo Grounds in New York - a stone's throw from Harlem where neighborhood kids would ask him to play stickball with them. He did. "24" is heavy with quotes from Willie Mays and those in his orbit as he took his talents to San Francisco when the Giants moved west.

Many still consider *The Say Hey Kid* the greatest all around baseball player of all time, what they call a 5-tool player. He ended his career back in New York with the



Mets, a shadow of his former self by then in his early 40's – but Willie Mays made it to another World Series, a fitting end to a glorious career. It seems in *24* like everyone along the way liked, loved, or respected Willie Mays for the work he put in, and for the genuine person he was. Every chapter in the book begins with a life lesson from Mays, now approaching 90 years old. Such as: "If you give your best effort, don't get down on yourself if things don't work out. Be happy with yourself and move on."

—Gene Marrano

Unfiltered

Summer House with Swimming Pool (Hogarth; 2014) by *The Dinner* Dutch author Herman Koch is yet another exploration into the politically-incorrect, taboo-hustling, mind of what otherwise, almost reads like a most ordinary man in a most ordinary television sitcom. The first person narrative reads like the most expected and habitual daily life, until you step back and say, "wait, he said/thought what?!!!"

It's a masterfully written story, as you roll along and are forced to accompany in silence, a man and the small circle around him who engage infidelity, rape, bigotry, sexism, and pedophilia, with a great big dose of medical ethics violations. "Wait, that was murder, right?!!!"

The cynicism here covers you in some kind

of slimy black film; but you don't claw your way out because you have to see how the characters sort it all out—even though you know you won't be invited to any resolution.

—Tom Field

Smooth transformation

Crescent City Bourbon & BBQ opened recently in the spot that used to be The Quarter (Cajun style) on Salem Avenue in downtown Roanoke. A recent stop there for a quick meal included a pulled pork platter, four different styles of BBQ sauce from tangy to sweet (love that) and two sides that measured up nicely, beans and a creamy style mac 'n cheese. The cozy outside patio area, complete with a wrought iron fence facing Salem Avenue, gave it a big city feel. Will have to go back to try the fried green tomatoes, gator bites, the bread pudding and, of course, the bourbon selections, but I was not disappointed by my first visit. Crescent City opens at 11am – and closes when they run out of the smoked meats they prepare every day.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Karen Anderson** is a publicist with Ascot Media Group in Friendswood, TX.; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT; **Tom Field** is the owner and founder of Valley Business FRONT and is a creative director, publisher, writer, and marketer.



Mack ready to roll >

Mack Trucks recently began initial production of its all-new Mack® MD Series of medium-duty trucks at its Roanoke Valley Operations (RVO) facility in the Roanoke Valley, Virginia. Full production of the Mack MD Series is scheduled to begin Sept. 1. Mack announced in January it had invested \$13 million to establish RVO, to produce the Mack MD7 and the Mack MD6. Both the Class 6 and 7 models are exempt from the 12 percent Federal Excise Tax. The new trucks will meet the needs of trucking applications requiring dry van/refrigerated, stake/flatbed, dump and tank truck vocations. The Mack MD Series will be supported by Mack's dealer network.



Props for Warm Hearth CEO >

Ferne Moschella, President and Chief Executive Officer of **Warm Hearth Village** since 2000, has been named the LeadingAge Virginia Vision Award recipient for 2020. LeadingAge Virginia is the state and national trade organization for nonprofit retirement communities. It works with members to create innovative practices that transform services for the aging in America and plays an active role in representing those organizations in seeking reform of policies related to health care. WHV has been an active member of LeadingAge since 1981.



SML Chamber gets BIG check >

Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce (SMLRCC) has received \$9,995 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant Program, a new grant made available to Virginia's Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the Commonwealth that have been heavily impacted by the novel coronavirus pandemic to fund recovery marketing initiatives. \$866,504 in marketing grant funds were awarded to go Destination Marketing Organizations as part of the DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant program.

