

# Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 150

MARCH 2021

Our Two Home Builders  
Associations

Alvis-Laing Electric

Bill Saul & Company

Blue Brick Building and  
Renovations

Lionberger Construction

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# WELCOME TO THE FRONT

At the risk of sounding like a Home Dept commercial, this month we salute the “doers” in the construction industry and other trades. Working with your hands – or with a tape measure, a hammer, power saw, wrench etc. has evolved into a negative thing over the past few decades for some, as instead the pressure to send kids to college – often unsure of what they really want to do and/or not prepared for the ensuing mountain of student loan debt – has been the norm. That’s led to skilled tradespeople shortages.

But we need trained, experienced people working in both worlds – for that matter with all of the IT and tech jobs typically unfilled it appears that just two years of college or some certification courses is enough to jumpstart a career as well. So maybe skilled work people in all three fields. But we digress. There is a myriad of general contractors, subcontractors, etc. we could have chosen to highlight in this issue but hopefully the subjects we landed on will provide a snapshot into this important business sector. By the way have you noticed what the typical plumber might charge just to walk through your front door?



**Tom Field**  
Publisher



**Gene Marrano**  
Editor

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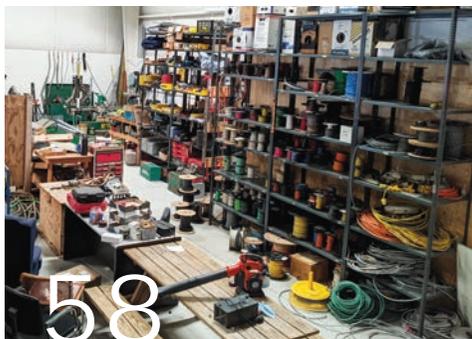
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“You're going to see things pick up and the economy jump started again. — Page 25

COVER STORY PAGE 8

## Contractors & the Construction Industry

By Jennifer Poff Cooper



Cover photography of Sam Lionberger III by Tom Field.



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# MARCH



Michael Abraham



Jennifer Poff Cooper



Mike Leigh



Nanette Levin



Nicholas Vaassen

## 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.

# 2021 CONTRIBUTORS



**Dan Dowdy**



**Tom Field**



**Doug Kidd**



**Gene Marrano**



**Michael Shelton**



**Dan Smith**

““  
We decided  
to quit crying  
about it and  
do something.

— Page 11

““  
I suggested  
that he stop  
working for  
others and  
that we start  
a company.

— Page 15



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

““  
I tell people it's not the  
years but the mileage.

— Page 61

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courtesy photo

RRHBA

# Contractors & the Construction Industry

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

---

**While some industries still struggle those who are building houses seem to be doing just fine- and help is wanted.**

The current state of homebuilding is "phenomenal," said Amy Lowman, Executive Officer for the Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association. While the industry was busy pre-pandemic, there was a marked increase in construction from 2019 to 2020.

With people staying at home so much, said Lowman, "it put a new light on their surroundings." As a result, there has been a lot of remodeling and adding amenities like home offices. The government stimulus money was a catalyst in some cases. Mortgage rates are also low so right now that homeowners could refinance and use

the proceeds for remodeling. It was at the discretion of homeowners as to whether they wanted workers inside their homes during the pandemic, and the vast majority did, she said.

Construction workers were considered essential under government guidelines, so there was no break in the work flow. "That was a blessing for the industry," said Lowman. New construction has been a huge market as well.

Said Kelsey Grow, Executive Officer for the New River Valley Home Builders

Association, "Builders and remodelers have plenty of work with no end in sight for the next several years. The NRV is booming with more work than we can handle. All of our trade partners have plenty of work and are not having to look for it as it is coming to them."

The home builders associations have contributed to this success. The associations work on the local, state, and federal levels to "serve, support, and represent the building industry," said Lowman. Networking, education, and opportunities for charitable giving are benefits to membership.

A principal service provided by the associations are lobbying efforts to make the cost of building more affordable. Lowman said that association lobbyists work with legislators to determine whether regulatory bills make sense and act accordingly. If there are too many add-ons, such as permits, said Lowman, the cost of housing becomes unaffordable.

One issue has been the price of lumber. Costs increased 170% between April and September of last year and added an average of \$16,000 to a single-family home, said Lowman. Part of the problem was lack of domestic production because of COVID-related mill shut-downs. Another factor has been tariffs on Canadian lumber, which the National Association of Home Builders has been lobbying the government to reduce.

However, the biggest challenge for contractors nationwide now is finding tradesmen. "The trades are graying," said



submitted

Amy Lohman, RRHBA

Back to Nature  
Landscaping and  
Construction

courtesy photo





courtesy photo

Kelsey Grow, NRVHBA

Lowman. Added Grow, "With so much work, most trades need help finding workers."

And the next generation is not taking up the mantle (see sidebar). Lowman said that there has been such a push among parents and schools for kids to attend college that the trades get overlooked. But college is not for all kids and the trades can provide a good living. High school students going straight into a trade can make more than many recent college graduates, maybe \$60,000 a year, without the loan debt, she said.

Finding a good fit, a person who really wants to do the job, is critical, as the trades are not always glamorous. "Mindset is key," said Lowman. One thing that the home builders associations are doing is going into high schools to promote the trades at career fairs and with guidance counselors.

"The NRVHBA is working to increase the awareness of the trades education opportunities in our area as well as the different career opportunities that are out there. This is key to getting more people interested in pursuing a career as a tradesperson," said Grow.

Some high schools' growing vocational programs provide enough training that students can graduate with certifications. Other avenues for training are community colleges and on-the-job training, which can then lead to certification.

Lowman expects builders to continue to be busy, and is "seeing the light" with respect to the trades as school systems and builders show the younger generation the benefits of vocational training.

Setter Construction



courtesy photo

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Build Smart Institute was born of the inability of Roanoke-based contractor F&S Building Innovations to find subcontractors, said Alicia Smith, Director of Marketing and Development at F&S Building Innovations and President of Build Smart Institute.

“We decided to quit crying about it and do something,” she said.

They are attacking the problem via several avenues. Two years’ worth of research and development showed them that middle school is when students first start to map out career paths. So, Build Smart offers a presentation about trades to “wet their whistles,” said Smith.

Many Build Smart opportunities are for high schoolers. In its leased 12,000 square foot facility, students work in 10,000 square feet of state-of-the-art labs, learning everything from framing to plumbing. When transportation was deemed a problem, Build Smart bought a 25-passenger bus to take that difficulty out of the equation.

“The hands-on piece is really important,” Smith said.

The first class is Core Fundamentals of Construction, from which students can progress to a full course on a more specific trade. Eight students comprised the first Core class, which graduated on January 20.

There are also adult classes for tradesmen interested in advancing their careers with full-length courses and one-day certification sessions. As a private entity, Build Smart is able to customize its offerings to the needs of local contractors and students.

Funding comes through tuition, grants, and scholarships sponsored by local builders in whose interest it is to train up quality tradesmen. Launched last fall, Build Smart currently has 29 people engaged in in-person classes and 65 students using their virtual portal.

The goal is to “spark a fire” in someone who has tendencies toward the trades, said Smith. Kids who might not enjoy sitting in a classroom “light up” when given this chance to work with their hands. Smith said, “We want to open their eyes to opportunities and make the trades an acceptable career path.”

—Jennifer Poff Cooper







courtesy photo

South River Contracting

Said Grow, "Home building will continue without a doubt, as well as the need for skilled trades and laborers. As with anything, technology and innovation will play a key role in the homes [industry]; however, the fact remains, at least at this point, that skilled professionals will be the ones building our homes by hand. Whether a pre-manufactured home or custom, people will be [still] be putting their hands on the lumber and erecting the homes of the future. Automation in homebuilding can only go so far."

The future for contractors, Lowman concluded, looks "very hopeful." 

Baseline Solar Solutions



courtesy photo

all photos by Dan Smith



Pictured: Roni and Richie Sutton at a worksite. This 100+ year old house in Blue Ridge is being totally renovated and is mostly a project they have entered in order to keep their employees working. Roni Sutton said it will involve very little profit if it sells for \$160,000 when finished. The house is typical of what they do.

# ADJUSTING WITH THE MARKET

By Dan Smith

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**Roni and Richie Sutton have found that being flexible is almost as important as being good at what you do. Hear Roni's testimony.**

The professional evolution of Roni and Richie Sutton isn't over yet. Fact is, it may never be.

Right now, they own and operate Blue Brick Building and Renovations and occasionally flip houses they renovate. Says Roni, who is more outspoken than her quiet husband of 31 years, "I started the business in 2006 because I had been buying houses for several years and renovating them to flip while working full time at Dominion Bank.

"Richie's [construction] job was rocky, and the owner of the company was not a nice person. After a particularly nasty encounter, I suggested that he stop working for others and that we start a company to flip houses full time. This [also] allowed me to leave a higher paying job at the bank and take a more fulfilling position at Community High School."

Richie has worked construction of some sort since high school and Roni "learned how to do renovations while working as a civilian computer programmer for the Army" in South Carolina.

Their work life has been varied. When the couple moved to Roanoke, Roni took a bank job, programming computers in the loan operations department and stayed there 14 years. "Richie worked with various small construction companies until we had our third child," says Roni. He became a stay-at-home dad until

the kids began pre-kindergarten.

