

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 163
APRIL 2022

WoTech

Cybersecurity

RAMP's Impact

Smith Mountain Lake's
Vickie Gardner

Salem Red Sox's
Blair Hoke

Goodwill's Vision

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Women in TECHNOLOGY

Wendi Pannell
Ozmo



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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Historic inflation. Fuel and crude oil prices up sharply. Where will that end? The Russian incursion into Ukraine. Let's hope that is over by the time you read this. The sharp dip in COVID rates and the masks coming off, the proof of vaccination required at the door like you're at a Customs checkpoint gone. How all of this news, some incredibly tragic, will impact business growth and consumer sentiment long term is to be decided. These are unsettled times, but we all have to muddle through.

Baseball is back and in this issue we'll meet an award winning female front office executive for the Salem Red Sox. Women in Tech are profiled and the public comeback for Vickie Gardner, critically injured when two WDBJ-7 journalists were shot dead on live television. Check out the book review for *Dream in a Suitcase*, a riveting memoir from a local author and college professor about escaping from then-Communist Romania and flourishing after making it to America. She fears for the people in Ukraine, which is right next door to her native country. Give Peace a Chance. Read on.



Tom Field
Publisher



Gene Marrano
Editor



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By Jennifer Poff Cooper

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By Tom Field



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We are all vulnerable. — Page 18



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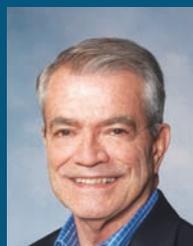
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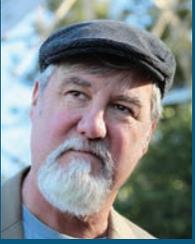


Dan Smith

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.

2022 CONTRIBUTORS



Tom Field



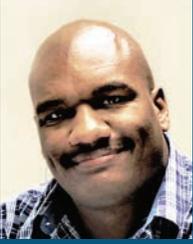
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“”
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local arts
and cultural
venues.
— Page 37

“”
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relationship-
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community.
— Page 10

Biographies and
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on each contributor
are provided on Page 56.

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Wendi Pannell: "You can build your village."

Women in Technology Stepping Up

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

It may be one of the best-kept secret in the valleys.

So a committee of motivated women is helping WoTech, a "women in technology" group that is prevalent across the country and the globe, gain traction.

Wendi Pannell found it lonely when she was climbing the technology career ladder. Sometimes, she was the only woman at a conference table. When she worked in Richmond, Pannell discovered WoTech. She said she felt "energized" by other women around her and learned a great deal.

When she moved to Blacksburg, Pannell, now Vice President of Digital Content Production at Ozmo, discovered that the local WoTech group was not very active. That changed in 2019 when she expressed a desire to “build a village or community to help each other grow.” With a job and a family, Pannell was clear that she could not be the only point person, but she wanted to help “pave the way and make it less of a rocky ride” for those women coming after her.

Said Lea Hamblin, Employee Development Manager at Ozmo, “I have lived and worked in the NRV [New River Valley] my entire life and have felt the lack of a common place where women can gather and share similar experiences to learn from one another in a traditionally male-dominated workplace.”

“Supporting each other and having each other’s backs is such a joy as you are growing in your career,” said Pannell.

Shannon Hodous, Senior Principal Director, Project Operations at 1901 Group, appreciates the opportunity to easily build relationships without the need to figure out a common thread to start a conversation.

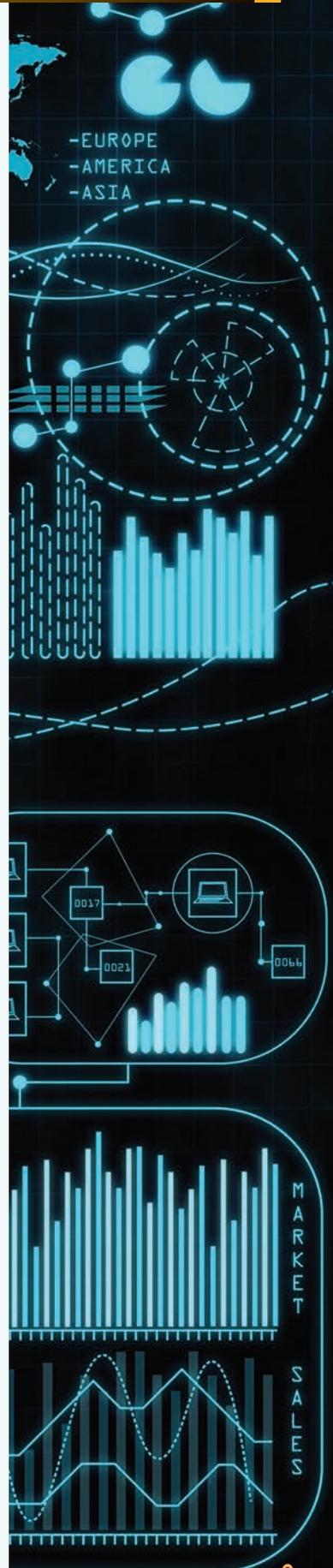
“For me, WoTech is a safe space to share experiences and learn from other local women. It’s an opportunity to make new connections with career-oriented women, build each other up, and strengthen the skills needed to grow and thrive in today’s tech world,” said Amanda Smith, Product Manager at Qualtrax.

Companies tend to stay in their “bubbles,” said Pannell. She extols the benefits of talking to people in similar roles in adjacent industries, as they are likely to share similar problems.

Said Hamblin, “WoTech wants to do our part to balance the workplace to meet women where they are and challenge them to take the next step in their advancement. I have been personally impacted by this forum and these women who have pushed me out of my comfort zone as I begin to build stronger relationships and learn from other women in similar career paths.”

WoTech has a broad scope, Pannell said. It targets anyone that touches, influences, or drives technology, spanning many industries. This includes men if an event features a topic that is applicable or good for men to hear about.

The local WoTech group is a branch of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC), a “community within the greater council,” said Pannell, serving both the Roanoke and Blacksburg areas by alternating sites



ONE PASSION, MANY HATS

Erin Burcham has had a busy year. In June 2021, she was named Executive Director of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC). In December, she was announced as the new President of Verge, the regional technology alliance that includes affiliates RBTC, Valleys Innovation Council, and RAMP, the region's accelerator program. Burcham will pull double-duty, maintaining her position with RBTC.

For her success, Burcham credits starting her career in the Roanoke region where "mentors have helped me grow and elevate." She said that Roanoke is a "relationship-based community" that provides more opportunities for leaders to grow at earlier stages of their careers than bigger markets like northern Virginia do. Participating in the Leadership Roanoke Valley program helped Burcham make connections that still hold, and she has been "very intentional" about relationships.

Burcham graduated from the University of South Carolina with a degree in communications and public relations. She continued her education at Virginia Tech, earning a master's in leadership studies with a focus on economic development. Her master's thesis focused on leadership around innovation corridors, research she is using in practice now.

After working at Virginia Tech in continuing and professional education at the Higher Education Center in Roanoke, servicing both the Roanoke and New River Valleys, Burcham spent four years as the Director of Talent Solutions at the Roanoke Regional Partnership.

The common thread throughout her career is her passion to elevate the technology and biotechnology sectors in GO Virginia's Region 2. Key to this goal is pulling together partners, from start-ups to larger entities like Virginia Tech and Carilion. Burcham extols the talent produced in the region but laments the "gaps in jobs." She said, "We are training but not retaining the most technical people."

Recalling her days working at Virginia Tech, she said the PhDs loved the region but couldn't stay because there were no biotech jobs. The solution requires that "we get creative," Burcham said. One aspect is being "intentional about developing a pipeline." Another is being aggressive in seeking new capital to allow for infrastructure growth. "We have the assets and motivation; we just need the funding streams to come through."

Recent leadership changes in local STEM partners have provided a lot of energy, Burcham said, but important groundwork was laid with the last round of leaders. As she takes the reins at both RBTC and Verge, she hopes to "strengthen the ecosystem" around tech and biotech.

Burcham loves that her job is different every day. She goes all over the region and may switch gears in one day from working with a start-up, to helping a larger company with talent retention, to working on economic development.

The energy around tech and biotech is "really strong," Burcham said. "We are on the edge of major things." (Editor's note: Burcham was also recently named to Roanoke College's Community Advisory Group.)



Erin Burcham

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

for events. It has a committee of five or six women who are “constantly in touch,” said Pannell, then another four or five who are not able to attend all the time. This way, if someone has family issues or a busy time on the job, there are others to pick up the slack.

“There are seasons when committee members have had to step back,” Pannell said, but it’s never just one person doing the work.

WoTech provides a variety of activities, with participation ranging from 15-60 people. Lunch & Learns are quarterly education-focused events, often with subject matter experts as speakers. Pannell cited a recent Lunch & Learn about influencing that offered concrete take-aways, as in “here’s what you can do.”

Power Hours are quarterly evening networking events where “you can build your village,” said Pannell.

Morning Jolts happen one Wednesday a month and they are “lightweight,” said Pannell, more of an open forum or conversation, including Q&A time. She said members vote on topics, aiming to cover relevant and timely ones.

Said Smith, “I really like that the regular events hosted by WoTech vary in style and purpose. I think it makes it easy for everyone to get involved in a way that’s comfortable for them.”

Pannell said WoTech is trying to engage “the right women” in the leadership committee. Getting the word out about the group’s existence has been a challenge, but a new social media / marketing group using consistent messaging has been of huge benefit. Involving young women who feel reticent about participating is another goal. Pannell said WoTech wants to make women feel comfortable at events, saying leaders are intentional about “stepping up to the woman in the corner.”

Pannell said, “We feel most proud when women are making connections.”

Said Hodous, “So often women take on the role of the conversation starters amongst their friends and family; it is important we bring that into our professional lives too. The conversations around technology, women in technology, our area, balance of home and work... will continue to evolve, and we want passionate women in our area to bring ideas, innovation, and energy to our group to keep relevant topics at the forefront of WoTech, RBTC, and our region.”

Women who would like to get involved should check out the RBTC webpage or WoTech’s LinkedIn page.