SMLRCC will use the VTC WanderLove grant funds to produce a new video that showcases Smith Mountain Lake and the array of outdoor recreation offerings, local wineries, historical sites, and other hidden gems. In addition, SMLRCC will launch a multi-media campaign to position Smith Mountain Lake as a road trip destination.



FBRI spinoff focused on cancer treatments >

A major goal of the **Fralin Biomedical Research Institute** on the Virginia Tech Carilion campus in Roanoke is to turn that research into viable commercial spinoffs that can help treat people. Like an FBRI offspring, where **Dr. Sammy Lamoullie** is CEO for Acomhall Research Inc. He's working on a peptide - that's an amino acid chain - to treat brain and breast cancer. Lamoullie is also an assistant professor at VT-C. "We are now going to scale up, then there is [FDA approval needed]. I would say hopefully that will happen in the next two years." A recent \$400,000 grant from the US Small Business Administration will support research; he says widespread human testing is at least several years away.



Changing hands >

Mariners Landing, one of Smith Mountain Lake's largest and most established resort communities, has new owners. Long-time regional commercial developers **Waller Perrow** and **Tom Branch** purchased the development in May. According to Perrow, the pair is investing in a variety of improvements, and recently introduced an all-inclusive program for property owners. "The property has great bones," he said. "Planning, engineering and infrastructure is in place for tremendous residential and commercial growth. Dozens of improvement projects are underway, and dozens more are being planned." Perrow is also Chairman of the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Roanoke native wins national honors for work in chemistry field >

Northwestern University chemist **Will Dichtel** has been named the 2020 National Laureate in Chemistry by the Blavatnik National Awards for Young Scientists. The foundation selects one chemistry laureate each year to receive \$250,000, the largest unrestricted scientific prize offered to young U.S. researchers. Dichtel grew up in Roanoke and graduated from North Cross. He previously received a Guggenheim Award and MacArthur "Genius" Grant.



Healing Strides celebrates "new" imaging with ribbon cutting >

Healing Strides on Naff Road just over the Roanoke County line in Franklin County has redesigned their logo and "tag line," a reimagining that 5 Points Creative worked with them on. Horses Inspiring Hope is the new tag line. They held a recent ribbon cutting for that and to celebrate the Phase 3 loosening of business restrictions. Healing Strides offers help to those dealing with mental issues, focused on equine therapies. CEO **Carol Young** says the old logo "did not encompass where we had grown – where we have grown is that horses really inspire hope in people." Young notes that Healing Strides does have another mental health therapy program "that is solely ground based," with no horses involved. "We really wanted to express the difference in the services we provide."

A thank you to employees at Retirement Unlimited >

Retirement Unlimited, Inc (RUI), a senior living community management company owned by the Fralin and Waldron families based in Roanoke, recently distributed \$100,000 worth of gift cards at all nine of their senior living communities. The gesture (which included a gift card drawing of employees who had worked the previous day) was initiated to recognize staff members "for their dedication and commitment to residents and community safety during the COVID-19 pandemic". **Doris-Ellie Sullivan** is the RUI president: "this was not a battle we signed up for, but it is one for which our team has taken up arms and are fighting regardless. They overcame the fear of putting themselves and their families at risk, and for that we wanted to thank and recognize them through this program."





Submitted photos

Gene Marrano photos

More craft beer in Roanoke >

A new craft brewer should be open early September in downtown Roanoke. **Golden Cactus Brewing**, at 5th Street and Rorer Avenue. Ales and Double-IPA's will be among the specialties. "We want to set a new standard ... and sell some beer," says employee **Randall Tickle**. The operators of the Benny's pizzerias and the Milk Parlor in Blacksburg also own Golden Cactus Brewing. Tickle says they will coordinate their offerings somewhat with Big Lick Brewing Company, right around the corner on Salem Avenue.