Richie returned to his profession with a small construction company and Roni left the bank to work at the high school as business manager and registrar. That lasted 17 years. Now, her second position is with Foreign Links Across the Globe (FLAG), which places foreign exchange students.

They live in a pre-Civil War farmhouse in Bedford County that could hold yet another profession for them eventually: farming.

Even with Covid-19 causing professional havoc across the world, says Roni, "We are a hybrid business and we've been quite stable. When work for others dries up, we have our own properties to fall back on.

"I have been able to purchase distressed properties in such a way [and] always have one which needs work. We are exploring farming on our 10 acres. Eventually, we would like to get out of the construction business entirely. We know we want to do an Agri-tourism business with cabins and campsites on our property in combination with growing something interesting. We've looked at herbs, mushrooms, bees for honey, elderberries, etc., but haven't come to any conclusions yet. That is a five or more years down the road dream, though."

The couple has renovated 20 properties since 2006, but it could have been more



had they found a lender willing to work more closely with their ambitions in a down economy. Says Roni, “Initially, we planned to only buy distressed properties, renovate them and flip them. When the housing market faltered, we ended up stuck with two renovated houses that we couldn’t sell so we rented them.

“Because our lender would only allow us up to three houses with mortgages at a time, we realized we needed to branch out. I tested for the Class A license and we began doing renovation projects for TAP. This led to other individuals approaching us to do work.”

The Suttons have completed some large renovations, but “we built a small client base of people who come to us whenever they need work done to their houses. Additionally, we take small to medium jobs.”

They don’t do whole home renovations these days because “they are stressful, and the expectations of home-owners are often not realistic.” Says Roni. “We specialize in historic renovation, but we are licensed and have experience in all

facets of renovation and new building for both residential and commercial projects.

“We like doing lots of different kinds of work. It’s far more interesting to us. We have sub-contractors who we use to do some of the specialized stuff, like HVAC, for example.”

Competition can be intense in construction and Roni says, “We don’t advertise, though we will occasionally sponsor a worthy event. Our competition seems to be what’s commonly referred to as ‘jack leg’ contractors. People who don’t have a contractor’s license will under-bid us and while a lot of them do good work, a lot do not.

“We have not really had a time where we had absolutely no work to do. We’ve had some lean times but have never been faced with the possibility of closing up shop. Our prices are generally less expensive than larger residential firms, so we don’t often get out bid by larger firms.”

With their flexibility and continuing curiosity, that stability seems assured. 

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## The skills gap

A few days before writing this article, I met with a prospective client who leads a local manufacturing company. This leader moved to the US from Germany about 20 years ago and he had a unique perspective about his skilled labor shortage when we discussed his needs.

“We don’t have this problem in Germany”, he said. “The school system provides a career path and apprenticeship programs that supply industry with the skilled workers they need.” He also said something else interesting. “Industry in the US is not as willing to invest in and try new technology as some other countries like Germany. The wages are higher in Europe so manufacturers must invest in technology to reduce labor costs and be competitive.”

As I reflected on these comments and considered the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on *unskilled jobs*, his comments reinforced my opinion that our country (and our area) needs to invest in skilled labor.

As a country, we are stuck in the middle. On one end are countries in Asia and Europe who are utilizing advanced technology to drive their economies. In manufacturing, most of the best technology (such as machine tools and robots) comes from overseas because that is where the demand is. One of my clients just bought four CNC precision grinding machines...from Taiwan.

On the other end are the “low-cost countries” where cheap labor is driving their economies and taking over the *unskilled jobs*. US manufacturers are either purchasing components or moving operations to these countries.

We do not have a lack of jobs in our area, but a lack of needed job skills. Over the past few decades, we lost our way when the education system focused almost entirely on college prep and not enough on skilled trades. We now have too many high-priced colleges, too much student debt, and too many underemployed graduates. And we are losing the middle-class, increasing the wealth gap, and losing jobs overseas because of it.

Consider this. Roughly 60% of adults do not have a 4-year college degree, *many of whom started college but dropped out*. And many of those who have degrees are working in jobs/careers that do not require them.

As a country, we are investing way too little to improve “lifetime career safety.” Skilled welders, machinists, electricians, medical technicians, mechanics, and plumbers have few problems finding good paying jobs. And more jobs are waiting to be filled. It is time to invest in putting more students and young adults on these career paths to success. Where the skilled labor exists, the good-paying jobs will follow. 

# BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

**Executive Summary:**  
*When it comes the manufacturing industry, as a country, we are stuck in the middle*

Send your questions  
or comments to Mike@  
OpXSolutionsllc.com

## Finding the right retirement savings vehicle for you

Know what these plans can do to pick the right one for you. Here are four more for you to consider:

### Cash balance pension plans are ideal for high earners:

These involve an employer crediting a participant's account with a set percentage of yearly compensation plus interest charges. These can be an attractive retirement savings vehicle for older business owners with \$324,500 or more in contribution permitted for those over 60. For others, typical contributions are 5-8% of one's salary, more than the typical 3% on 401(k)s. The downside is, these cost a lot as they require an actuary to certify proper funding each year, have set up fees that are in the \$2,000-\$5,000 range, and have an additional \$2,000-\$10,000 in annual administration costs.

### Profit sharing plans are funded with cash or company stock:

Contributions, usually based on a percentage of salary, are discretionary and do not need to be applied every year. There's no limit to how many or how few employees you have for eligibility. Administration on these plans can get a bit tricky so it's usually best to consult a professional prior to deciding to implement one in your company.

### Traditional & ROTH IRAs come with low costs and contribution limits:

These tend to be the retirement plans most people are familiar with because they don't require any additional filing or administration costs beyond opening the accounts and contributing to them as you see fit. However, contribution limits are far lower at \$6,000, or \$7,000 for those over 50.

Traditional IRAs are tax deferred, meaning you don't pay taxes on money until you withdraw it from the account at retirement age. There are penalties, as with most retirement accounts, for early withdrawal.

ROTH IRAs collect taxes on income prior to it being deposited in these accounts, but you don't pay taxes on money taken out (at retirement age) or the interest those funds have accrued over time. If you think income taxes will be higher when you retire, ROTHs usually make more sense.

All these options may seem confusing – and some of them truly are – which may cause you to say, "Just give me what everyone else has." That's a bad plan. Get some help if you need it because the cost of picking the wrong solution, both in lost tax savings and administrative outlays, can be significant. This is something you'll likely want to put in place for a lifetime. Do it right the first time. 



## FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

### Executive Summary:

Recently I discussed SEPs, 401(k)s and SIMPLE IRAs.

*What's best for you is often going to be different than for your friends. This applies to both employee benefit priorities, as well as an ideal owner tax and nest egg savings plan.*

Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at [michael@discover360.com](mailto:michael@discover360.com)  
Financial.com



all photos submitted

Springhill Suites

# Generations spent building in Roanoke and beyond

By Nanette Levin

**Its not hard to find a Lionberger Construction project in these parts – and hasn't been for several generations.**

Just over the railroad tracks on Starkey Road in southwest Roanoke County sits in a one-story, non-descript, brick building, a construction firm company that's been a Roanoke mainstay for almost a century. Started as John Senter Company in 1922, they've stayed focused on the building industry. While the name has changed

over the years, along with the client focus, this business remains family owned and operated. Lionberger Construction is now headed by a fourth-generation son, whose grandfather took over the business from his uncle.

Sam Lionberger III, CEO of Lionberger

Construction, explains the company's atypical business model. Instead of the traditional proposal procedure, where job specs are pre-defined for contractors who compete with others through a bidding process, 75% of Lionberger's projects are negotiated. This process begins with a client selecting the firm to do the job. The final contract comes from a collaborative approach that includes the owner, architect, and contractor.

These jobs come from existing clients of the company, Lionberger states. The advantage to this approach is relationship familiarity with both the building owner and the architect, which leads to a quicker time to market, he says, adding that the company is also able to deliver more value through a negotiated job. "We understand how the client needs to work while we're getting your work done." This applies particularly to renovations when a



courtesy photo

Sam Lionberger III



Jill Graybill | CAR ACCIDENT

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WSLS-10 studio

business is staying in the space or continues to operate on the company campus while work is completed.

## Finding skilled tradespeople

"It's proving more and more difficult," Lionberger explains, when asked how

difficult it is to get needed workers for jobs. "During the pandemic, when the additional benefit was available through unemployment, people could be home making more wages than working for us. That was difficult. I think coming out of the pandemic the industry is reaching out to the high schools and middle schools to try to encourage young adults



to consider the construction industry.”

He notes that wages in the industry are now good, underscoring skilled trades pay well. “We employ primarily carpenters, who can make \$45,000-\$50,000 before overtime. We also employ superintendents who can make \$55,000-\$75,000, depending on the size of the project they can manage.”

Lionberger encourages recent high school grads to consider the construction industry as a discipline with a big demand for new workers that teaches new skills to support a fulfilling career.