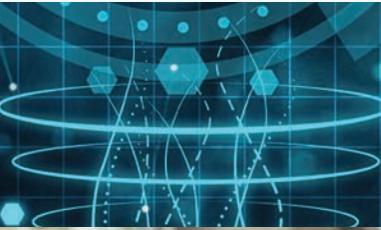
Pannell encourages women to reach out and take that first step: “I promise they won’t regret it.” 



5 Tech Women on Industry Gender Differential

Compiled by Tom Field

We asked a handful of women in the technology sector to share their perspectives on working in an environment that was predominately male.



Amy Ankrum

Submitted



Kelsey Monahan

Submitted

Talent is talent

"Throughout my career, I've not let gender be a blocker nor a focus. I've invested my time in organizations where I've been successful working with and attracting great people with strong purpose and core values. I've been fortunate as a woman leader to be connected with and hire some of the most talented people I've ever met, and many of them happen to be women."

Amy Ankrum, (Blacksburg) leader of Qualtrax (that was acquired last March by Ideagen) says she's on to her next adventure, and that will include staying active in our tech community.

The challenge of bonding

"I'm in a technology sales role and as a result, not only are my internal colleagues predominantly male, but so are my customers and competitors. I have encountered countless challenging situations due to being a female in a male-dominated industry. The disadvantages I've experienced as a woman usually differ if I'm in a position of power or if I'm a subordinate. They also differ if I'm in the office setting or traveling with all men (pre-COVID). For instance, removing myself from an uncomfortable situation while traveling with customers and peers ultimately resulted in my competitor obtaining the business with a customer by building rapport after I left the event. All to say, not all gender inequities come from intentional prejudice or stereotyping. By refusing to recognize privilege, women are not given the same opportunities to succeed. "

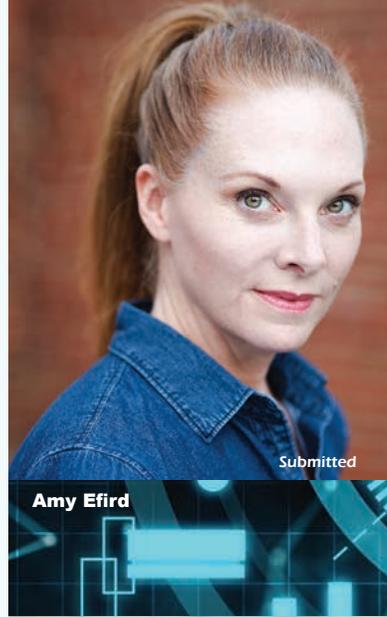
Kelsey Monahan (Salem) is a senior account executive / field rep with Oracle, currently serving the higher education sector, western US region.

Female experts do exist

"Our company has an even split of women to men in leadership roles at the moment. We are deliberate as an organization to make sure we have voices that are different,

perceptions that are different, and experiences are different—better solutions are produced when there are various views addressing the challenges. This philosophy is also seen in our teams and hiring efforts. I know technology has a male-dominated culture. When panels are put together to be a part of a conference or event, when keynote speakers are booked, when the future of technology is discussed, this is when I see male faces COMPLETELY dominate the field. There are female thought leaders and experts not being consulted on important aspects of growth and innovation. I have no answer to the issue—only that I choose to take up space and contribute to ideas and opportunities in my area of experience and knowledge with energy and purpose.”

Amy Efrid (Blacksburg) has a technology position with Exelation/Next Up vice president of Partnerships (a business development role on steroids, she says); and operates DBI, a coaching business.



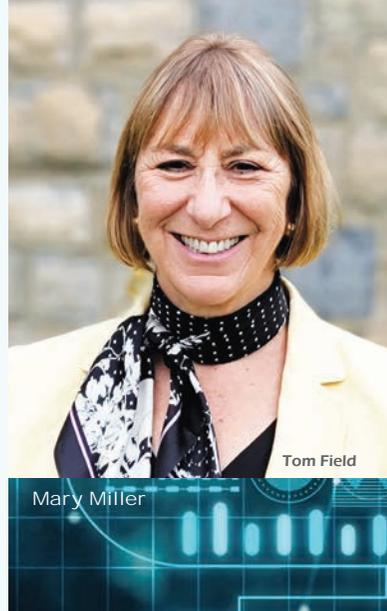
Submitted

Amy Efrid

It keeps improving

“I grew up with three brothers and three sisters. I was lucky enough to be brought up in a home that encouraged us to develop our talents without regard to gender. I have always loved science and technology, and it was just natural to move to computers when they came on the scene. I understand that others may see gender and are still surprised to see women excel in STEM. I’ve seen many positive changes in the past 50 years, and I applaud them all. Congratulations to WoTech for elevating the conversation and shining the light in our region. The world has significant problems to solve, and we need all the talent working together. Thankfully, women are here to stay.”

Mary Miller (Blacksburg) has been involved with the technology council (in all its variations) since its inception; she was owner/operator of an IT and web development firm during the boom; and is currently director of the regional accelerator RAMP.



Tom Field

Mary Miller

Room for everyone

“I am thrilled to be a woman in the technology field in this region. We are blessed to have the supportive networks and welcoming tech environments that allow for everyone’s success. I think our region is very special in that there is room for everyone, and we do lift each other up. As someone who has grown up in this region, I am committed to its success and really appreciate the efforts of so many to create an ecosystem that respects and values our talent.”

Amy White (Botetourt) is the dean and director of the STEM program at Virginia Western Community College; she also served as a FRONT advisory board member. 



Submitted

Amy White



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

Organizations are asking their teams to work harder, but many of us are getting burned out. It seems like this is a vicious, downward spiral ... so how do we prevent employee burnout?

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

Avoiding burnout

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal was titled "American Workers Are Burned Out, and Bosses Are Struggling to Respond." Over 4 million Americans have quit their jobs for the past six months in a row. Our working hours are expanding, and the labor shortage continues.

According to a recent article by Adam Bornstein in Entrepreneur magazine, instead of thinking of how we prevent burnout, we should ask ourselves how do we fill employees with energy, creativity, excitement, and fulfillment.

Rarely do long hours alone cause burnout. Have you ever started a new job and put in extra hours to get up-to-speed, yet still felt energized? The same happened to me when I started my business. My hours increased, but I was motivated and excited to do well.

Here are some suggestions from Bornstein to reduce burnout:

- **Embrace time off.** Don't save all vacation time for the end of the year (or not use it at all!) If possible, consider offering unlimited vacation time to your team. I have no formal vacation policy in my business and my team members can take time off whenever they need to. I trust them, and they have always been there for me when I need them.
- **Remove the fear of failure.** It's mentally draining to work in a culture where mistakes are not tolerated. It's up to leaders to remove this fear so your employees are less stressed and more creative.
- **Invest in personal growth.** Everyone on your team should pursue growth and improvement, in both their personal and professional lives. We are either green and growing or ripe and rotting. As a leader, your employees will value working for you when you can help them pursue their most important goals. This includes understanding what each employee's career goals are and helping them get there.
- **Encourage deep thought.** When employees run constantly in a tactical execution mode, it's hard to think strategically about opportunities. Many organizations recognize this need and plan dedicated time for uninterrupted thought and deep work. Consider scheduling a 2-4-hour block in your calendar each week, or scheduling "no meeting or calling" days when your team can work with fewer interruptions. 

“We are either green and growing or ripe and rotting.”

Calculating estimated payments

It's a rare day that goes by without a business owner calling our office confounded over how to find the right number to report for quarterly taxes. This is a hard concept for people to wrap their heads around because it requires projections. Estimated payments mean you need to predict what your business will do in the future.

Whether you need to pay quarterly taxes or not is based on the profit of your business. Many startups operate at a loss. Most entrepreneurs take one to four years before they're in the black. If you're keeping good accounting records, you should know what your business did last year – and last quarter – so you can make a good guess about what you'll owe, if you owe.

Profit means money left from income after you've paid all your expenses. Salaries (including yours), material costs, travel expenses, vendor fees, rent, utilities, office supplies, and merchant fees are all costs of doing business. These get subtracted from your income to determine profits.

It makes sense then that nobody can really answer what their profit is going to be until they know their numbers. Some businesses have a pretty steady rhythm year over year of inflows and outflows. Others are on a continuous growth curve. Seasonal businesses are cyclical. My tax preparation portion of the company is a great example of this. It's extremely profitable during the first and second quarters, but quite variable during the third and fourth.

Technology is changing accounting

To determine estimated taxes, it helps to create a cash flow statement. Look at the current operations as well as prior years to see patterns.

New technology in the financial sector provides AI assisted accounting. This negates the time required for data entry by seamlessly connecting business account activity to QuickBooks. It also eliminates human error typing mistakes.

With such a solution, it's easy to get the information you need to calculate estimated payments. If lack of time and organization are your excuses for not having up-to-date financials, this is an option that eliminates these challenges.

The IRS taxes you on net profit, not gross income. That's what you need to be able to effectively project estimated payments. In order to do this, you need to know your cost of doing business, not just revenue. If this still confuses you, reach out and I'll try to help you get a handle on it. 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:

To effectively projecting estimated payments, know the cost of doing business.

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



Toye Oshoniyi and Duke Baldrige

Preparing for cyberattacks starts with some basics

By Gene Marrano

Not to get personal, but how's your firewall these days?

Cyberattacks on computer systems anywhere in the world - from anywhere - are not new at this point. Ransomware attacks where the culprits - be it rogue hacker or a bad actor state - are holding networks and databases hostage for crypto payments. Concerns as Russia

rolled into Ukraine from people like the chair of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Virginia's Mark Warner, that cyber-attacks initiated in Ukraine by Russia could spread to US computer networks. We're all connected. So, how's your firewall?

Roanoke-based Dominion Risk Advisors and similar firms can sell businesses a cybersecurity insurance package, yes, but first they say steps must be taken to ensure that coverage is even available. Implementing core security controls some call it. Duke Baldrige is president for Dominion Risk Advisors, an insurance brokerage, with an emphasis on commercial: "it's gone from a way to control costs to being an important aspect of getting [the policy] that you need."