Submitted

New wheels >

The **Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia** recently awarded a \$34,000 grant to **DePaul Community Services**, which will be used for a new wheelchair-accessible van. That's earmarked for the **OPTIONS** day program, focused on programs for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. "This van will allow us to expand community engagement opportunities," said DePaul case manager **Cyndle Hash**; "we can add new activities for our [day program] participants."



Sign of the times >

How people are seeing the dentist these days. Call from the car and wait to be welcomed in. No waiting room these days. Inside hygienists are fully gowned, masked and shielded.

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

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TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

The Board of Directors for the Virginia Tech – Montgomery Executive Airport has appointed **Keith Holt** as the new Airport Director. Holt assumed all responsibilities for airport operations in late July. Holt takes the reins from retiring Airport Director, Michael St. Jean, who has led the airport since 2002.

Luna Innovations Incorporated, an advanced fiber optic-based technology, announced that **Jane Bailey** joined the company effective August 3, as Vice President, Marketing & Communications. Bailey will report to President and CEO Scott A. Graeff. Bailey is the former vice president, marketing for GE Digital, where she spent the last two decades of her career. Bailey was accountable for all global product marketing and customer advocacy functions for the

organization's entire software portfolio.

KlariVis, a proprietary data analytics software platform developed by bankers and headquartered in Roanoke, has hired **Art Lucia** as its first-ever Chief Technology Officer. Lucia, also a co-founder of InfernoRed Technology based in Roanoke, has been leading the technology development of KlariVis since the Company's inception in February of 2019, as an outsourced consultant through InfernoRed Technology. "The evolution of the product from just one year ago is phenomenal," said Lucia in a new release.

WELLNESS FRONT

Live, Work, Eat, Gather Inc. has hired **Laina Schneider** as Manager of Millstone Kitchen in Blacksburg. Schneider brings with



Schneider

her nearly ten years of sustainable food, agriculture, and restaurant kitchen experience to the shared kitchen facility. She has worked with both academic and private sector entities in the U.S. and abroad in Honduras and Nepal. Schneider holds a B.S. in Crop and Soil Environmental Science from Virginia Tech and an M.S. in International Agricultural Development from the University of California, Davis. She succeeds Jessica Schultz, who returned to Pennsylvania to be closer to family.

Dr. Philip Brown has joined Tuck Clinic at the Salem-Roanoke Clinic Location. Brown earned his Bachelor of Science Degree from The University

of South Florida and then enrolled in Palmer College of Chiropractic in Port Orange. Brown practiced in Florida for three years before moving to Salem to join Tuck Chiropractic.



Hinton

Mary Dana Hinton became the thirteenth president of Hollins University on August 1. For six years prior Hinton served as the president of the College of Saint Benedict (Saint Ben's) in Saint Joseph, Minnesota, and was named President Emerita upon her departure. Longtime former and then interim President Nancy Gray has stepped down after taking over the reins again a year ago following the departure of Pareena Lawrence.

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Hopkins

William Hopkins has joined the Fralin Life Sciences Institute at Virginia Tech as associate executive director. Hopkins is a professor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation in the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech and has been with the school for 15 years.

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to 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.

she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position. She assumed this leadership role on August 1.



Prusakowski

Melanie K. Prusakowski has been promoted from assistant to associate dean for admissions at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. She has led the school's admissions team since 2016 and has been a pediatric emergency medicine physician for Carilion Clinic since 2008.



Read

Dustin Read has been named head of the Department of Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management at

Virginia Tech. Read started as an assistant professor of property management in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. In 2016, he became a faculty affiliate of the Urban Affairs and Planning Program in the School of Public and International Affairs.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

Virginia Campus has announced **Dr. Sofia Abraham-Hardee** as Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs. As a graduate of the inaugural class of VCOM and Discipline Chair of Pediatrics at the Virginia Campus,

“ ”
Brace yourself.
You are entering
consumer hell.