“What we’re missing in our industry, we used to get the laborer who came from the agricultural field,” he explains. “As the



Member One branch in Daleville



Brandon Oaks Pool



Hotel Roanoke Palm Court

agricultural community shifted from family-owned farms to large corporate farms, those kids came over to the construction field. The background of the farm kids was they're super resourceful. With the family farm going away we've lost that pipeline." Lionberger notes many of his current workers live in Floyd, Giles, and Allegheny Counties as well as other rural areas.

"Latinos have filled the gap, but we still need to recruit for the future," he says. One of the challenges he notes in recruiting workers is the nature of the job, which often involves being out in the elements. Lionberger cites a sense of accomplishment as a huge plus in this career choice, where one can "look back at what you've done every day."

## Construction industry outlook

"Overall, I'm encouraged about the industry," says Lionberger. "We're sort of insulated in



Cave Spring Post Office

the Blue Ridge Area from the ups and downs of the overall economy. I'm encouraged as we start to come out of the pandemic, you're going to see things pick up and the economy jump started again, which helps us. "I think the industry has been lucky that we were, early on and during the pandemic,

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Hotel Roanoke Pine Room

considered an essential business,” says Lionberger. He cites construction businesses that were quick to adapt with masks and distancing protocols.

## Recent Lionberger projects

“We just finished a very nice project for the City of Roanoke and for Virginia protective services, commonly known as 811.” The 811/911 Communications Center shares

a common server datacenter for the two call centers. The company also completed work on the Roanoke County Maintenance Facilities.

One of the jobs he’s most proud of is the recently completed Pine Room at Hotel Roanoke. “We’re really excited and pleased with the way it turned out and honored to be part of that team. That was a really fun project to be a part of.” The firm has also finished two different branch banks



Steam Cafe at the Hotel Roanoke

for Member One Federal Credit Union.

## Working together

“I’m blessed that my friendly competitors are sort of in the same boat,” says Lionberger, referring to family-owned firms who also face similar business concerns. “While we compete, at the same time, I can reach out.” He consults with colleagues on everything from family dynamics to industry challenges. Lionberger also notes the collaborative nature of the construction industry. “We come together where we need to or we should: safety, legislatively. It’s nice that we have this community out there of construction folks.”

## The future

Sam Lionberger’s current plan is to retire in about ten years. In the meantime, he says,



New Member One branch on Franklin Road in South Roanoke

the company will continue to help charities throughout the valley. “We are proud to support the Boys and Girls Club, the Red Cross, and Kiwanis.” A fifth-generation family ownership of Lionberger Construction isn’t likely to happen. Lionberger III has two daughters, “neither of which have shown an interest in the business.” He’s now 55 and is starting to look at transition options. Some of his employees have expressed an interest in picking up the torch. Stay tuned. 

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## STYLE NOTES

By Doug Kidd

**Executive Summary:**  
*Wardrobe options are changing ... lead with the pants.*

*Doug Kidd is with Tom James Company. He is an image consultant and clothier. Reach him at [d.kidd@tomjames.com](mailto:d.kidd@tomjames.com)*

## Don't forget your pants

More business has gone casual, and some sectors such as the construction industry have traditionally been casual anyway. New options are emerging in clothing. It's possible for an owner or manager to represent a multimillion-dollar business, keep personal image in mind, and make sense of the emerging business casual landscape, all at the same time. Hint: lead with the pants! Decide what level of pant you think matches the image that your business is trying to put forward. An easy way to figure out what to wear for your meetings for the week, is to take a quick look at the many pant options, and then match your top accordingly.

1. Jeans - If you decide jeans, there are many dressier, more professional options now that look more business appropriate. Custom made jeans are now available for the customer who has never been able to find jeans to fit.
2. Technical Fibers/Cottons - These come in many varieties such as golf pants, work pants, and exercise-based options. Choose wisely as often a poor choice or fit is not flattering, and not appropriate for some business situations. Custom options now exist in this category to include lounge pants, stretch fabrics, and golf options. (Cargo pants might be making a comeback in a much slimmer look)
3. Five pocket pants - a relative newcomer to the pants scene. This style, cut like a jean, is now available in a variety of fabrics and can be made out of classic dress pant fabrics now too. This niche will prove to be a top seller in 2021.
4. Classic dress slacks - most of pants sold in this category are flat-front. If you are reading this, and still wearing pleats, you might consider a visit to your local haberdasher on the quick.

Lead with the pants, and the outfit will follow. 



## Meals to underserved NRV kids

"Our anti-hunger initiative [provided the following] numbers from the program since April 2020," says Laureen Blakemore, getting right to the point with results. She's the director of community engagement at YMCA at Virginia Tech; and she's talking about "Meals On Main."

- Total number of shelf stable meals distributed in 2020: 31,548
- Total number of fresh meals served from Millstone Kitchen: 2,600
- Total number of children served in 2020: 7,452

On April 6, 2020, the YMCA at VT introduced "Meals On Main" in direct response to the COVID-19 crisis. The YMCA at Virginia Tech, in conjunction with Feeding Southwest Virginia and the USDA, provides food five days a week to ALL youth in the New River Valley. The meals and snacks are shelf-stable, ready to eat items based upon the USDA's nutrition guidelines. Recently, the Y re-organized its food-access activities into the Meals On Main program.

Meals On Main is an extension of an ongoing service which the YMCA at Virginia Tech has been offering for the past few years. It's an active partner in the Prices Fork after school feeding initiative; and nearly three years ago, created a Mobile/Pop-Up Feeding Program bringing food to children under 18 in a variety of underserved areas within the community throughout the summer months.

Y volunteers and staff members supervise the program from a short distance away, reducing the possibility of exposure and increasing the safety of everyone involved.

Through the Meals On Main initiative, the YMCA at Virginia Tech hopes to help relieve some of the pressure faced by families due to the current pandemic.

"We are grateful to have support from local restaurants, including Blacksburg Bagels, Next Door Bake Shop, Avellinos, Millstone Kitchen, Blacksburg Farmers Market and Souper Hero, in addition to generous donations from Green Valley Builders, the Town of Blacksburg and community members to make fresh meals and treats available," says Blakemore.

The program seeks volunteers; more information is available at [www.vtymca.org](http://www.vtymca.org) 



Meals On Main's Laureen Blakemore (foreground), Jim Lawrence (left) and volunteers

## GOOD WORK

**Executive Summary:**  
*Meals on Main provides food to youth in the New River Valley.*



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Bill Saul

# WASHING WINDOWS, WORKING HARD, AND CLEANING UP

By Gene Marrano

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**Foregoing higher education for the life of a tradesman and small business owner was the right career path for Bill Saul, as it has been for others.**

For Bill Saul, a lifetime of window cleaning – or getting others to do that work for him – has been a good life. The Roanoke native didn't go to college, besides dabbling in a few computer courses. Instead in high school he started washing windows for a contractor (recruited at a restaurant where he was washing dishes at age 16) before eventually branching out to launch Bill Saul & Company about 25 years ago.

Now in his mid-50's, Saul has a small fleet of trucks, 4-5 employees and steady business

from repeat clients or new ones from word-of-mouth referrals. Some mornings the phone just doesn't stop ringing. But on those rare days he doesn't want to work, the father of two sons, avid outdoorsman, rock climber, e-mountain bike off-road trail enthusiast and landlord (he rents a handful of other homes he owns besides his current residence in Southwest County) just doesn't answer it.

Oh yeah, he and his girlfriend are building their custom-designed dream home in the hills of Southwest Roanoke County,

a floor plan with lots of outdoor decking that they've envisioned. On property with a pond. Saul would like to retire soon, do some traveling, perhaps spend lots of time in Spain and Colorado. "I've worked [hard] for what I have." Not bad for a window washing (they also clean out gutters and do pressure washing) business, where he says the average residential customer charge per window might run \$75 dollars or more. "I have so much work – I basically can make a living [now] in Roanoke County. People get mad at me if I can't keep up with the phone calls." Clients often tell him "it's the best money they ever spent."

Bill Saul & Co. was heavy on commercial customers at one point, including high-rises like the Wells Fargo tower, but now leans more residential. Those who like to entertain guests might have their windows cleaned "maybe 4-5 times a year." He helps out in the field several times a week but "doesn't do the ropes," for jobs off the ground floor any more himself. Saul never had a problem with heights, even when he was doing the high-rise window cleaning himself. He has climbed in the New River Gorge and in Colorado once scaled the vertical Diamond Face on Longs Peak, a 14,000-foot plus Rocky Mountain snow-capped giant several who have gone on to climb Mount Everest cut their teeth on.

Finding qualified people to do the job, as in other trade fields, can be a challenge; Saul is also choosy and tries to hire workers that homeowners will feel comfortable around when they clean windows from inside a house. "I like to ask them what their hobbies are," he



Bill Saul & Co. fleet

notes. A gym rat or a runner is more likely to be a better fit for the physical demands and pace of the job than someone with a passion for playing video games in their basement. Those in the skilled trades, "can name their price today," if they are qualified he notes.

A push to drive the state minimum wage to 15 dollars an hour will put pressure on Bill Saul & Company to raise its standard hourly wage – and likely what he charges clients. "It creates a domino effect." Saul has an office on Starkey Road where his fleet is kept but most often works to schedule calls from his dining room table.