Toye Oshoniyi is a Producer for DRA. "We're going to look at the IT controls they have in place. We work closely with their IT provider [or] and in-house person." With "more and more controls in place," Dominion Risk Advisors can offer a checklist of security measures that should be considered before seeking a cybersecurity rider or policy. There may even be a company "cyber attorney" that can be part of the mix. Locally Gentry Locke and Wood Rogers both have cyber law specialists says Oshoniyi, who at one time played semi-pro soccer for the long-gone Roanoke Wrath.

"Cyber is what we call an emerging risk," says Baldrige; "things are changing quickly. We need to work really closely with [a client's] IT department ... and with the legal department to make sure they have the right controls. We help them manage risk."

GLOBALDATA REPORTS, IN A RECENT SURVEY:

- 68% of business leaders feel cybersecurity risks are increasing (Accenture)
- On average, only 5% of company files are properly protected (Varonis)
- Data breaches exposed 36 billion records in the first half of 2020 (RiskBased)
- 45% of breaches featured hacking, 17% involve malware, and 22% involve phishing (Verizon)
- Top malicious email attachment types are .doc, .dot, and .exe (Symantec)
- 300 billion passwords are used by humans and machines worldwide (Cybersecurity Media)

Some companies tell DRA that they are too small to be the target of a cyber-attack, but Oshoniyi says breaches are showing up in businesses large and much smaller. In fact, many times he adds bad actors are going after the smaller companies, "because they know those controls may not be in place. You really have to be addressing this risk."



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A commitment to staying cyber-safe needs to start at the top of an organizational chart. A number of giant companies in sectors from retail to health care and credit bureaus have been hit by hi-profile hacks in recent times. Was management asleep at the wheel?

Start by working with a proven IT professional who can help set security priorities, based in part on the investment to be made. Encryption and “a good firewall,” is a good start notes Baldrige. “Cyber hygiene,” Oshoniyi calls it. Multi-factor authentication to access a computer network (not just a simple password) is recommended, and DRA has a list of why cyber security insurance policies have been declined that they can share with clients or prospects. “What should we as a company be doing first, to protect our data?” he asks rhetorically. Its also about protecting private customer data – and the company’s image.

95 percent of the way bad actors gain access to a computer network is human error says Oshoniyi – often by clicking on an e-mail that opens the backdoor to your IT. “We always come back to [employee] training. There has to be training. That’s across the board.”

Internal reports can show who is opening what e-mails and what potential cyber hazards that might be leading to. Business interruptions due to computer systems being locked down is a productivity issue as well. What does that cost? For a massive customer mea culpa mailing to clients, for attorney fees as they assess the damage?

A 30 year-plus veteran in the insurance sector, Baldrige says coverage for certain personal data has been around for a decade or so, but cyber liability has now become an important part of risk management strategies, even for smaller businesses, in just the past 3-4 years. Important private information needs to be protected. “We would argue that all businesses need it.” Your brand these days is tied to how well you protect the information of others he adds. That could be health records, client details, company secrets etc.

“The reality is the bad actors are all around the world,” says Duke Baldrige, “and we are all vulnerable. In some cases, it’s government-sponsored [or] government tolerated bad action. But we’re all exposed to their desires to corrupt our data, ransom our information, [trying] to create harm and chaos.”

“”
A commitment to staying cyber-safe needs to start at the top.



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One brings together. One separates.

Dr. Tammy Kemp launched her startup after her father passed away.

Alex Hyler's business emerged from a Virginia Tech lab that developed a new technology to allow researchers to separate different kinds of cancer cells found in tumors.

Both of these Southwest Virginia-based entrepreneurs have been accepted into RAMP's Spring 2022 Cohort focusing on health and life science companies.



Tammy Kemp
Axon Acuity



Alex Hyler
CytoRecovery

Founded and led by Kemp, Axon Acuity uses a validated, prescriptive analytic software to identify high risk patients that assists clinicians in matching the right nurse with the right patient, the right location and the right resources in near real time. The solution improves patient outcomes and increases operational efficiency.

A visionary innovator with over 30 years of operations experience in the clinical setting, Kemp was awarded the Virginia Nurses Foundation Excellence in Leadership – Nursing Informatics Award. "We are excited to have been selected for the RAMP Spring 2022 cohort," she said. "RAMP is a great opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs and mentors to help Axon Acuity reach its full potential."

Hyler serves as vice-president and Chief Scientific Officer at CytoRecovery, which is developing a novel, integrated, benchtop platform to sort, enrich, and recover viable cell subpopulations that will help clinicians with disease understanding, therapy selections, and drug development.

RAMP is headquartered in Roanoke's Gill Memorial Building on Jefferson Street. RAMP hosts two cohorts each year that provides startup tech and health science companies with a 12-week program that features:

- Expert 1:1 mentoring with the region's top entrepreneurs and executives
- Free office space with high-speed internet in downtown Roanoke in Virginia's Blue Ridge
- Access to venture capital
- \$20,000 in equity-free funding
- Membership into the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, GAN and Shenandoah Club

No matter where you find yourself in the startup pipeline, if you are building a technology-based business with high-growth potential then RAMP wants to connect you to the region's resources.

For more information contact RAMP:
<http://ramprb.tech> or 540.595.7315.

"With our participation in the RAMP Spring 2022 Cohort, we are excited to continue talking to more potential customers so we can better structure our market launch to develop customer-driven pricing and purchase plans," Hyler said. "In addition, we look forward to further connecting with Southwest Virginia's biotechnology investors, entrepreneurs, pioneers, manufacturers and community."

RAMP
THE REGIONAL ACCELERATOR



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Kimberly Whiter

Executive Summary:
An occasional series about a topic getting serious attention these days in DC, leading up to The Care Colloquium in November.

How businesses can tackle our national care crisis: Part 1

Supporting family caregivers is a hot topic among businesses. It is estimated that 1 in 5 individuals in the workforce has a family caregiving role alongside their career. Family caregivers are those providing care to a family member or friend in an unpaid fashion. Family caregiving has some pretty steep costs.

Time: family caregivers spend on average 20 hours a week on care tasks¹. That’s a part-time job on top of their career. Many care tasks can take place during the typical 9AM to 5PM workday (e.g., scheduling appointments, refilling prescriptions, calling financial professionals, talking to attorneys, etc).

Money: few families are prepared for the overwhelming cost of care. Most family caregivers spend on average \$850 per month out of pocket for care¹. Working family caregivers are spending 40% of their paychecks on care needs². This is incredibly stressful and causes caregiving-employees to panic, making it difficult to focus on their careers.

To find answers, caregiving-employees are:

- taking time off of work to figure out viable solutions.
- using work time to hunt answers online and make phone calls.
- leaving the workforce altogether, which only accelerates their financial strain.

This has caused employers to look for ways to add or expand their employee benefits. Most current benefit offerings don’t provide the support these employees need. Businesses that don’t support caregiving-employees lose money on lost productivity and lack of employee retention³.

Many working caregivers are reluctant to share that they have a care role. They worry they will be viewed as less productive and don’t want to appear less committed to the company. Employers have a huge opportunity to support caregiving-employees by offering value-added benefits that strategically support the challenges family caregivers face. This is also an incredible opportunity to promote an inclusive work culture.

Caregiving does not impact all employees equally. It disproportionately impacts women, people of color, and employees in low-economic situations⁴. Currently, the Gen X and Millennial generations carry the bulk of caregiving responsibilities. These employees need help combating the financial strain of caregiving as they juggle both their aging loved one’s finances and their own. Baby Boomer

employees are considering retirement and need help planning for their own long-term care needs. Gen Z employees are quickly entering the caregiving game, some already caring for grandparents, and need help planning to bypass the struggles generations before them faced related to care.

More than ever, employees are looking closely at benefit offerings as they consider moving within or re-engaging with the workforce. With many more people concerned about care responsibilities, you can expect current and potential employees to pay close attention to caregiving supports. Supporting caregiving-employees is a national conversation. This year, leaders in the care economy will gather in Roanoke, VA at The Hotel Roanoke from November 14 - 16 to tackle big care issues like this topic at The Care Colloquium, a national thought-leadership conference. To learn more visit www.thecarecolloquium.com

Citations:

1. AARP. "2020 Report: Caregiving in the U.S." (2020)
2. Rosalynn Carter Institute for Family Caregivers. "Working and Caring" (2021)
3. Forbes. "Caregiving Is Crucial: How To Support Caregivers And Why It Matters So Much" (2021)
4. Morningstar. "100 Must-Know Statistics about Long-term Care: Pandemic Edition." (2020)

Kimberly Whiter is CEO and Owner of Elder Care Solutions, a local business with national reach that guides families to a financially positive caring and aging experience. She is also the creator of The Care Colloquium, the first meeting of the minds for leaders in the care economy. She is putting Roanoke, VA on the map for where the great minds in care convene to tackle our nation's care crisis. 



Supporting caregiving employees is a national conversation.



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Dan Smith

Vickie Gardner: "I don't think I knew I was not dead."

The Spectacular Rebound of Vickie Gardner

By Dan Smith

The victim of an infamous shooting seen on live TV is leading the economic development charge at Smith Mountain Lake.

Vickie Gardner lay face-down on the cool decking outside her office, overlooking the boats docked at Bridgewater Plaza in Moneta, wondering how long she had left to live. Just minutes before, Gardner, president of the Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce in her late career, was being interviewed live for a morning television show out of Roanoke by a young journalist and her cameraman. She was lively, ebullient, full of information, natural. It was her way, one that interviewers liked. They were talking about the 50th anniversary celebration for the lake and she was in her element: marketing a place she loved.

She had spent years building the lake as a destination, a place to call home. It wasn't just a job; it was her passion. She had a career, a husband she loved, two daughters, real happiness and fulfillment.

Gardner noticed a man standing off to the side, watching them, but that wasn't unusual. When TV showed up, so did the gawkers. She was asked a question. As she was answering, she heard a noise. The young journalist (Alison Parker) screamed.