— Page 15



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CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Abraham

is a businessman and author. He was raised in Christiansburg and lives in Blacksburg. [michael@mabrahamauthor.com]

Ally Bowersock, PhD, is the co-owner of Runabout Sports and several other businesses with her husband and fellow fitness fanatic Tyler. She is also an Associate Professor at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and consults with local companies on employee wellness. [runaboutroanoke@gmail.com]

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

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

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. [cooperjpp91@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]

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

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

development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com]

Nanette Levin is a senior correspondent for FRONT business journal and owns a writing and consultancy firm, Roanoke Revealed. And outdoors advocate, when she's not creating strategies for clients, she enjoys growing fresh vegetables and herbs, seeing the sights in the area, and occasionally hopping on a horse. [nlevin@fulcrumny.com]

Gene Marrano is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy. [gmarrano@cox.net]

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

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

Paul Phillips has served as the chief executive officer of Freedom First Credit Union for the last twenty years. Freedom First was chartered in 1956 as a federally-insured member-owned financial cooperative and currently serves residents and businesses through its ten locations in the Roanoke and New River valleys. Prior to moving to Roanoke in 1998

Paul and his wife Missy lived in Cheyenne, Wyoming with their three children. A resident of Fincastle, Paul enjoys numerous outdoor activities, travelling and spending time with his two granddaughters.

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

Michael Shelton is a Registered Financial Consultant that specializes in working with Accredited Investors, largely being business owners and real estate investors. He has worked with thousands of clients in Southwest Virginia and beyond to create smart, cost-effective, and rewarding financial solutions. Michael's services bring together the powerful combination of tax reducing plans through the business and investment planning with your personal net worth. His unique strategy to provide a holistic approach towards asset management always delivers a simple, easy and enjoyable experience. [michael@discover360Financial.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 19 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

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

“ I don't care if you have a '72 Pinto or a 2020 Bugatti. — Page 23

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That sandwich demographic is a growing number and is shouldering the lion's share of elder care issues. — Page 60

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*Berglund Center dark
(at least for hockey)
until December*

The Southern Professional Hockey League (SPHL) announced that it is targeting mid-to-late December for the start of the 2020-2021 regular season. "With the continued spikes in COVID-19 throughout the country and the challenges other sports are facing in their attempts to resume play, delaying our start to December gives us the best chance of completing an entire season with all 10 teams," stated Commissioner Doug Price in a news release. "In addition, various state restrictions on large gatherings and the economics surrounding the uncertainty of having fans in our arenas in October or November, even at reduced capacity, make it difficult for teams to guarantee the ability to generate the revenue needed to operate if we were to start any earlier."

ROA air traffic picks up

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport saw an increase in June 2020 traffic of 112% over May 2020. June 2020 saw

13,566 passengers fly via ROA compared to 6,387 in May of 2020, an increase of 7,179 passengers. The airport's gain of 7,179 passengers from May to June equates to 239 more passengers flying each day, as ROA entered phase two of the reopening.

*Statewide Innovation
Authority created*

A bi-partisan bill now state law as of July 1st established the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority - designed to oversee and support research, development, commercialization and seed-stage funding. Governor Ralph Northam was at the Staunton Innovation Hub in late July yesterday for a ceremonial bill signing. Northam said then the Authority is about "bringing minds together to share thoughts about innovation," - and finding access to capital.

*The locals are
headed for the
hills ... and the river*

A wide-ranging online "Town Hall" forum by Roanoke County officials in late July focused on small business relief

grant programs, updates on construction projects and the need for more rural broadband. Parks, Recreation and Tourism director Doug Blount said one bright spot includes the increased number of people heading outdoors since the initial COVID-19 shutdown. "It has not stopped. We have seen a resurgence with people using trails, our blueways and just out walking in our park system." In fact, Blount said some local outdoor equipment retailers are running short on stock at times, trying to keep up with the increased traffic from those seeking fresh air.