Who says you can't live this type of life as a tradesperson, especially when that phone keeps ringing early and often in the morning? You are on notice 24 hours a day sometimes, yes, but "basically you can [also] call the shots," says Saul. Doing the dirty jobs property owners are willing to spend good money on? Bill Saul says he wouldn't have it any other way. 



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## New option for Friendship residents and the local community >

Hundreds of residents living at the **Friendship Retirement Community** now have another choice when it comes to seeing a primary care physician - and it's right on campus. Friendship cut the ribbon in late January at its Hershberger Road site and the office of **Dr. Erin Howes**. "We're just trying to bring it all together as a one-stop shop," said Howes, "they have the pharmacy here, physical therapy, some services here, all of these things are available for the resident." The new Physicians Clinic is also available to local community members not living on the

Friendship campus. Howes said some of her patients have followed her to the new office inside the Friendship North complex.

**Joe Hoff** is President and CEO for Friendship Living: "our Hershberger campus has 50 acres here. Nine independent living buildings, skilled and long-term care all on campus, assisted living, a little bit of everything. This [on-site doctor's office] will play into our overall ability to provide the continuity of care that we want to provide to our residents." Hoff also noted that local Walgreen's and CVS outlets had been administering the COVID vaccine to hundreds of residents recently; some at the Friendship South long term rehab facility were already getting ready for the second vaccine shot needed.

## Farm-to-table burger joint, local non-profits feed elderly residents >

**FarmBurguesa**, located in Roanoke's Grandin Village and in Vinton, prepared 140 meals (hamburgers and waffle fries) that were delivered in late January to elderly residents at Lansdowne Park, a property of the City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Commonwealth Catholic Charities St. Francis House and FarmBurguesa joined forces for the Planting Change Initiative, which supports independent restaurants while delivering meals to people in the community. All told, FarmBurguesa received a grant of \$10,000 to split into an 8-week

campaign, providing over 2,000 meals during that time frame at various pop-up distribution points and deliveries.

"I want to recognize all the volunteers that organize food and fund drives within their businesses to feed our residents. We share the common goal of providing assistance to people in need within our community. Collectively, we are able to serve more people," said **David Bustamante**, Executive Director of RRHA. "FarmBurguesa is honored to work alongside Roanoke Housing Authority, CCC and all the volunteers it takes to make initiatives like the #PlantingChange come to fruition. We hope to have the opportunity to serve the community for many years to come," said **Kat Pascal**, co-owner of FarmBurguesa.







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Dan Mirulli

## ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

### Executive Summary:

*We have so many instructional resources at our immediate disposal, we can fix most anything... I think.*

## DIY pride

To get a real appreciation of a professional, just do it yourself.

Thanks to YouTube and all the mesmerizing television programs on Do-It-Yourself shows for home projects, renovations, property flipping and whatnot, we celebrate the chap or gal who jumps in on a repair and gets it done. Most of the time, it looks so easy. And our entrepreneurial hero is always smiling, never sweating (much) and certainly NEVER swearing at a malfunctioning tool or a piece that just isn't working out.

I succumbed to this form of worship. The kind of honor that's bestowed when you fix the dishwasher or change the hardware on a door so it closes better. And I've even stepped my steel-toed boot on occasion over to the more formidable trades from time to time. Molding and trim work (yuck), painting, roofing, light electrical, light plumbing, flooring, framing and drywall, fencing and siding.

What I've noticed is that my DIY work includes two deficiencies. First, it lacks perfection. Second, it takes me six times as long as someone who really knows what he or she is doing.

It doesn't take long to notice the difference between an amateur and a professional. Before the work is anywhere close to being completed, just watch them work.

I once had to stop in my tracks when walking through Hotel Roanoke because of... the wallpaper. Here was one guy, installing wallpaper—and it was like watching an artist. His hands and tools and paper slipped up and down and around complicated molding and fixtures and corners in a way that looked like he was baking a cake or something. His cuts were precise. His skill was perfection. His movement was fast and on point.

Could I do that? I thought. No way could I do that in my bathroom that needs its wallpaper replaced RIGHT NOW, that's for sure. I don't know the days, weeks, years of apprenticeship required to handle professional grade wallpapering like this artist.

So yes, I still get a little sense of dad-like accomplishment when I am able to fix something.

It may happen four hours later than anyone else on the repair job. And it may come with some caveats, such as:

- I fixed your sink disposal... for now.
- The crown molding is up... a little wood putty will hide that joint that doesn't quite meet.
- I don't know why you have to hold the handle down until it's completely finished, but the commode flushes now.
- That flickering will probably go away after a while... or I'll get some new bulbs.
- And you're sure there wasn't already a scratch on that cabinet door BEFORE I fixed it?

So while I may not be a professional when it comes to DIY home repairs, I'm smart enough to know those DIY reality shows on television and YouTube how-to videos are not entirely based in reality.

At some point, somebody's cussin' up a storm when the cameras aren't rolling. 

## Here's to the unsung tradespeople

Personal story: a few months back I wrote a feature about Southern Trust Home Services, the plumbing-electrical-HVAC contracting firm that was celebrating its 25th Anniversary. Ted Puzio is the owner – you've seen the commercials. So recently my sump pump went out – I need one because my SW Roanoke County neighborhood sits on an underground lake – an aquifer – that once supplied everyone with water until the County connected us to a public supply. Thus that underground lake is never far from the surface.

Anyway, the handyman who had put the pump in last year has gone AWOL and I needed to get someone in ASAP. You will pay more for an established contractor firm with multiple employees and overhead, yes, but there is a tradeoff. Either way or employ some hybrid when it comes to getting things fixed around the house; you make that choice.

My real point is this – the young man who came out at 7:50am to check out my sump pump couldn't have been nicer, laid out all the options, worked with me on the price. I told him to fix it. Then I heard his story: single father with custody of two young children (he can't be more than mid-late 20's), has a home he will pay off in four years, drives from Martinsville to the Roanoke area for service calls because there's more work here.

He does all of that on whatever he makes somewhere in the Southern Trust Home Services food chain. The point: if you or your kid isn't ready for college or doesn't want to go, learn a trade, apprentice, get licensed or take a certification course. Work for a company like Southern Trust or go out on your own. Believe me the independents can charge a pretty penny too – because most homeowners don't know how to plumb, to install a light switch, build or repair a deck, or how to install a dishwasher. And/or they don't have the time or just don't want to do that. Those in the trades can always go to college later on if they so choose – my brother help put himself through school (masters level included) as an auto mechanic.

So, here's to the tradespeople from someone who is pretty much all thumbs. Just treat me fairly, quote me a decent price, back up your work, show up when you say you will show up. We all can't get along without you. 🛠️

“If you or your kid isn't ready for college... learn a trade, apprentice, get licensed or take a certificate course.”



## THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

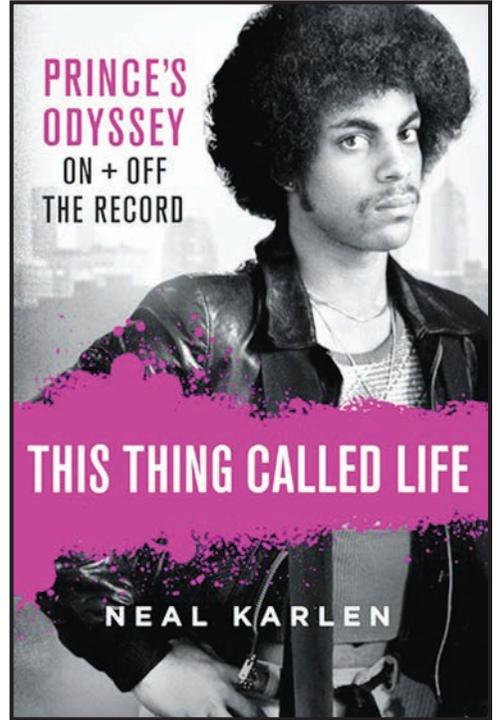
By Gene Marrano

**Executive Summary:**

*Where would many of us be if we couldn't call on those with true expertise in the trades?*

## FRONTReviews >

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



### *Musical genius, loner, liar*

All great artists of various stripes it seems have some dark side, or serious struggles at least that in the end often do them in, sometimes far too young. Witness Prince Rogers Nelson, or Prince as we knew him, or for a few years that symbol with no name that was a mashup of the signs for male and female. In the 1980's Prince was a guitar playing and song writing phenom, largely off albums like 1999 and the Purple Rain soundtrack. Neal Karlen grew up with Prince in Minneapolis, an overwhelmingly white city that was another dynamic in Prince's life. He told some not-so-accurate and outright tall tales about his upbringing, some of which found their way into Purple Rain the movie, which Prince also starred in with his then-band The Revolution.

Karlen's book, *This Thing Called Life: Prince's Odyssey On + Off The Record* (St. Martin's Press, 2020) is an edgy, provocative look at a man who by the end of his life was racked with pain and died at his Paisley Park mansion, found dead of an overdose in an elevator. Personal note: after passing up a chance to see Prince in his heyday in 1987 at

Madison Square Garden (which I regretted for 25 years) I finally saw The Beautiful One, a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, at a Greensboro concert about five years before his death in 2016 – and he still put on quite a show. But all that dancing and jumping on high-heeled shoes as Neal Karlen writes, led to the narcotic painkillers and the fentanyl overdose that ultimately did Prince in. If you were a fan, *This Thing Called Life* is a worthwhile read. Even 30-plus years into their relationship Karlen says it was hard to really know where his childhood pal was coming from. That is evident throughout in his book – and it's sad.