And now this. She heard Bryce Williams' footsteps slowly shuffling toward her and

felt the pressure of those steps on the wood. Seconds earlier she had locked eyes with WDBJ-7 cameraman Adam Ward at the very second a bullet entered his brain and ended his life. A few heartbeats later, Williams shot Alison Parker again, this time fatally, as she ran into a corner with no exit, trying to escape. Williams turned to Gardner, who had not been shot, but fell to the deck as Ward went down, faking a wound.

"I was looking out at the lake," Gardner says now, "realizing how beautiful it was. I spent 17 years with the [Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce], promoting that beauty and thought this might be my last look at it." She could "feel and hear what he was doing. He went back to [Parker] and shot her again, then came back to me. It was deathly quiet. I waited for him to evaluate me, holding my breath," hoping he would think her dead.

Williams shot Gardner in the back, just below the kidney, the 9mm hollow point projectile tearing its way through her organs like a ragged pinball. A hollowpoint round explodes upon impact and rambles out of control until it stops, usually inside the body. "It felt like a blade of metal off a fire, so hot. I lay there like a rag doll, waiting. "In seconds, I saw everything so clearly, like watching an enjoyable movie" of her life.

Gardner was gravely wounded, but there was little blood and the bullet didn't fully exit. The tip of it pointed through her body near her front ribs. "There really wasn't an injury that you could see," she says. "The bullet came in below my kidney, grazed the spine and took the kidney and a lot of my colon. I still have fragments inside."

It was nearly worse than that. After shooting her, Williams pointed the gun at her head and pulled the trigger again. The gun clicked on an empty chamber, or perhaps simply mis-firing, and Williams walked away. "I don't think I knew I was not dead," says Gardner.

Minutes later, two emergency workers who just happened to be close by, rushed to the scene and put her in a large truck, lying down until the ambulance arrived.

That was nearly seven years ago on a

SML CENTER: AN ECONOMIC BONANZA?

Vickie Gardner is spearheading an effort to buy the Grand Furniture building in Moneta with the goal of turning it into a kind of community civic center. It would be used for meetings, events, entertainment and a wide variety of economic development purposes.

"The community greatly needs a venue that can accommodate trade shows, fundraising events, graduations, concerts, plays and social gatherings," said Gardner in a news release. "[It could also] provide meeting space for clubs and businesses, workforce development training, higher education, lifelong learning classes, health and wellness projects, youth activities and so much more."

A recent survey projected that potential economic activity by the center during its first years could settle in at between \$47.5 million and \$58 million. State and local taxes generated also could be between \$3.3 million and \$4.1 million. Those taxes would benefit both Bedford and Franklin Counties. Moneta is in both counties. "This will be revenue generating for the community. It is really going to help us hold on to all of the amenities that we have out here and perhaps add to them," says Gardner.

- Dan Smith

picture-perfect late August day, and in the intervening time, while the journalism world has celebrated the lives of the two young reporters from WDBJ-TV interviewing Gardner that day, she has been the virtually forgotten victim, the one who had to come back from severe injury and learned to live again.

As anybody who knows Gardner—the woman with the extraordinary energy, the incontrovertibly sunny outlook and the vision—would tell you, her recovery was predictable. She still has some physical problems, but she doesn't hesitate to talk in depth, almost dispassionately, about the incident and, in fact, she is writing a book about the shootings.

The title is *Survival Has Consequences* and "that says it all," she insists. The consequences

EXECUTIVE PROFILE



Submitted

Bedford County Economic Development Authority.

Outside what she calls “daily pain,” she says there are no real physical after-effects of the shooting. But she vividly remembers bullets “flying through my hair, coming in waves.”

She had “tons of surgery. The doctors couldn’t figure where all that blood was coming from.” The physicians at Carilion Clinic totally opened her thoracic cavity looking for the bullet and identifying the damage. The colon required an ostomy bag for a time, an often-embarrassing inconvenience. But Gardner doesn’t complain, she simply explains, sometimes laughing through explanations of the medical adjustments. “There is no ‘woe is me’ in the book,” she says.

Gardner talks about the humor she plans for the latter part of the book—after she fully explains that awful day—and admits that “there’s nothing funny about” the incident, but sometimes her mind goes to the irreverent, the music she heard in her head, the ambulance ride on curvy country roads, the fact that Smith Mountain Lake “was suddenly a shooting site.” She had worked 17 years on image and here was this. And there are “the four bellybuttons” she has now because of the surgery. And, oh, that ostomy bag. Can’t forget the ostomy bag.

“I’m having a blast writing” the book, she admits. And the SML Center is looking like a lasting legacy for her, if she can pull it off. Almost nobody doubts she can. 

have been severe at times over the past seven years, but never more than she could handle. Her humor has sustained her. Her belief in herself has rarely wavered. She knows who she is and what she is capable of.

Gardner, a writer for years in her job, has written quite a bit of the book and is in the process of finding a literary agent. Meanwhile, she is spearheading the effort to turn the empty and large Grand Furniture building in Moneta into a meeting and entertainment center for the lake.

While she was recovering from the shooting, many people—most of whom she didn’t even know—sent her money and she has since taken \$80,000 of it and invested it in the SML Center, which is what the Grand building would become (see sidebar).

These days Gardner is the Chief Operating Officer of her husband Tim’s company, Inspecx, a home inspecting business. They have been married for 47 years (two daughters in Florida, both teachers). She is president of the SML Center and is with the

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TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:

*Own your audience –
and seek direct lines
of communication
with customers.*

*Zack Jackson is
co-founder of The JPG
Agency small business
creative firm. Reach him at
zack@thejpgagency.com.*

The short form video war and what it means for you

In the past year, TikTok has put a significant dent in Meta's world of social media dominance. Facebook's user numbers shrunk for the first time in the history of the company, and Darrh (Mark) Zuckerberg is freaking out. In retaliation, Meta is turning up the heat on TikTok and going all-in on short form video, significantly boosting reach and engagement for organic content posted via Reels.

Here's a crazy idea ... had they not squashed the hell out of organic engagement to force people to buy more ads, this never would've happened in the first place! In the "good old days" of Facebook/Instagram when you could simply post good content and have organic growth, and it made you WANT to spend money on ads to spread that content even further. Now I feel like I've gone to a restaurant where I've ordered a meal and they've served me a bunch of hot garbage but tell me, "well if you pay us a little bit more, then MAYBE we'll bring you some better food." Awesome!

We've seen this pattern before ... when Facebook first started crushing organic growth, people gravitated to Instagram. So, what did Facebook do? Bought the company of course! Because if you can't beat 'em, copy 'em, steal their market share, crush their growth, and then buy 'em out!

Facebook then began to apply the same practices to Instagram. Oh, you actually want someone to SEE your post? Give us money and then MAYBE we'll let our algorithm robot overlords expose it to a couple new people. Pleasure doing business with you! The battlefield is set yet again ... this time against TikTok. So, what will happen next? Will Meta win this battle too? Will TikTok be able to weather the storm?

Regardless of how this all shakes out, the real message here for the growth and success of YOUR brand is one that we preach over and over here at The JPG Agency ... OWN YOUR AUDIENCE! Social media platforms have a place in your marketing strategies, but they should be a supplement to your primary objective of creating a direct line of communication with your audience that engages with them on YOUR terms.

Sure ... you can make a post on Facebook, or TikTok, or [insert next big thing here] but you'll always be relying on that platform to actually deliver that content to people. Meanwhile, when YOU are the one who owns your audience, you can reach them and not rely on someone else's algorithm to do it for you. It takes TIME to achieve, but once you have that direct line of communication, you own it FOREVER, no matter what new trend emerges. 🖱️

Getting technology advanced

I remember in 2nd grade when we had the first remote control for our TV. I was so excited to not have to get off the couch and turn the channels. It was shortly after that my stepfather had his own cell phone in his car bolted to the floor and I thought it was amazing. Then I remember when I got my first 6-disc cd changer to replace my cassette tape playing boom box and was blown away.

Technology continues to change in real estate too. Before the internet, you had to see a home in person, there was no FaceTime, and more than likely you sat down with a realtor face to face to go through a book of home listings. Most of the time when I send a client a home, they will tell me they already have it on their phone! Zillow, Realtor.com, Trulia, and MLS search campaigns provide properties at your fingertips. Some have even hopped on Google Maps or The National Sex Offender Registry to make sure the neighborhood is a good fit.

Clients from out of town will tell realtors "FaceTime us from the home, give us a tour" and then make the decision to purchase the house sight unseen! Lenders will send you an app to fill out your application without even seeing you face to face. It's wild how times have changed. The real estate digital age brings homes closer to the buyer's with virtual video tours, floor plans, drone pictures, marketing, and property tax web sites.

But let's get real. I know you'd rather see the home in person. My photographer can make small rooms look bigger and colors brighter. Walking through and around a home lets you grab the full view of what the home has to offer. You don't have to be a pro to smell weird smells, see an old worn-down HVAC unit, water spots in the basement, and appreciate beauty as well like a new deck, dazzling granite, or a fresh paint.

According to Investopedia here at The 7 Best Real Estate Apps of 2022: 1) Best Overall: Zillow 2) Best for Auctions: Xome Auctions 3) Best for Home Purchase: Redfin 4) Best for Home Values: Trulia 5) Best for Rentals: Realtor 6) Best for Renters: Apartments.com and 7) Best for Entrepreneurs: LoopNet.com which has a lot of commercial properties in The Valley not on the MLS!

96% of you are online looking for properties and with most homes receiving multiple offers, buyers today do not have the luxury to 'think about it' and need to make fast decisions fast. Today's technology provides that. 📺

“Walking through a home lets you grab the full view.”



REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:
It looks like shopping for a house online is here to stay.

Frazier Hughes is with Keller Williams Realty. Reach him at frazierhughes@gmail.com



Shawn Nowlin photos

Blair Hoke and Allen Lawrence

She's on First

By Shawn Nowlin

Blair Hoke, Salem Red Sox's first female Assistant GM says, "failure has never been an option for me."

Social norms were meant to be broken. Since the Cincinnati Baseball Club played its first competitive game on May 4, 1869, the vast majority of decision-makers behind sports franchises have been males. Across all sports, the sheer numbers are staggering: less than 15 percent of all current Presidents, General Managers and CEOs are females. The list of current female Minor League Baseball (MiLB) Assistant General Managers is a short one: there's Blair Hoke and a handful of others.