*Recognition
for Lewis-Gale*

LewisGale Medical Center is the recipient of the Healthgrades 2020 Patient Safety Excellence Award, based on the study period of 2016-2018. LewisGale said in a news releases that it places the Salem facility in the top five percent nationally among all short-term acute care hospitals reporting safety data as evaluated by Healthgrades, an online resource for information about physicians and hospitals. "We are proud to have

been recognized among the top five percent of hospitals in the nation for patient safety," said Lance Jones, market president of LewisGale Regional Health System, which is part of the sprawling HCA Healthcare network. This is the second time LG has received the Patient Safety Excellence Award from Healthgrades.

More WanderLove

The City of Salem has also received \$10,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation WanderLove Recovery Grant Program. Salem will use the grant to highlight things to do in and around Salem: biking, hiking, tubing the Roanoke River, local brewpubs, local retail shops etc. "This is the first time we have applied in some time and we are very pleased to receive a grant," said Carey HarveyCutter, Salem's Director of Tourism.

Tourism grants

The Floyd County Tourism Development Council has also received \$10,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation



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"WanderLove" Recovery Grant Program. The Floyd Tourism Office says it will use the WanderLove grant to help develop a comprehensive, county-wide program that highlights Floyd in sectors including the arts, outdoor recreation, history, local foods and spirits, now through June 2021.

Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge and several other nearby localities including Bedford County have also received WanderLove Recovery Grants as the Commonwealth deals with a loss of visitors due to COVID-19.

More Smoothies!

Elderberry's has opened a second smoothie shop on West Main Street in

downtown Salem. Elderberry's first location is in the West Village Center on Electric Road in Southwest Roanoke County. Both locations will be closed on Sundays.

Unemployment system feels the strain

Officials with the state Employment Commission say the fund that pays for jobless benefits is expected to have a 750-million-dollar deficit by the end of December amid an influx of unemployment claims during the pandemic. The large number of jobless claims that have been filed since March pushed the trust fund to a \$500 million balance in July – a drop from the more than

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1-billion-dollar balance that the state's unemployment compensation trust fund had on January 1.

GO funding for COVID testing

Growth and Opportunity for Virginia – better known as GO Virginia – has awarded \$500,000 in Region 2 (including the Roanoke and New River

Valleys) to Virginia Tech for workforce training and its COVID-19 response efforts. That includes increasing capacity at two recently established laboratories in Blacksburg and Roanoke to allow for COVID-19 testing.

Saving more wood

Musser Lumber Company is expanding current



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- 10/09 Kid Rock Tribute: Cowboy
- 10/23 KISS Tribute: KISS America

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operations in Rural Retreat, creating 12 new jobs and investing \$2.4 million in Wythe County. The family-owned company is adding new production and drying capacity for sawdust and wood shavings, which it will source exclusively from Virginia sawmills. Over the next three years, this will lead to more than \$8.5 million in additional forest product purchases according to a release from Governor Ralph Northam's office. A \$75,000 grant from the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund will assist with the expansion; funding and services to support employee training activities will come through the Virginia Jobs Investment Program.

New alliance aims to take business development to the next level

Greg Feldmann is now the CEO over a troika of organizations focused on high tech business development: Valleys Innovation Council, the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and the RAMP business accelerator. "It's really taking the planning, research, grant writing, and the ability to use a 501c3 [status] as a vehicle to accept donations, have foundations and other grantors." Feldmann says a lack of access to capital needed to grow is still an issue for some startups in the region and this new approach should help generate some funding.

Feldmann says he may be CEO now over the alliance but insists it will be a collaborative venture with the leaders of those organizations. The president of Skyline Capital Strategies, Feldmann has a background in corporate finance capital markets, venture capital, and real estate financing.

Hold the wine

The Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce has canceled the 32nd Annual Smith Mountain Lake Wine Festival scheduled for September 26-27 at Mariners Landing due to safety concerns with the coronavirus. The Chamber also cites "uncertainty surrounding state regulations and the ability to comply with current mandatory requirements for social gatherings."