—Gene Marrano

### *Outer space explained for kids*

Using images from outer space that demonstrate the wonders of the universe, children's drawings and Dr. Suess-like poems about the stars, Roanoke College Professor Dr. Matthew C. Fleenor has released a book aimed at young children, say ages 5 and up, introducing them to the wonders of the night sky – and what's out there in the heavens.



*Blue Star, New Star* (Archway Publishing, 2021). “Stars spin slow and stars spin fast, mass determines how long they last,” Fleenor writes in one of the book’s poems. I was an astronomy buff as a kid, had my own telescope and even wrote an astronomy book long-hand with illustrations when I was maybe 9-10 and sent it in to a publisher. They promptly sent it back with a gracious note. Some bemoan that young children today don’t step outside often enough and gaze up at the night sky in wonder – as I still do on a regular basis. Books like *Blue Star, New Star*, available in paperback at \$13.95, may help change that. I sent one to my 5-year-old granddaughter Bella. Can’t wait to discuss the life cycle of a typical star with her.

—Gene Marrano

## *American Fare eatery debuts*

My favorite thing to do is to try new restaurants and different foods. I have been hearing a lot about this new one – Cast Plates & Pints (3555 Electric Road in southwest Roanoke County) and in fact one of my favorite bartenders works there.

They have a very unique and varied menu with lots of choices, from seafood to pasta to burgers to hotdogs and steaks. I always prefer to sit in the bar area as you meet the coolest people. The ambiance and decor is simple and makes you feel at ease and comfortable. There was a pool table; a few guys came in to play.

Cast Plates & Pints carries draft beer and a big selection of mixed drinks. I’m more of a beer person. A favorite is Blue Moon, but quite a few different choices. Bartenders are right there on keeping up with your drinks and easy and fun to chat with – another bonus. The food was excellent and cooked just right. I ordered the Ahi Tuna Tacos and asked for it to be cooked just a bit more than rare. PERFECT! The Sriracha sauce was just the right amount of spice and I was totally in love with this dish; it also came with French fries. I will definitely go back. Support local!

—Brenda Smith

The reviewers: **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT and an award-winning news reporter; **Brenda Smith** is a USPS letter carrier living at Smith Mountain Lake.



courtesy Debberan Properties.com



submitted



submitted

## New businesses at Mariner's Landing >

**Mariners Landing** at Smith Mountain Lake has announced two new businesses as part of ongoing redevelopment at the 1,000-acre waterfront resort community. **LAT Personal Training** is operational in the 15,000-square-foot Mariners Landing Wellness Center, which includes a gym, indoor pool, studio space for exercise classes and locker rooms. Opening soon inside will be **Tootie's Smoothies + Toasts**, a cafe focused on whole foods such as smoothies, acai bowls and plant-based specialty toasts. **Laurie Andrews**, a clinical exercise physiologist and owner of LAT Personal Training, said she and her staff work with clients of all fitness levels, combining mind, body and spirit through integrated practices. "We're looking to bring in boot camps, outdoor yoga opportunities, personal training and small group personal training," she said.

**Ashley Earick**, a Bedford County native who recently moved back to the area after nearly a decade in New York City, said she plans to open Tootie's Smoothies + Toasts in March. Customers will be able to place to-go orders or dine in the cafe with seating that allows for social distancing. "Our mission at Tootie's is to enable the community to take charge of their health by offering convenient, simple, nutrient-dense food options," Earick said. "We hope to educate our customers on the healing benefits of our ingredients and empower them to find a healthier relationship with food [with a] "groovy vibe."

## Vinton cuts ribbon on two new businesses >

The newest eatery in Vinton, **Joe Goodpies** does pizza in a way no other restaurants in town do. So says Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director **Angie Chewning** after attending a soft opening for Joe Goodpies Brick Oven Eatery. Chewning says no other places in Vinton are offering pizza brick-oven style and she says there's more on the menu: "salads, wings, seafood, pasta, subs, pizza. It's something for everyone." Joe Goodpies is the first tenant at the newly redeveloped Vineyard Station, where the former Vinton Motors was located the corner of Washington Avenue/Route 24 and South Pollard Street. Meanwhile just down the block on South Pollard the **Earthworks Pottery** studio also cut the ribbon in Vinton. Earthworks both sells handmade pottery and offers classes for those that want to try their hand at spinning the wheel and molding clay.



## Photos from a fan >

Of Valley Business FRONT, local resident **Tina Bernard Urquhart** says, "the magazine is great." So are the photos of a snowy January day she sent us – and of the ice storm last month. Have a high-resolution photo of an event in the area, maybe of a local business or on a trail somewhere? Feel free to share with us: [news@vbfront.com](mailto:news@vbfront.com)





## Bedford Middle School property makeover >

**Waukeshaw Development** has broken ground at the former **Bedford Middle School** complex, transforming it into a mixed-use property to include a boutique hotel, market-rate apartments, athletic facility, and business incubator space. This comes after a fire ravaged the former Bedford Middle School building a year ago, when a selective demolition process was then completed to prepare the building for redevelopment, saving as much of the remaining structure as possible.

This is Waukeshaw's third project in Bedford, having successfully completed the Bedford Lofts in 2015 and Beale's Beer in 2017. **Dave McCormack**, President of Waukeshaw Development, Inc., says, "The response to the projects we've done so far in Bedford has been overwhelming. Seeing the influx of visitors coming to Beale's and the support of the local community gives me great confidence in the hotel project. Bedford and the surrounding area have so much to offer." Waukeshaw also turned the old William Byrd High School in Vinton into the Billy Byrd apartment complex.

## Safety recognition >

**Averitt Express** in Roanoke recently honored associate **Scott Beaman** of Vinton for 25 years of safety. Averitt says it has "developed a culture of safety by measuring both vehicle and driver performance through a series of indicators;" also striving to have the safest trucks on the road, aiming for continual improvement through training programs and awareness campaigns. Averitt Express is a provider of freight transportation and supply chain management with international reach to more than 100 countries.



Averitt



## Latino business initiative partners with The Gauntlet >

The **Latinas Network** has partnered with The GAUNLET Business Program & Competition to sponsor a member of Latinas Network, **Ivana Savany**, with a full tuition to the 7th Annual GAUNTLET Business Program & Competition, now underway. “This is what Latinas Network is for. We believe in each other as women and business owners alike and it’s that support that helps us to realize and achieve our goals,” said Savany. Latinas Network kicked off their first event in November 2020 and is a branch of Nuestro Comercio Latino, an online platform to highlight Latino/Hispanic-owned businesses. Latinas Network’s mission is to grow business and professional opportunities for women in the Roanoke Valley and NRV. (photo from Lunch with Leaders program)

## More broadband in Botetourt >

The Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) has awarded a grant of \$1,364,337 to **Lumos** and **Botetourt County**, to assist with the expansion of fiber in Botetourt County, in an area where access is currently lacking near Buchanan. The grant will be used as part of a project to install fiber to provide high-speed internet to 548 new addresses, including 30 businesses. 59 miles of underground fiber optic cable will be installed. Approximately 52% of the cost of the project is being funded by the VATI grant, with Lumos, a provider of fiber broadband internet, and Botetourt County pooling resources to match the VATI grant. “This is fantastic for the residents and business of Botetourt County who have been in need of a broadband solution,” said Dr. **Mac Scothorn**, Chairman of the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors and Broadband Commission. Preliminary goals indicate that many addresses will have access to the new fiber service later this year and the remainder by mid-year 2022.





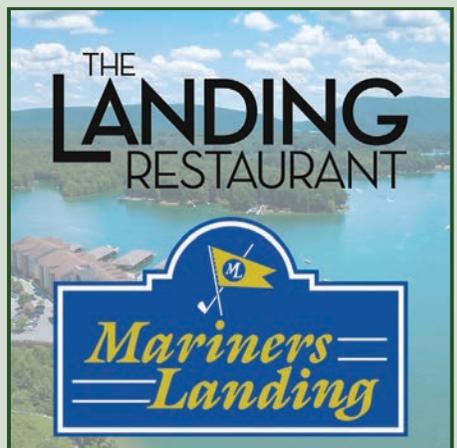
## New eatery moves from truck to brick >

The Roanoke City Market Building has a new tenant. What was a food truck with a popular following is now the brick-and-mortar restaurant, **Hibachi Guys**. It's in the space previously occupied by Caribbica Soul before that eatery moved to the former Cancun spot on Market Street. Co-owner **Angela Boyle** and her husband are "excited" to be able control the presentation of their food with a physical location. Homemade sauces for the dishes served is a specialty. "We love how people are really starting to like it. I was always told to 'put a little bit of you in it,'" says Boyle.

## Moving across the Lake >

**The Landing Restaurant** is relocating to Mariners Landing Resort. Long-time lake residents **Bruno and Tiffany Silva** own the award-winning restaurant and have operated at Bernard's Landing for the past 16 years. The Landing Restaurant will retain its name and operate out of the waterfront restaurant located at The Pointe at Mariners Landing. An opening date has not been set but Tiffany Silva said they hope to be operational by May 1.