For Hoke, a Christiansburg native, overseeing all aspects of ticket sales for the Salem Red Sox is just one aspect of her occupation. She also provides leadership on community

activities and assists in social media accounts, among other things.

All MiLB teams, said Hoke - who joined the organization four years ago - essentially operate as a small business within the community. "Whether a team is Single-A or Triple-A, all clubs have the same operating expectations that cannot be made possible without a strong workplace dynamic and willingness to work as a team. It is important to have a front office willing to fill in critical roles in any department - and we have just that within our staff."

Those who work with Hoke say that she is class personified with a second to none

work ethic. Explained Salem Red Sox GM Allen Lawrence, "Everybody wants to work with someone who understands what needs to be done and goes above and beyond to make it happen. We have that with Blair. We are very lucky to have such a special, dedicated member on our team."

Hoke and her father have always shared a passion for athletics. Some of her most cherished memories of her youth include attending Virginia Tech games, watching baseball on TV and playing at the park with her dad. As a teenager, Hoke was more likely to play a game of basketball with the boys than paint her fingernails and binge-watch a TV show. After graduating from high school, Hoke furthered her education at Radford University, graduating in 2010.

The Salem Red Sox are not the first baseball team that Hoke has worked for. It was David Hagan, owner of the Pulaski River Turtles, formerly Pulaski Yankees, who gave Hoke an opportunity to join the baseball industry. Before becoming the organization's General Manager in 2016, Hoke served as the Director of Marketing. In 2016 and 2017, respectively, she was the recipient of the Appalachian League Woman of the Year and Executive of the Year Award.

"David took a chance on a non-traditional candidate such as myself because he saw the hard work that I was willing to put in to learn every aspect of the operation," she said. "There is just something about baseball that is hard to put into words – and Minor League Baseball plays such

an important role in so many communities. MiLB has many resources available to support females in the industry to help them grow professionally."

She added, "my accomplishments in Pulaski were that of a group effort and showed me just how important teamwork is in our industry. Minor League Baseball is a very close community, and my accomplishments were made possible by the hard work from our entire team and league." The Pulaski Yankees and the Appalachian League are now history; Calfee Park in Pulaski is currently home to a collegiate All-Star summer circuit team. Ironically, the New York Yankees Single-A club in Tampa, the Tarpons, have hired the first female on-field manager ever for a team affiliated with the major league franchise, Rachel Balkovec.

The Salem Red Sox made their debut in 1955 as the Salem Rebels. From 1995 to 2008, the team was known as the Salem Avalanche, adopting its current name the following year, playing in the Carolina League. Built in 1995, the Haley Toyota Field at Salem Memorial Ballpark is where the team plays its home games. The 2022 season opens at home against the Lynchburg Hillcats. The stadium has a seating capacity of nearly 6,500. Sixteen years ago, the Salem Ballpark hosted the All-Star Game between the California League and the Carolina League.

The Carolina League went away last year after the Major League Baseball minor league affiliate downsizing (which included the demise of the Appalachian League).

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That led to the Low-A East League the Salem Sox competed in last year. In mid-March however, the Sox announced that the Carolina League name will return to the circuit. "The Red Sox have a lot of history in the league," noted Allen Lawrence.

Four division titles ('09, '13, '16, '19) have been claimed since 2009 by the Red Sox, in addition to five playoff appearances, including a league championship in 2013 with a roster including current LA Dodgers star Mookie Betts. Hoke encourages everyone to experience at least one Salem Red Sox game. "We take tremendous pride in our commitments to the community. We would not be able to do what we do without the unwavering support of each fan and community member," she said. "We keep our relationship with the community strong by remaining active outside of the regular season with special events, volunteer opportunities, drives and much more."

Having the support of her colleagues, friends, family and the community means the world to Hoke. Without that, she explains, I wouldn't have this amazing opportunity. When Hoke is off the clock, she likes to travel and spend time with her husband Ryan and two children, Jake and Audrey.

The day that her Salem Red Sox journey began, Hoke had a specific mission in mind. "From the start, I wanted to do everything in my power to make sure this is a class organization both on the field and off the field. Collectively, we've been able to do that. I am beyond excited for the upcoming season."

For any woman who wants to pursue a passion, but for whatever reason has yet to do so, Blair Hoke has a message: "Follow any inevitable self-doubt, embrace all the challenges and surround yourself with individuals who want you to succeed." 



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Gene Marrano photos



Arts of all sorts Pop! >

The **Taubman Museum of Art** was a busy place over the first weekend in March with a free multi-discipline event called **Roanoke Arts Pop!** - featuring dance, author readings, hands-on creative activities for families and Grandin Film Lab videos.

Douglas Jackson is the Arts and Culture Coordinator for the City of Roanoke: "what [Arts Pop] says about is that we care about art, we want to create these welcoming public spaces. It takes it to another level." Jackson also calls 2022-23 "The Year of the Artist" and says the city is taking applications for NEA-funded grants it will issue to local artists later this year.

Tyler Lyon - program coordinator for the Grandin Film Lab - was screening some

of the short features that students at the Grandin Theatre based lab had put together as **Roanoke Arts Pop!** wrapped up a three-day run at the Taubman Museum: "it brings together all these different disciplines that you don't necessarily think about in the same vein that are all part of the arts and culture scene – whether that's live theater, movie making, fine art, painting, sculpting, music, graffiti, it's all here under one roof. Lyon says he hopes events like **Roanoke Arts Pop!** will lead to more collaborations among cultural organizations in the valley.

The second Arts Pop! (2020 was the first) featured some 30 participants in all. Lyon also said some Film Lab high school students have gone on to study various aspects of filmmaking in college or have used that experience for their work.



competitive grants to non-profits, [including] REACH, Habitat, Renovation Alliance – they’re all starting to do more work in this neighborhood.”

Historic tax credits will also offset some of the \$260,000 it will take to renovate the house on Stewart Avenue Southeast. It’s the 6th project in all Restoration Housing has taken on, focused mainly on turning blighted homes into affordable rental properties. “It is actually in better shape than some of our properties have been,” said Thornton at the ribbon cutting last month as renovations got underway, “it doesn’t have any giant holes in the roof. The structural stability is pretty good. The previous owner had done a lot of preventive maintenance.” That means it should be ready to be rented sometime this summer says Thornton. A grant from Roanoke City - which is targeting the historic Belmont neighborhood - and tax credits will help offset the investment Restoration Housing will make during the renovation.

Restoring southeast Roanoke housing one step at a time >

The non-profit **Restoration Housing** has embarked on their third project in the Southeast Roanoke Belmont Neighborhood. In this case a 115-year-old (circa) house on Stewart Avenue that had sat vacant for at least a year (except for the occasional squatters) will be renovated and turned into a two-family, affordable rental property. **Isabel Thornton** is executive director for Restoration Housing: “the city is really directing a lot of funding to this neighborhood, and they are giving



Ten years of healthy smiles

2022 is a significant milestone for the Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation. We are celebrating 10 years of improving the oral health of all Virginians through education, program development and community partnerships. As the Foundation continues to look towards the future of improving oral health in the communities we serve, it is helpful to remember where we have been to fully appreciate how far we have come.

One of the Foundation's most widely recognized benefits is the support of countless safety-net providers who deliver oral health care to underserved communities across the Commonwealth. Since its creation in 2012, the Foundation has contributed more than \$6 million to our community partners and made an additional statewide contribution of more than \$4 million in 2020 to support Virginians impacted by COVID-19. Although a decade of service has provided the opportunity to fund countless projects through Virginia's safety-net organizations, there are many that still need help caring for our neighbors who may have found themselves out of work and without insurance. In honor of our 10-year anniversary, the Foundation is adding a second grant cycle in the spring of 2022 to provide an additional grant opportunity for our community partners.

From the very beginning, the Foundation has focused on supporting Virginia students. We created the George A. Levicki, D.D.S. Endowed Scholarship at the VCU School of Dentistry that has now provided scholarship funding to 75 students. The Delta Dental Endowed Fund established through a gift to Health Focus has distributed more than \$24,000 in scholarship funding to 39 students. And we continue to serve tens-of-thousands of K-5 students through our Smart Smiles oral health curriculum taught inside Virginia's elementary schools.

A thriving community partnership with the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSM) that was established in 2012 continues to provide oral health education and thought leadership opportunities to our medical community. The Foundation helped fund one of the first fully integrated medical, oral health curricula with VTCSM. Through this unique partnership, each class of students is given a full week of instruction on oral health and the Foundation sponsors an

GOOD WORK

By Polly Raible

Executive Summary:

An update and community impact report from Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation on its 10th Anniversary.



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annual lecture series featuring expert speakers and in-depth presentations exploring the latest findings in oral health.

In 2022, the Foundation is celebrating its anniversary by launching a pair of new community programs in addition to the new grant cycle.

LIFT (Local Impact for Tomorrow) is a health and wellness initiative in partnership with Roanoke City Public Schools and sponsored by a coalition of community partners, including Delta Dental of Virginia, Carilion Clinic and Freedom First Credit Union. We believe the key to strengthening a community starts with the family and the best way to reach families is through their neighborhood school. The Foundation and its partners officially opened the first LIFT center inside Roanoke's Fallon Park Elementary School this spring to deliver life-changing services to the families who need them most including health care, dental care and financial counseling.

The second program launch in 2022 is focused on growing and diversifying the dental workforce in the Commonwealth. The Foundation and the Gene W. Hirschfeld School of Dental Hygiene at Old Dominion University have partnered to create the Dental Health Summer Institute. The new program provides an opportunity for underrepresented high school students to learn about the options available to them in the dental workforce and inspire and prepare them to apply to an institution of higher learning.

A healthy smile is a powerful thing and these are just some of the initiatives, partnerships and programs that are celebrating this year as part of the Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation's 10-year Anniversary. As we commemorate a decade of support for Virginia's dental safety net and oral health education initiatives, we are eager to share our story with you. Keep up with all of our community programs and 10-Year Anniversary initiatives at deltadentalva.com/foundation. 



Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation



These are just some of the initiatives, partnerships and programs as part of the Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation's 10-year Anniversary.



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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Thirty-five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in 21 states could close or be completely reconstructed under a \$2 trillion infrastructure campaign released in a report mid-March.

Systems re-engineering, anyone?

I remember it like it was yesterday. President Franklin D. Roosevelt shows up at our very own Veterans Administration campus in Salem to dedicate the beautiful complex.

Okay, so I wasn't among the 25,000 people who showed up for that. But I saw the pictures. And I've heard the stories about "The Salem VA" throughout the decades following that historic dedication on October 19, 1934.

My connection to this rather picturesque campus is one of geographic proximity (I drive by it practically every day), a few old salts I know who visit the medical center, the recreation league softball games we held there, and the seasonal excursions to the nursery (no longer there) to pick up some well-nurtured plants for our landscaping. It is quite the campus; and it has hosted a lot of feet shuffling around the grounds and through the three-dozen buildings over its near nine-decade history. (I also envied the brick and metal rail fencing they erected around the acreage a few years back, thinking how provincial it would be to have my own home front encircled with such a fortified presence.)

Well, there is one other connection I have to the Salem VA. A connection that immediately surfaced in my mind upon the news (March 14) that the Department of Veterans Affairs released a 52-page report recommending the possible closing of outdated facilities—our Salem VA among them. We have reported on many activities at the campus over the years; and most of it, involved the construction sector. It's true. We've written more about construction and maintenance projects at the Salem VA over our 33 years of business coverage than we have the medical, administrative, or personnel services themselves.

The infrastructure indeed, has its issues. But who among us hasn't noticed other historical campuses that are—somehow surviving? Campuses far more expansive. Campuses much older. Campuses with multifunctional services. Even historic campuses with more foot traffic and heavy use in a single quarter than the Salem VA ever experienced over its entire lifetime.

So, what's the difference here? Is it management? Yes. But it's deeper than that.

It's systemic.

Perhaps we should have reported something more in all our stories on the various contractors and projects at the Salem VA. Because there's a bit of a dirty little secret.

Contractors (our local ones and outsiders) loved getting a project awarded by the VA. Even if they had to be the lowest

continued on Page 38

Support the Arts

Before the then-executive director for the Roanoke Regional Partnership, Beth Doughty, issued a challenge before local government boards, maybe 10 years ago (?), telling them we were not taking full advantage of promoting the outdoor amenities (many locals don't even know how to get to the Appalachian Trail she noted), arts and culture was something Roanoke City specifically was hanging its hat on it seems. Professional and community theater, Center in the Square, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, Opera Roanoke, several ballet companies, the art galleries etc. Then the Taubman Museum became a community arts focal point, now more than ever. Remember the museum building is a piece of art itself, like it or not.

The arts were also touted as an economic development driver and a quality-of-life issue that can draw new residents and companies here. Then the greenway really started taking shape, more people started getting outside, the Blue Ridge Marathon took root. We also became an East Coast Mountain Biking center. And now we have an Ironman.

And that's all good. But continue to support the arts. Who doesn't like Mozart or Beethoven? Go listen to the RSO. I saw three plays recently, a musical *She Loves Me* at Showtimers, *The Cake at Mill Mountain* (based on the same-sex couple and a baker who refused to make them a wedding cake) and Virginia Children's Theatre's tough take on teen suicide, *Apologies*. All were very well done. Hundreds or more showed up at the Taubman for Roanoke Arts Pop! which they hope to turn into an annual festival. There's all sorts of live music venues big and small.

It was a bit odd to see the Russian Ballet Theatre perform *Swan Lake* – the music written by Tchaikovsky, the great Russian composer, the day after that country's President invaded Ukraine, but the sign they projected on a screen before the curtain came up said "We Dance for Peace," and it was an experience. Support local arts and cultural venues, go check out the Zoo (the Zoo Choo coming back this spring by the way.) The Roanoke Cultural Endowment is raising \$20 million before it starts issuing grants to local arts organizations. Support the arts. 



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
Supporting arts and culture is good business – and there are plenty of options locally.



Gene Marrano



Projects at the VA are guaranteed to last a L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G time.

Field / On Tap

from Page 36

bid to secure the contract, every provider—from the smallest HVAC crew to the largest deconstruction/construction builder to the architects and engineers to the sub trades and specialty agents (IT, solar panels, etc.)—was keenly aware of an exceptional benefit when you're in the marginalized labor and materials market: Projects at the VA are guaranteed to last a L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G time.

We have reported on numerous multi-million dollar complete facilities that were originated, financed by capital campaigns, designed, constructed, built, and put into operation in less time than a plumbing repair at the VA.

An exaggeration? Not at all. You can look it up; or you can just answer one question:

Why is the Salem VA STILL in a state of disrepair?

Exactly. In essence, the Salem VA is under a perpetual contract with multiple entities who aren't just maintaining or developing anything new. They're fixing the old place.

While other campuses that could be in the same shape—aren't.

Are we ready now? Ready to point the finger at whom is to blame? Is it the ineptitude of the people managing the campus, the mismanagement of the Veterans Administration, the regulatory environment or exploitive contractors?

Or is it deeper than that? Yes.

It's systemic.

The Salem VA is a perfect microcosm of our national infrastructure crisis. You know the one; the one the current president keeps saying we've got to fix.

The irony is, the exact same entities we see building and maintaining successful private sector projects are the ones you see at the Veterans Administration facilities across our land. They're the same ones you see paving interstates and fixing bridges. It's not government employees and equipment doing the work.

Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced a New Deal to improve our lot. His public work projects were essentially a financial restructuring that some attribute to getting us out of the Great Depression, while others point to the tripled federal taxes and catalyst for our national debt.

We'll see what happens to our Salem VA. The only solution though, will be a systemic one. Because the system we have now—is not working. 

Compounding the Impact

We've only just begun.

Many hands and hearts have come together to bring RAMP, our Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program to our Fifth Birthday. FIVE seems significant, and it is, but we recognize we are just getting started. Our goal is for every entrepreneur to have the support they need to thrive in our region, and working together, we are making progress.

Like most accelerators, we have shared metrics to document the impact of our work. For example, we've reported companies who have hired new employees, received grants, obtained investments, and grown sales. However, as you can imagine, documenting the total impact is difficult. Unfortunately, not all success rolls up to a number, and building a robust entrepreneurial community takes time.

RAMP is fortunate to be a member of GAN, the Global Accelerator Network. GAN serves 140 accelerators worldwide and has been at the forefront of the entrepreneurial building industry with thought leadership, best practices, and access to resources and capital. GAN began over 15 years ago to support the development of accelerators. Recently, they looked back over all their data to produce a new whitepaper that documents the impact of accelerators on communities like ours.

"Accelerators have proven to be not only viable, but critically valuable, and not just to the startups that join these entrepreneurial systems. Corporations, investors, civic institutions, and others are all realizing benefits. Accelerators provide a blend of returns, only some of which can be measured on "vanity metrics," such as capital raises, exits, and job creation. The more we, the GAN team and I [Eric Mathews], thought about and researched accelerator returns, the more we found that existing accelerators are likely at the beginning of a period of compounding impact and results that may even exceed direct investment returns in value. While we see the accelerator model at a point of maturation developmentally, we do not want to mistakenly view this maturation as linear, or even at a plateau in terms of returns and opportunity, when the reality is there are larger returns yet to be realized."

It turns out that helping startups thrive wherever they call home is an essential economic driver for the entrepreneur and the community. Even startups that fail benefit the community, which is a message that is important to share. These entrepreneurs are likely to start another venture or take a position within an existing business, bringing their knowledge of the innovation process with them.

There is more to consider, and we invite you to the conversation.

GAN's whitepaper, *Reviewing 15+ years of Accelerator Dividends: Innovation & Entrepreneurship Returns and a Roadmap for Future Success*, is available here: RAMPRB.tech

RAMP is an affiliate of Verge 



GUEST COLUMN

By **Dr. Mary Miller, PH.D.**

Executive Summary:
The director of RAMP shares an update on the technology accelerator program.



Helping startups thrive wherever they call home is an essential economic driver.

GUEST COLUMN

A FRONTpatron positioning statement

Executive Summary:
*More than just a
strategic plan, Inspire
2026 is a vision built
on collaboration.*



Edgar J. Helms
believed in
giving people the
opportunity to
work as a path
to both financial
and personal
independence.

Inspire 2026

Last year, Goodwill Industries® of the Valleys celebrated 90 years of serving communities, families, and individuals. It was a milestone we are honored to have achieved as well as an opportunity for reflection. We felt it important to focus forward by looking back – to our roots – and find the why behind what we do. Our founder, Edgar J. Helms, began Goodwill with a vision of ‘not charity, but a chance.’ He believed in giving people the opportunity to work as a path to both financial and personal independence. Such independence was key to combating poverty by providing ‘a hand up, not a handout.’ Looking to the past to shape our future led us to defining the eradication of poverty as the cornerstone of our mission. It also forced us to address some very real challenges - what role do we play? How can Goodwill make a difference? How can we make an even greater impact on communities, families, and individuals? How can we work with our partners from all facets of business, the nonprofit sector, civic and grassroots to move the needle on eliminating poverty?

To answer those questions, over the course of several months, we collected real time data through a series of surveys. We contacted shoppers, donors, financial supporters, board members, community partners and other key stakeholders (including our own team members), to gain input and give voice to our priorities, efforts, strategy, and the future of our organization. We listened. We listened to the priorities, needs, and challenges, as well as aspirations, of those we partner and serve.

We let the feedback guide us and shape the strategic direction of Goodwill for the years ahead. Inspire 2026 is the culmination of hours spent looking inward on how we can define who we are, where we want to be, and the impact we want to be a part. Our goal was to develop a transformational plan that will allow us to eliminate poverty by empowering individuals, strengthening families, and inspiring communities.