Back to Business in Bedford

Bedford County has launched \$1 million Back to Business grant program. It will assist Bedford County small businesses that have experienced losses from COVID-19 closures and disruptions. The grants, \$5,000 each, will be provided to eligible small businesses on a first-come, first-served basis through Friday, September 18, 2020, or until the funds are depleted. The program

is funded through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Wonderous Books in Salem

Wonderous Books and More has opened at 25 West Main Street in Salem, featuring gently used books and other gift items. The shop also offers a small event space for rent, for meetings, small parties, and book clubs. The owner is Savannah Oaks, a college junior, and the store's name pays homage to Alice in Wonderland - Oaks' favorite book. There's even a shop bunny, with a great bookstore name - Poe.

TT in WSJ

It's happened before and now the Texas Tavern in downtown Roanoke has been recognized nationally again. A Wall Street Journal story in mid-August hailed the Texas Tavern's "cheesy western" in a story on America's Best Burgers - focused on "portable, reliably good food at a fair price." The Cheesy Western is a cheeseburger with a scrambled egg on top. Matt Bullington is the tavern's fourth generation operator. "I'm happy to be part of it - I'm humbled at how many people love the Texas Tavern. It's part running a restaurant and part a caretaker of institution." As the world keeps changing, Bullington calls the Texas Tav-

ern a "cultural mooring" for the city of Roanoke. He's just released a book on the Tavern's 90 year history as well.

Financial Empowerment for Roanokers

The City of Roanoke has partnered with the national Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund) and Freedom First Enterprises to open the Financial Empowerment Center. Professional, one-on-one financial counseling and coaching will be offered as a no-cost public service to local residents, over the phone for now only due to COVID-19 restrictions. Brandon McGinley is with Roanoke's Economic Development Department: "Citizens have requested individual financing counseling," says McGinley of the new FEC, which is a follow up to the Bank on Roanoke Valley campaign of a few years back. Money management, establishing credit and reducing debt are among the topics financial counselors can discuss says McGinley. Then-mayor Michael Bloomberg piloted the program in New York 12 years ago. McGinley says it's all about, "helping people on their path towards financial stability." Freedom First Enterprises has hired the counselors.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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Kim Whiter

Making Long-Term Care Decisions Easier

By Gene Marrano

CEO Kimberly Whiter says Elder Care Solutions is “bringing together all the professionals that have a say in long-term care.”

Three Louisianans – present and past – including the Chief Executive Officer and a co-founder based in Roanoke – have launched a nascent company with large-scale potential, featuring a multifaceted go-to-market plan. Elder Care Solutions uses the tag line *Care Cost Analysis*, and the focus says CEO Kimberly Whiter is on both those facing their own long-term care (LTC) issues and those in what is known as the “Sandwich Generation” – individuals

from 35-55 who are juggling caregiving for children and for aging parents, and often a career.

The current model, which has been in place for a few years now (taking another step when Whiter was hired as CEO earlier this year after consulting), includes a one-time \$2500 price tag for the Care Cost Analysis service, which provides a detailed look at a client’s long-term care situation, then presenting viable options

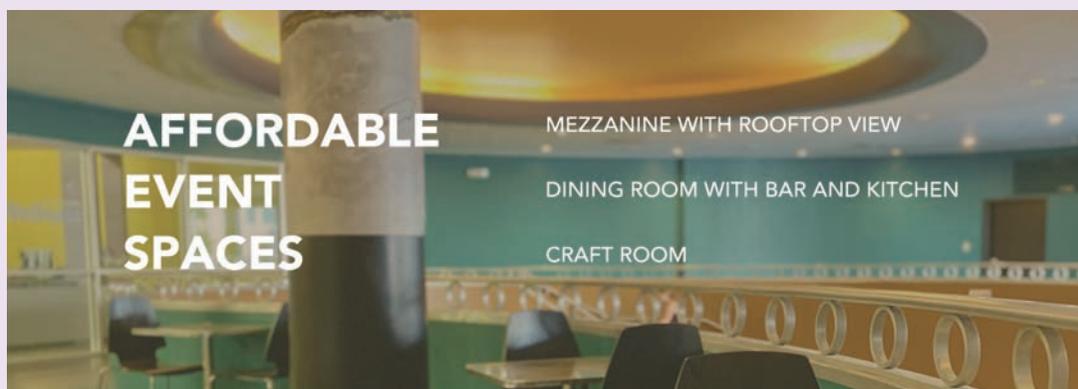
to help pay for LTC. It also promises the support of the Elder Care Solutions team for further guidance/tweaking in the decision-making processes surrounding long-term care issues. Whiter says in many cases families make up that fee within the first month through the costs savings uncovered.