Real estate developer Waller Perrow began reshaping Mariners Landing, a 1,000-acre golf and lake community, with partner Tom Branch last year. The Silvas will oversee all catering and special events at the resort. They will also establish a new private restaurant at the golf clubhouse called Bruno's and operate a seasonal poolside eatery called Chubby's. The Silvas' plans also include opening a wine shop and gourmet market called Bottles & Bites. "Bruno and I have cherished our time as part of the Bernard's Landing community but are excited about expanding our brand and our business offerings significantly by moving to Mariners Landing," said Tiffany Silva.





## American Pickers in the house >

**Mike Wolfe, Frank Fritz** and the hit series *American Pickers* from the History Channel will be filming shows in the region in April. *AMERICAN PICKERS* is a documentary series that explores the world of antique “picking” on History. Along the way, the Pickers want to meet characters with remarkable and exceptional items. “The pair hopes to give historically significant objects a new lease on life, while learning a thing or two about America’s past along the way,” according to the news release announcing their arrival. See the *American Pickers* Facebook page for more details.

## It all starts with customer service >

Virginia Tech’s **Joe Griffiths** recently received the 2020 Governor’s Honor Award for Creative Customer Service in a virtual ceremony announcing the winners. Director of Hokie Passport Services since 2010, Griffiths was recognized for his contributions in the areas of technological innovation, automated processes, inclusion and diversity, and COVID-19 pandemic response. The annually Creative Customer Service award recognizes



a VT staff employee or team who has demonstrated an exceptional level of accomplishment and innovation in serving their customers. “Joe’s leadership and innovative work have greatly improved our campus experience over the years and strengthened our ability to serve our community during the pandemic,” said Virginia Tech President Tim Sands.



## Mass vaccination event for educators helps prepare for future efforts >

As part of the effort to get people back to work on site - and kids back into classrooms – mass COVID vaccination events in the Roanoke Valley began in late January with a day for local teachers and school staff at the Berglund Center in Roanoke. It was complete with sign in stations, pre-scheduled vaccination times, a recovery area - and everyone left with an appointment set for their second vaccine shot. "It was pretty easy, we just went through the line, we sat down and got our vaccination," said **Melissa Caldwell**, a preschool teacher at Colonial Elementary School. "It was very well organized," added her husband Chris, also a Botetourt County educator. The next two days some 4,000 people in Phase 1B, mostly 65 and up, were scheduled to receive their shots as well. Carilion Clinic took the lead on that two-day weekend mass vaccination event.

## Kroger makes equipment donation to Rescue Mission >

**Kroger Mid-Atlantic** presented the **Rescue Mission of Roanoke** with a new forklift at its Rescue Mission Manna Food Pantry last month. The Clark forklift donation is valued at \$13,500. "Without the forklift we couldn't manage and distribute the volume of donations that come to the Mission," said Rescue Mission Pantry Manager **Karl Stewart**. **Allison McGee**, corporate affairs manager for Kroger Mid-Atlantic, added that, "we hope this new equipment will make it easier for their staff and volunteers to get food to those in need in the Roanoke community."



*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the social media links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Roanoke-based Hall Associates, the Commercial and Industrial Real Estate firm, welcomes Sales and Leasing Agent **Robert Powell**. The Roanoke Valley native graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in Business Management.



**Johnson**

Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer has announced several promotions company-wide, including one locally: **Jessica Johnson**, CCIM has been promoted to first vice president. She joined Thalhimer's Roanoke office in 2015 and has over fourteen years of experience in the real estate industry specializing in both tenant and landlord representation within the retail sector. Johnson is an active

member in the CCIM (Certified Commercial Investment Member) Institute and serves on the national Marketing Committee. She also sits on the Board of Directors for the CCIM Mid-Atlantic chapter and is a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC). Locally, she serves on the Board of Directors for Downtown Roanoke Inc., as well as a member of the Economic Development Committee.



**Blankenship**

Draper Aden Associates, a Mid-Atlantic engineering, surveying, and environmental services firm with offices in the mid-Atlantic region, announces several promotions at its Blacksburg location. **Carrie Blankenship**, PG was promoted to Environmental Team Leader. She was



**Lawless**



**Mason-Deese**

previously a Senior Project Manager. **Michael Lawless**, CPG, PG was promoted to Principal in Charge of Regional Growth in Southwest Virginia. He was previously the Environmental Division Manager and is also an Executive Vice President. **Will Mason-Deese** was promoted to Operations Manager and Group Leader for the Environmental Team. He was previously a Geologist. **Srikanth Nathella**, PE was promoted to Environmental Division Manager. Previously an Environmental Team Leader, he is also a



**Nathella**

Principal and Vice President with the firm

SFCS has announced that architect **David Prevet** has joined the firm as an Associate. Prevet has been frequently recognized by clients, colleagues, and the AIA for his leadership skills in planning, design, and collaboration said SFCS. "David brings nearly 20 years of experience in Higher Education and Civic/ Public projects and we are excited that he has joined our team of professionals dedicated to serving our clients," said Brenda Landes, Principal.

## FINANCIAL FRONT

Blacksburg-based National Bank has promoted **Jennifer R. Kirschenman** to Senior Vice President

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**Kirschenman**

of Operations. She began her career at National Bank in 1994 as a part-time teller. In 2006 Ms. Kirschenman was promoted to Assistant Vice President, and later managed the bank's Memorial Drive branch office before being named Vice President of Operations in 2013. National Bank has 25 full-service offices and a loan production office located throughout Southwest Virginia.

Bank of Botetourt announces that **Sheila M. Petty** has been promoted to Branch Manager at its Daleville Town Center Office. Petty has more than twenty-six years of industry experience and has been with the Bank since 2017. **Kristina H. Lima** has been promoted to Assistant Branch Manager at the Bank's

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**Petty**



**Lima**

Daleville Town Center Office. She has been with the Bank for seven years and was previously with the Office of Admissions and College of Education for James Madison University.

## LEGAL FRONT

**Justin E. Simmons**, an attorney in the



**Simmons**

Woods Rogers Roanoke office, was recently named as the firm's newest Principal. His practice focuses on commercial litigation and bankruptcy and creditors' rights. Simmons is an active member of several state and local bar groups and has served on the Board of Directors of the Roanoke Bar Association, where he also chaired the Library and Communications Committee. Simmons is also a member of Roanoke's Grandin Theatre Foundation Board of Directors.

## WELLNESS FRONT



**Finley**

**Christopher Finley** stepped down in late February as executive director of the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce and is moving on to become director of marketing and public relations at Lewis-Gale Regional Health System, a part of HCA Healthcare's Capital Division, based in Salem. Finley had succeeded long time director Vickie Gardner at the Chamber. In 2020, Finley spearheaded the SML Leadership Academy



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with 14 participants in its inaugural class. He also helped secure \$30,000 in grant marketing funds from Virginia Tourism Corporation, which the Chamber utilized to launch multiple tourism initiatives, including a monthly consumer e-newsletter, a destination travel blog, a new brochure, and a commercial to market Smith Mountain Lake.



**Bishop**

Carilion Clinic has established an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and named **Nathaniel L. "NL" Bishop**, former president of Jefferson College of Health Sciences, to lead it. As the health system's first Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and senior vice president, Bishop will work to expand Carilion's efforts to advance community and public health, in keeping with its mission.

Bishop served as president of Carilion's

Jefferson College of Health Sciences from 2010 until its integration with Radford University in 2019. He was then named senior vice president of administration at Carilion and senior associate dean for diversity, inclusion, and student vitality at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. He joined Carilion in 1997 as executive director of Burrell Nursing Center. In 2002 he was named vice president and administrator of Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital and subsequently served in additional senior leadership roles.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



**Parker**

**Michael Parker** has been named Senior Vice President of Comcast's Beltway Region, where he will serve as the head executive responsible for operations, overall customer experience and financial performance

for customers in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and parts of Delaware, North Carolina and West Virginia. Parker joined Comcast in 2001 and has spent the last 20 years in progressively larger leadership positions.



**Tuttle**

5Points Creative in Roanoke announces the addition of Strategic Development Consultant **Karen Tuttle**. She will be advising the full-service marketing and advertising agency on client communication, namely the challenges unique to high-level and senior executives. Tuttle has a long relationship with 5Points, which began when she served as Chief Administrative Officer for Jefferson Surgical Clinic and partnered with the agency for marketing and advertising services.

## EDUCATIONAL FRONT

**Lisa Wilkes**, who



**Wilkes**

previously served as vice president for business affairs and special assistant to the president, has been named vice president for strategic initiatives and special assistant to the president at Virginia Tech. In this position, Wilkes works to advance strategic presidential initiatives and address issues that impact the institution.



**Parker**

**Sarah Henrickson Parker**, director of human factors research and senior director of the Center for Simulation, Research and Patient Safety at Carilion Clinic, has been named chair of the Department of Interprofessionalism at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Parker is also

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a research associate professor at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC and is associated with the medical school's Department of Basic Science Education. In July 2020, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine expanded its Interprofessionalism curricular domain to Health Systems Science and Interprofessional Practice.