At the heart of the plan are our own team members. They are the very individuals we aim to empower, part of the families we want to strengthen, and members of the communities we want to inspire. We have implemented a team-centered model which incorporates increased wages, better and more affordable benefits, and development opportunities. It is our connection to our communities we hold so dear. By putting team members at the center of the decisions we make, we find we are more connected to the areas we are located. Through this connection, we strive to address and meet the needs of those we serve as well as those we’ve not yet had the opportunity.

In addition, we are focused on operational excellence to strengthen the programs and services we provide throughout our territory. A key component of that focus is a multi-generational approach to the programs and services we provide. It has been proven; individuals thrive when the entire family unit thrives.

Letters

Perceptive

Compelling piece on religion and business [March 2022 FRONT cover story]. It was so

retro FRONT: obvious issue that nobody else would touch, reported with authority, perspective, confidence and perception.

Dan Smith, writer, former FRONT editor
Roanoke

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

Strengthening families is part of our mission and vital to the success of both our strategic plan and our vision of eliminating poverty. We are dedicated to empowering youth through programs, building skills training opportunities, and helping those with various barriers gain employment as well as further developing our partnerships with community organizations and area businesses. Goodwill is committed to helping each individual reach their fullest potential. And our commitment is stronger than ever.

Finally, using this strategic framework for the future as a guide, we seek greater financial independence and stability, to allow us to reinvest in our communities, build stronger partnerships, and maximize resources.

So, you may be asking, what does this mean for me? I just want to shop for cool stuff or drop off my donations, what difference does it make to me what Goodwill is focused? Valid questions. First, thank you. Thank you for shopping and

thank you for bringing your donations. 'You Donate and Shop. We Train. People Work.' has been our slogan for many years – and it holds true today. Your donations are the fuel that powers the change we are committed to being a part. We promise to be good stewards of your items by turning them into jobs, programs, youth activities, and more. We are dedicated to the neighborhoods, cities, towns, communities, and individuals we serve. We also recognize we cannot do this alone. Eliminating poverty is a lofty goal and one that will only be achieved through collaboration. Together, whether as a shopper, donor, business partner, is the only way we will make a lasting impact.

We are entering this transformative era energized with renewed mission, vision, purpose, and values. We hope you will join us.

Baseline measures and target outcomes projected for year five are included and the full plan is available by visiting www.goodwillvalleys.com/inspire. 

MEET THE NEWEST FACES OF THE GOODWILL® BOARD



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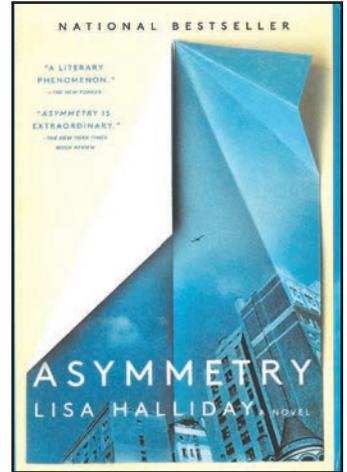
Samuel Worthington
Roanoke Times

Time. Talent. Energy. Wisdom. And action. There are many ways to give. Our new board members know them all.

goodwillvalleys.com/about-us

FRONTReviews >

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



Do we know where we're going?

Asymmetry (Simon & Schuster; 2018) may be the most unique novel I'll read this year. Here's just one passage, pulled with zero context for you, that demonstrates the richness:

God has not predetermined the course of human history but rather is aware of all its possible courses and may alter the one we're on in accordance with our will and the bounds of His universe. Think of a bumper cars rink. Seated in a bumper car, you're free to steer yourself in any direction you like, while at the same time your vehicle is connected by a pole to a ceiling that supplies energy to the car and ultimately limits its movements to those predetermined by a grid. Similarly, with his enormous bumper cars rink, God creates and presides over the possibility of human action, which humans then take it upon themselves to carry out.

And that's just one tiny excerpt on a character's discussion on free will—not even in the Christian theological context, either. Don't fret—Lisa Halliday is not presenting a hefty trope that perplexes your philosophical quests. The stories (including the overlord of two distinctive novellas, if you will) are sufficient in their own rights; and you can try to fit them together as metaphysical interweaving relationships—or not—and you'd still grabbing it by the handles. You'll meet Alice and Ezra in a New York literary circuit; and Iraqi-American Amar, trying to visit his brother in Kurdistan.

A captivating introspective that's done

in a way I doubt you're expecting.

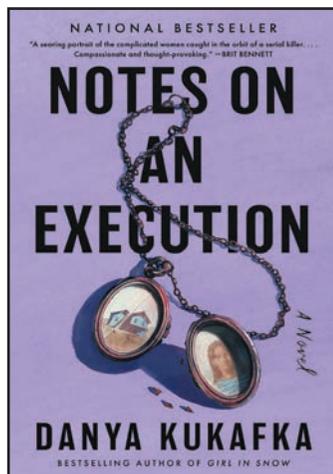
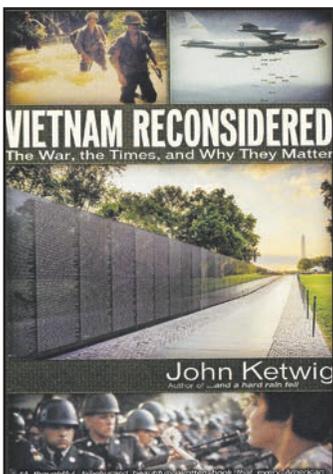
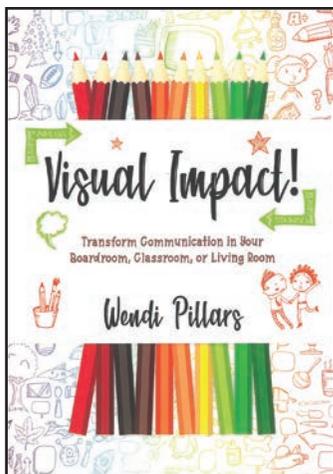
—Tom Field

Even stick figures stick

As someone who has attended a gazillion business workshops over the past 40 years, I'm still intrigued by who gives the best presentations, who's the best teacher, who imparts information in a way that I still remember (or at least keep recalling it for more than a few days). The tools—it turns out—do make a difference. Sometimes. The presenter still has to be competent and engaging; but on occasion, I've seen where the creative use of PowerPoint or just visual slides or videos or animation prop up the workshop in some memorable fashion that would not have happened from just a lecture alone. And this is true of presentations with low-tech tools, too: plain old flip boards and markers, white boards, and going back as far as... get this... overhead projectors.

One could make a case that a presenter who illustrates or writes "on the fly" versus prepared graphics is on some primal level—even more engaging. The message is being crafted right before the audience's eyes, after all. And that's exactly the point of *Visual Impact: Transform Communication in Your Boardroom, Classroom, or Living Room* (Wisdom House; 2021) by Wendi Pillars.

This hefty workbook (sketchbook?) is as much a collection of examples of how to illustrate your ideas than anything else. Formatted with textual explanations



partnered with hand-drawn infographics, flowcharts, process visuals, bullet lists (and every possible kind of imaging, depending on what is more effective for your subject and audience); any “teacher” will have an arsenal of techniques and tactics with this rich resource. Pillars goes deep, too. Methodologies tap into the neuroscience of learning; and you absolutely don’t have to be an artist to see how basic elements (colors, shapes, typography, arrows, borders, blocking, spacing) work to impart your message in a way that sticks.

—Tom Field

War, no more

Perhaps it is the assumption that we are a good people, a good nation with the best of intentions that leads us to accept endless war as a national policy. But John Ketwig of Bedford, author of the consummate Vietnam memoir, “... and a hard rain fell,” offers a much deeper explanation. War is complex, dirty, savage, inhuman, but there is more than that responsible for its damage to our humanity, and Ketwig digs out its many ugly faces in his new *Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times and Why They Matter* (Trine Day).

This book will leave even the most hardened warrior questioning America’s war record: 16 years without a war in our entire 246-year history (six percent of our existence). Ketwig, a Vietnam veteran who actually fought the war, is unabashedly opposed to the kinds of corporate profit center that

war has become in America, the kind of wars that helped create and continue to prop up the 1 percent.

My friend John calls himself “the stereotypical angry and bitter Vietnam Veteran,” but he is much more than that. He is intelligent, insightful and unafraid of the truth. In his two books dealing with that war and other American wars, he has sought to understand why the hell we are fighting these unwinnable, soul-draining conflicts year after year and he finds answers in *Vietnam Reconsidered*, if not solace. As with “... and a hard rain fell,” the work is superbly written, flawlessly reasoned, heartfelt and so blunt it will curl the toenails of career officers, war profiteers and federal office-holders.

Our wars, almost without exception, have been embarrassing exercises in futility and most of them (WWII the exception) have been dramatic losses of one kind or another. John Ketwig wants better for his country and his fellow Americans.

—Dan Smith

Injustice, in four voices

The title makes Danya Kukafka’s *Notes on an Execution* (William Morrow; 2022) sound like sensational non-fiction, but it is actually a compelling piece of literary fiction. The author writes from the points of view of three women in the life of a serial killer, and of the serial killer himself, to provide both a dramatic story and a searing commentary

““”

...puzzled as well by all the Confederate imagery in the area.

on our criminal justice system.

Ansel Packer is 12 hours from the death chamber at the beginning of the book. In his chapters, Kukafka employs the unusual technique of second person point of view. This has the effect of distancing the reader from the chilling character, as well as giving the impression that Packer is distancing himself from his past misdeeds.

The ripple effect of evil is one of the author's main points as she delves into the lives of the women in Ansel Packer's life. Ansel's young mother Lavender's response to her desperate situation clearly affects Ansel's future character development.

Hazel is the twin of Ansel's wife, Jenny. Hazel always had a bad feeling about Ansel, but Jenny was pulled in when he turned on the charm, and it caused a rift between the once-closes sisters.

The most interesting of the three women is Saffy, once a child in a foster home with Ansel who grew into police detective obsessed with bringing him down. (That the two characters crossed paths more than once is believable in the small-town setting.) Saffy's reaction to Ansel's eventual fate surprises even her.