She is exploring alternative models, specifically partnerships with financial planners, so both parties can benefit from the “deep dive” promised by her new company. This is not retirement planning Whiter stresses, although involving financial planners could bring that aspect into the fold. Elder Care Solutions is also talking to employee benefits managers at major corporations – for a few dollars a month envisions Whiter, companies can offer their Care Cost Analysis as a benefit - becoming more tuned in to needs of the current workforce, the majority of which are in the Sandwich Generation she says.

Whiter cites her “strong background in inter-professionalism and inter-disciplinary work. That’s a large [factor] in elder care services, because there are a lot of different disciplines that play a role.” That includes financial planning, legal issues specific to the elderly, health care services – and how they all work together. Elder Care Solutions has a special focus on “the financial challenges,” she notes. Bringing mortgage (and reverse) mortgage brokers, community resources and veteran’s affairs specialists into the mix as needed is also part of the client plan.

Most people that have to plan for a family member’s long-term care needs are “on their own,” says Whiter, “figuring out how to navigate that situation.” That’s where Elder Care Solutions hopes to demonstrate that their expertise – available at any point needed – is worth the money spent.

As the eldercaresolutionsinc.com website



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develops further (Whiter is overseeing that process with outside vendors), clients will also be able to access a database where answers to many standard questions will be addressed. When needed, outside experts will be included to answer queries from “their own professional silo.” Whiter says an advisory panel “across the United States” is a strong staple of the Elder Care Solutions method.

That sandwich demographic is a growing number and is shouldering

the lion’s share of elder care issues says Whiter: “the juggling act this generation is pulling off is stressful, time-consuming, and full of emotion.” After an analysis, Elder Care offers viable options to clients. Having a will or Power of Attorney in place is a good place to start. Are there assets - other than selling a family home – that can be utilized?

Whiter’s remote partners are Richmond, VA-based Fred Bailey, an accredited attorney by the US Department of Veterans Affairs and among the first

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lawyers in Louisiana to be certified by the state Bar Association for estate planning and administration. The third cofounder is Louisiana-based Ken Keller, an LSU graduate with a background in finance and insurance brokering, described on the eldercaresolutionsinc.com website as “having a real talent for finding solutions to help seniors and their families. The trio met at a conference in 2019. “They had been fine-tuning this idea for a few years,” notes Whiter of Bailey and Keller.

At 38 (and raising two young daughters) Whiter’s background includes medical laboratory science, directing an academic program at-then Jefferson College of Health Sciences, teaching appointments at the VTC medical school and Virginia Western Community College, and on a leadership team for a nationwide education-related startup. As for being a first-time CEO: “it’s some of the most exciting work I’ve ever done. I love

strategic planning and connecting with really impactful people who are making a difference out in the world. It’s been great to connect with other CEO’s.”

Being able to work remotely means Elder Care Solutions is thinking nationwide. Whiter calls that a “great asset to a lot of people. We know we are sitting in a space there’s a great need for.” The double graduate from McNeese State University is also working on a doctorate through Liberty, and is grateful, in light of the pandemic, that the business can function online.

“What we’re bringing to families with Elder Care Solutions are holistic approaches,” says Kim Whiter, “together with all of the professionals that have a say [and a stake] in long term care.” For the most part the services are out there she notes, “but when people are left to their own devices ... they are going to miss things.” 



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