Radford University President **Brian Hemphill** will be leaving the school to lead Old Dominion University after the end of the fiscal year on June 30. John Broderick announced last May that he would retire as president of Old Dominion University this summer. Radford's Board of Visitors got the news from Hemphill, who said "the decision to leave Radford University was not made lightly." He came to Radford in 2016.

### MUNICIPAL FRONT

**Angela M. Hill**, who



**Hill**

most recently served the County as Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, has been promoted to Assistant County Administrator/Chief Financial Officer in Montgomery County. Hill joined the county in October 1997 as Director of Financial and Management Services. Prior to that she worked as an auditor at Brown Edwards & Company, LLP. L. "Carol" Edmonds retired from the County as Deputy County Administrator on December 31.

The New River Valley Regional Commission welcomes two new members, **Liza Morris**, representing Virginia Tech and **Sarah Thwaites**, an elected official representing the Town of Narrows, who both joined the board on January 1.

The Commission also announces that Summer Bork was hired in November as the Commission's Economic Recovery Planner. The New River Valley Regional Commission is comprised of 13 local governments and three higher education institutions

### NON-PROFIT FRONT



**Darby**

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys has appointed **Michelle Darby** as Vice President of Marketing & Development in January. As a member of the Executive team, she leads both the Marketing and Development departments. Darby was most recently at the United Way of the Roanoke Valley as the Vice President of Resource Development.

She previously held positions at the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce and Anthem BlueCross BlueShield.



**Brown**

DePaul Community Resources in Roanoke announces the election of **Renee Brown**, LPC, CSAC to the board of directors for the Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA). Brown is Vice President of Child and Family Services at DePaul Community Resources where she oversees foster care, adoption, and community-based programs. Before joining DePaul in 2017, Brown spent over 20 years at Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare in various roles. The FFTA was founded in 1988 to develop, promote, and support treatment foster care.

*Compiled by Gene Marrano*

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# CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

**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]

**Micah Fraim** is a top-referred Certified Public Accountant and business finance strategist who is well-connected in the regional business community and nationally recognized. Publisher of The Little Big Small Business Book, he also publishes a blog at www.fraimcpa.com/blog and is frequently interviewed as a business financial expert in national media channels. [micahfraim@fraimcpa.com]

**Doug Kidd** has 25 years in the business as a professional image consultant and clothier. He's with Tom James Company, a service that comes to clients

in the privacy of their home or office.

**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 the Wordsmith of Roanoke. When she's not creating marketing copy for owners of B2B and B2C professional services firms or ghostwriting & editing books for non-fiction authors, she's trying to get control of her talented, always happy, but easily distracted mutt Morrie on the agility field. [Nanette@WordsmithofRoanoke.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]

**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.

**Michael Shelton** is a Registered Financial Consultant, tax specialist, and owner of 360 Wealth Consultants. His firm specializes in providing retirement planning and wealth preservation strategies for business owners and astute individuals. What really has the locals excited, though, is his groundbreaking, proprietary software, designed to streamline accounting and wealth planning for business owners of medical practices, real estate properties, and construction industry businesses. [michael@discover360Financial.com]

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

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



A gym rat or a runner is... better for the physical demands and pace of the job than someone with a passion for playing video games in their basement. — Page 31

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*The Gauntlet gets another boost*

**Southwest Virginia State Farm®** has awarded The Advancement Foundation a \$35,000 grant to help sustain and scale the business program and competition that has grown to be the largest in the Commonwealth. The Vinton-based Gauntlet is now in its 7th season, focused on helping small business startups and current businesses develop new strategies for growth. To date the Gauntlet has helped over 500 entrepreneurs in the region start or expand their business. In addition, The Gauntlet has engaged 250 community mentors and raised cash and in-kind awards totaling more than \$1.2 million.

More commute than you might think

New census data shows the Roanoke Valley's "surprisingly deep employment ties" to Bedford and Lynchburg to the east, and Franklin and Henry Counties to the south, with 10,000 and 9,000 daily commuters, respectively. That's according to the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission. Daily commute traffic from the New River Valley is 6,500 daily commuters. Of the approximately 141,000 people employed in the Roanoke Valley, over 90,000 of them are moving back and forth between the Roanoke Valley and surrounding areas. "The commuting data shows that businesses across our region rely on a labor

shed that is larger than any one locality alone." says Commission Executive Director, Wayne Strickland. "This demonstrates how interconnected we are to communities outside the Roanoke Valley and how important it is to work on transportation planning collaboratively and on a larger scale." Census data shows that 55 percent of workers in the Roanoke Valley commute less than 10 miles to work. Out of the remaining 45 percent of workers (63,343 people), who commute more than 10 miles to work, it is estimated that over 24,000 people (17%) are commuting more than 50 miles for work within the Roanoke Valley.

*Big drop in numbers at ROA due to COVID impact*

The **Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport** reports that 2020 passenger traffic was down 59% versus 2019, with 291,718 passengers served this year compared to 719,707 in 2019. David Jeavons, interim executive director of the Roanoke Regional Airport Commission, says, "we hope traffic increases throughout the winter. Lower overall airfare has stimulated demand, and as airlines rebuild their schedules, it is critical to use our current service not only to keep it, but also to have more restored and help our economy grow."

*That's a lot of junk*

**Appalachian Power** lake crews removed a record 10,417 tons of

debris from the Smith Mountain Project in 2020. That shattered the previous mark set in 2019 of 5,731 tons. "This is just an unbelievable amount of debris that these guys were able to remove in 2020," said David Bailey, Appalachian Power manager in charge of debris removal. "This team worked under extreme conditions, sometimes 10 or 12-hour days, six days a week to get this done." Crews from both Appalachian Power and contractor Clifton F. Byrd and Sons, Inc., patrolled the 600 miles of shoreline between Smith Mountain and Leesville lakes. Heavy rainstorms often wash debris downstream from the Roanoke River and other waterways into Smith Mountain Lake.

*Bank of Fincastle says it is "well-positioned"*

The Bank of Fincastle said it was, "pleased to report strong quarter-end results in a year [2020] that has presented many challenges," said Scott Steele President and CEO. "With quarter ending net income of \$547,950, net loans at \$198.4 million and total deposits of \$224.3 million our Bank is well-positioned as we progress into the new year." COVID-19 related payment deferrals were down 88.75 percent from their peak in the 4Q. "We are once again processing applications for the SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for eligible borrowers including those who previously received a PPP loan and wish to apply for a second draw

PPP loan," confirmed Steele. The Bank of Fincastle also welcomed Peter Jessee as Roanoke City Executive in the 4Q.

*Virginia a top spot for retirees on the move*

**Hireahelper.com**, which helps site visitors find moving companies, reports that the latest Census Bureau data shows Virginia was the top destination for pandemic retirees that moved out of state during 2020. Almost 400,000 thousand Americans moved for retirement in 2020 despite any pandemic issues says hireahelper, the highest number in five years - 30% more people than a year before. The Top State Destinations in 2020 for retirees on the move, according to the data: Virginia (15%), Florida (13.5%), Wyoming (10.3%), Pennsylvania (7%) and Idaho (4.9%).

*4Q 2020 real estate report*

The real estate services firm **Cushman & Wakefield** reports that rental rate growth was relatively flat in the 2020 4th quarter. Meanwhile the industrial vacancy rate increased by 6% and the unemployment rate in the Roanoke Valley dropped to 4.7% - 2 points below the national arrived in the 4Q. On the retail side, Cushman & Wakefield there is also minimal change in the rental asking rate per square foot, and "continued political instability and the unpredictability of the timing for mass

vaccination causes an uncertainty in predicting activity for the Roanoke industrial market for 2021.”

*Roanoke Partnership Launches New Farm to School Program*

The Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) partnered with Roanoke City Public Schools to procure local-grown sweet potatoes from Virginia grown Kirby Farms and included them in a curbside meal distribution in late January. Along with the sweet potatoes, RCPS families received recipes and additional information about this

crop to explore. “Farm to school helps children, families, and the community see, taste, and feel the important connections between our bodies and the food we grow and eat. As a community of farmers and farmer supporters, we are here and we want to serve our community as best we can,” says Maureen McNamara Best, Director of LEAP.

*North Cross recognized for diversity in Computer Science*

North Cross School in Roanoke County has earned the College Board AP® Computer Science Female Diversity

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Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science A. Schools honored have demonstrated expanded girls’ access in AP Computer Science courses. Out of the 20,000 institutions that offer AP courses, 1,119 achieved either 50% or higher female representation in one of the two AP

computer science courses, or a percentage of the female computer science examinees meeting or exceeding that of the school’s female population during the 2019-20 school year. That’s nearly 37% more than the 818 schools recognized last year. In 2020, North Cross School was one of 232

# 2021 SEASON LINEUP

*so far....*

- 5/8 Jackyl
- 5/14 Metallica Tribute: Battery
- 5/15 Jamey Johnson
- 5/28 Eagles Tribute: EagleMania
- 5/29 Kip Moore
- 6/5 Aaron Lewis
- 6/11 Van Halen Tribute: Completely Unchained
- 6/12 Ashley McBryde
- 6/18 Michael Ray

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- 6/19 The Cadillac Three
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- 6/26 Blues Traveler/JJ Grey & Mofo
- 7/9 Steely Dan Tribute: The Royal Scam
- 7/23 AC/DC Tribute: Shoot to Thrill
- 9/9 Blackberry Smoke
- 9/18 Nitty Gritty Dirt Band
- 9/24 Prince Tribute: Dean Ford & the Beautiful Ones



recognized in the category of AP Computer Science A.

*NRCC to offer new heavy equipment operator program*

**New River Community College**

recently received state approval to offer a new short-term training program for those interested in becoming a heavy equipment operator. Core skills courses will teach students the necessary basics to start a career as a trade apprentice and heavy equipment operator through a combination of online training and live lab training. "Implementation of the heavy equipment operator program will assist local business and industry in securing skilled employees," said Ross Matney, workforce training coordinator at NRCC. The program will be administered by NRCC's workforce development office as one of its FastForward offerings - short-term training programs that prepare students for in-demand careers.

An exact date and enrollment details for the first course offerings in the new program will be announced at a later date.

*RoCo planning for future growth*

Roanoke County has launched a yearlong effort to develop a strategic plan to help guide the direction and focus of the County's economic development program over the next five years. Formulation of the ELEVATE Roanoke County 2026 Plan will be assisted by the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development. The effort is funded by a grant from Appalachian Power and resources from the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development. "Developing a strategic plan is essential to the work of economic development," said Jill Loope, Roanoke County Director of Economic Development. "Changing demographics, consumer preferences and the ability of many employees to work remotely presents challenges and opportunities for economic

development. This strategic planning effort will guide the County and enable us to direct our actions and investments to yield future results."

*Delta Dental steps up again*

The **Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation** has awarded \$500,000 in grants to fund education, prevention and delivery of care initiatives for six Virginia safety-net providers. The grants were focused on groups pursuing "innovative approaches to reducing barriers to care," said Roanoke-based Delta Dental of Virginia. "Our foundation took a new approach this year, shifting focus toward providing larger, more substantive grants to a fewer number of organizations," said Polly Raible, Delta Dental of Virginia's corporate social responsibility manager. Local non-profits receiving those grants included the Community Health Center of the New River Valley (\$100,000) and the Child Health Investment Partnership/ New Horizons Healthcare

(\$85,000).

*DISH building sold*

The former **Dish Network** call center in Christiansburg, just off Exit 118 on I-81 has been sold. The sale consisted of a 101,500 SF industrial facility located on 19+ acres in Falling Branch Corporate Park to Moog, Inc., which purchased the property to accommodate the expansion needs of its Industrial Components Group. Moog intends to convert the building to a production facility with planned improvements in excess of \$3M. As part of this expansion, Moog will vacate a nearby facility at 2200 South Main Street in Blacksburg. Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group handled the transaction; the property sold for \$6,500,000.

*STEM boost for teachers*

The **Virginia Department of Education** has announced a \$10.8 million "Education Innovation and Research" grant aimed at improving

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STEM and computer science teaching skills for educators. Governor Ralph Northam made that announcement at the Mecklenburg County Public Schools central office last month. Northam also said encouraging more young girls to become interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math - STEM - is another goal. "The reason we're doing so well economically is because of our talented workforce. We need to keep that going, we need to

continue to train our children for the 21st century jobs," said Northam.

*Mini-grant application process is SIMPLE*

Founded 3 years ago by ten Roanoke City families, the SIMPLE grant program is just that - and it casts a wide net when it comes to eligibility. "Supporting Innovative, Meaningful Projects and Local Experimentation" - SIMPLE - issuing

one thousand dollar grants every month- and funded by a rotating group of Old Southwest Roanoke residents who chip in 100 dollars each month. Brad Stephens says it does not have to be a non-profit. He was one of the driving forces behind the Big Lick Soup micro-grant event a few years back. If a thousand dollars would make a difference for your initiative apply on the Simple Roanoke website. Applicants stay in the queue

and under consideration for 6 months before they would have to reapply." It can be anything that has a positive community impact," says Stephens, "we've funded everything from murals to education projects, to coffee houses and documentary projects." See [simpleroanoke.org](http://simpleroanoke.org) to apply for a micro-grant.

*Compiled by  
Gene Marrano*

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Rich Alvis

all photos by Michael Abraham



## Alvis-Laing Electric: a company in transition

By Michael Abraham

**A Christiansburg based electrical construction company –  
“an honest business” - renews life with a new owner.**

Rich Alvis got his start in the electrical construction business by accident. “I had to have a job one day,” he chuckled. “In 1972, I was working to build the Hubbell Lighting factory here in Christiansburg. I worked on the electrical crew. My grandfather was an electrician, earning a diploma in 1915. It hung in my office for decades. I have electrical construction in my genes. I am from Richmond, but I came up to attend

(Virginia) Tech, met my wife, and started my family here. So, I decided to stay.”

Alvis moved on to several jobs within the industry, working at many of the area’s largest companies. By 1973 he started his own company, Alvis Electric. Over the years, the company benefited from his hard work, honesty and integrity. He phased away from residential work in favor of mostly industrial

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Malcolm Laing



and commercial work. He hired his first employee in 1974 and moved the company into the current location at the Christiansburg Industrial Park in 1997.

“Electrical construction is hard work,” he explained. “It’s hard physically and mentally. You can do well with a good philosophy, taking care of customers. I cared about my customers’ best interest. I offered services at reasonable prices. I did it for 40 years, and I tell people it’s not the years but the mileage. I worked 60- and 70-hour weeks. I reached the point where it was tough for me to keep up the daily grind. It’s competitive. I needed good employees. I had up to 20 employees but when the company transitioned to new ownership, it had 13 or 14.”

Three years ago, a younger man, Malcolm Laing, acquired the company, learning about its availability through a broker. Alvis has continued to assist in the transition. Both spoke of the changing nature of electrical construction. Many industrial operations are now automated, so work involves far more than stringing positive, negative, and ground wires through conduit. Robots are ubiquitous. “Somebody’s got to install and wire them,” Alvis said.

“Our people need to be smart, educated, to understand what they’re installing, and what it’s going to do so the installation works,” added Laing. “Working in the industrial space, we have to provide electricians who can communicate with plant engineers to achieve successful outcomes. As the installations get more complicated, their skill level, along with their ability to communicate, go up.” Both agree that while the pandemic has hurt many local businesses, on the whole theirs

has remained strong. One customer makes the fabric that goes into N95 masks (in short supply last year as the pandemic took root), and they were overwhelmed with orders. With the increase in volume, there were installations of new manufacturing equipment. Alvis-Laing has been working on that.

“We still install lots of light fixtures and light switches for many of our customers. But nowadays many contracts are far more complex,” said Laing, who studied mechanical engineering at Virginia Tech before working for a variety of technology companies in Blacksburg. But he and his wife had wanted a business of their own. “Working at these technology companies gave me the ability to grow into spaces that I could have failed [at] and fallen on my face really hard. I had to figure things out and move forward. I was managing employees, working with customers on testing equipment in high pressure situations. I learned management and responsibility. Without those opportunities I would not have been able to do this.”

Alvis notes that, “I no longer have a function here. I agreed in selling the company that I would stay on for two years. I ended up staying 27 months. I have not had regular responsibilities since, although Malcolm and I talk every week or so. I fell into this by accident. I was able to stay with it, live with it, provide an income for my family, and be able to sleep at night. I ran an honest business, and it was important to me. I like to think that my honesty was rewarded.” Concludes Malcolm Laing, “I had lots of apprehension taking over. We’re doing well as a business. We have a good group of 18 people. I didn’t know that I’d enjoy it as much as I am.”

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**NOTICE:** The COVID-19 “coronavirus” pandemic has affected most events and activities by businesses and organizations serving our news coverage region. Specific schedules and dates cited in this edition of FRONT may have been postponed, canceled, or otherwise changed after press time. Please check with each business or organization for the most updated information on any event or activity you intend to engage.

“”  
Do it right the first time. — Page 19

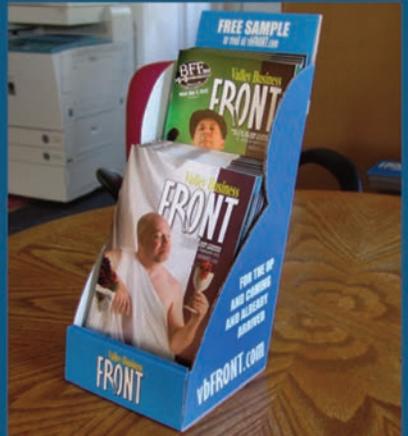
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# SPOT A STROKE

Learn the Warning Signs and Act *Fast*

**B**



**BALANCE**  
UNSTEADY

**E**



**EYESIGHT**  
CHANGES

**F**



**FACE**  
DROOPING

**A**



**ARMS**  
WEAK/NUMB

**S**



**SPEECH**  
DIFFICULTY

**T**



**TIME**  
CALL 911

Act FAST in response to any of these signs to improve your chances for recovery.

If you get help within three hours of the first symptom, the advanced interventional treatments and fast-track Stroke Alert program available at Carilion Clinic can lessen or even eliminate the effects of a stroke.

**If you or someone else has any of the BE FAST symptoms, call 911 immediately.**