The author raises the implicit question: is nature or nurture more responsible for Ansel's devastating choices? Kukafka avoids the trap of using gruesome scenes as a draw; most of these happen off page. Despite the subject matter, the writing is lyrical, if sometimes overly flowery.

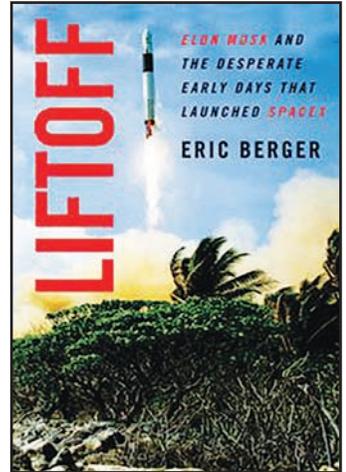
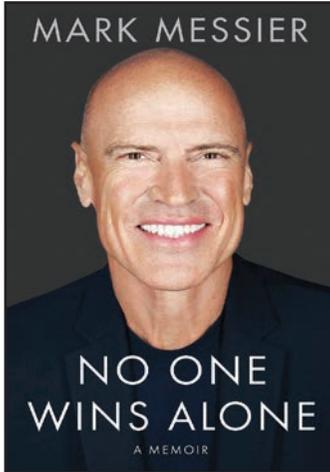
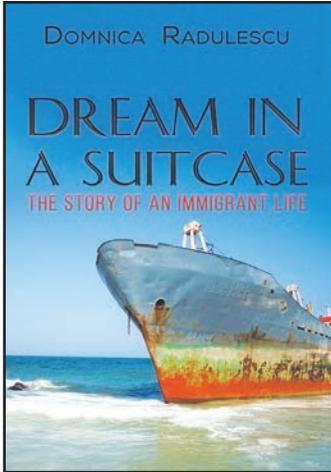
There are a few twists and turns, but the outcomes aren't hard to guess. The premise focuses on how society fails both the to-be criminal and the victims, as well as how it wrongly glorifies men who kill.

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

Romanian immigrant leaves no stone unturned

A Washington & Lee University professor of comparative literature who knows all about fleeing from oppressive regimes - even if it means leaving her beloved home country - has written a no-holds-barred memoir about her journey from Eastern Europe almost 40 years ago. Domnica Radulescu left Romania in 1983 on a travel visa and never returned - leaving behind parents that ultimately joined her in Chicago under the same deception - that they were just going on a vacation - and a boyfriend. She earned a PhD at the University of Chicago, a city she grew to love, but eventually settled in Lexington, Virginia. Dr. Radulescu became a tenured professor in a place she did not always feel welcome, even among the Washington & Lee staff, puzzled as well by all the Confederate imagery in the area. Her recently published memoir is *Dream in a Suitcase - The Story of an Immigrant Life* (Austin Macauley Publishers, 2022). Radulescu also details various romantic liaisons, motherhood as a working woman/breadwinner, her mixed feelings about America at times, and how she felt unfairly treated by fellow faculty members at W&L.

In 2009 the first of her three novels, *Train to Trieste*, won the Library of Virginia Best Fiction Award. It's also about a young woman who leaves Communist Romania for a better way of life. "I said then I would never, ever write my memoir," notes the author, "indeed there came a time where I felt the story of my life ... seen through the perspective of the immigrant experience, was a necessary endeavor for me to undertake." *Dream in a Suitcase* has a strong feminist theme as well, with Domnica Radulescu often critical of the Man's World she makes her way through. She writes with a creative flair, an often stream-of-consciousness style. She's also a playwright and was an actor as a young



woman in Romania - even leaving behind a role on stage before its run was over to flee. Radulescu has spent much of her time in Europe - even going back to her native Romania after the Soviet Union fell on numerous occasions. Torn between two continents, it was after she saw a revival of the classic play "Our Town" on Broadway that she let herself begin to appreciate on another level her life in the United States, feeling like less of an exile perhaps. A great read.

—Gene Marrano

Leadership comes on skates as well

Mark Messier is one of the most well-known names in the professional hockey world – even for Seinfeld fans, since he was mentioned in an episode where his New York Ranger team was playing the New Jersey Devils (see: David Putty, face painter). In *No One Wins Alone* (Gallery Books, 2021), Messier details an amazing career that included five Stanley Cup Championships with the Edmonton Oilers (4 with Wayne Gretzky) and one with the Rangers in 1994 – the first for that Original Six franchise since the 1940's. Messier also shares his insights about success, winning cultures and how leaders can help teams – on the ice or in the office – overcome challenges. Its about much more than hockey, but I also got a kick as he mentioned names from the National Hockey League, I haven't thought about in 20-30 years or more.

—Gene Marrano

The wild early days of SpaceX

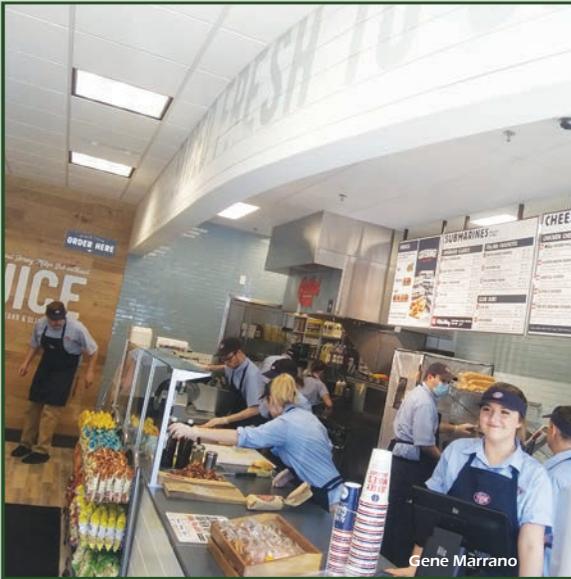
Working for Elon Musk in the early days of SpaceX was indeed a wild ride – exhilarating, exhausting, demanding, even precarious, as the first few attempts to launch the Falcon 1 rocket from a remote site in the Pacific Ocean went awry, and Elon Musk faced the prospect of running short of cash after a \$100,000,000 initial investment. Then there was competition from the more traditional NASA suppliers like Boeing and Lockheed, which initially sniffed at startups like SpaceX and several other rocket companies, some of which fell by the wayside. But NASA saw the need for private investment in the space industry, and now SpaceX routinely delivers satellites to space, and supplies/astronauts to the International Space Station. *Liftoff: Elon Musk and the Desperate Early Days That Launched Space* by Eric Berger (William Morrow/Harper Collins, 2021) is another tale of changing course, improvising and endless workarounds in trying to fix the myriad of problems for a rocket company that for all intents and purposes was started on a relative shoestring. Musk, who also owns the Tesla electric car company, now has his sights set on manned excursions to Mars. Don't bet against him.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT; **Dan Smith** is a Roanoke writer and founding editor of FRONT; **Jennifer Poff Cooper** is senior correspondent for FRONT.

Serve yourself at Barrel Chest >

It took months longer than first planned but **Barrel Chest Wine and Beer** has finally launched its self-service beer and wine taps at its new location on Franklin Road in Roanoke City. Delays in getting parts and labor issues were part of the problem. Barrel Chest, which relocated from southwest Roanoke County when owner **Martin Keck** was looking for a property he could purchase, is also rolling out an expanded food service centered charcuterie – cheese, sliced deli meats etc.



Tanglewood offerings expand >

Jersey Mike's subs opened its Route 419/Tanglewood location last month as Roanoke County continues to roll out new offerings on the mall property. **Blaze Pizza** and **Panda Express** will follow soon. The county also held a public meeting as the Reimagine 419/Town Center project continues to unfold. Traffic congestion at the busy 419/US 220 intersection was a concern; VDOT will start building a new on ramp/exit ramp to the highway in 2024 it believes will help traffic flow.

Oscar winner gets Key to the City >

It's not every day that an Academy Award winner rolls into Roanoke but that's what happened last month when **Ruth E. Carter** made a stop at the **Taubman Museum of Art** to accept the key to the city from Roanoke Mayor **Sherman Lea Sr.**, other members of City Council and other invited guest. Carter won her Oscar for *Black Panther*; she is now working on a sequel. An exhibit of the lively and colorful wardrobes she designed for movies and television dating back more than 30 years ends at the Taubman early this month.



Goodwill rolls out Inspire plan >

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys calls its new strategic plan "Inspire 2026," and it was rolled out last month to stakeholders, other non-profits it hopes to collaborate with, and to several Roanoke City officials. **Richmond Vincent** is Goodwill's President and CEO: "we need to do more, and we need to do more better. That's what inspired us." Inspire 2026 is focused on reducing poverty in the entire region that Goodwill Industries serves. Goals include strengthening the non-profit's internal operations, creating more opportunities for its own employees, developing a skills-based pipeline to support job growth (with input from local employers) and more collaborative efforts with other social service agencies. Goodwill Vice President for Business and Community Engagement **Zenith Barrett** helped analyze the feedback it received when crafting Inspire 2026: "the goal is to help move the needle on poverty." At 16 percent Roanoke City has the highest poverty rate in the region Goodwill serves. Better employment opportunities, summer youth activities and more affordable housing were some of the top responses from the community survey.



Gene Marrano



Submitted

New Freedom First branch >

Freedom First Credit Union has opened their Bonsack area location at 3565 Orange Ave NE in Roanoke to the public. Freedom First claims it is now the financial institution with the most branch locations in Roanoke. "Our members have been asking us for a Bonsack location for a while," says President & CEO **Paul Phillips**. "We kept our eyes out for potential branch locations, and when the perfect location became available, we seized the opportunity."

County sees economic growth in auto sector >

A Roanoke Valley auto dealer is on the move — and expanding. **Southern Team Automotive Group** will build a new Hyundai Sales and Service facility at Peters Creek and Williamson Roads in the Hollins area. It will be the 10th Roanoke-area expansion for the Southern Team in the last 33 years. The new 30,000-plus square foot facility will be designed with Fast Charging Electric Vehicle capabilities, and will be under construction in Spring 2022, with completion expected in the Winter of 2022. **Jill Loope** is Roanoke County's Director of Economic Development: "its great news for the County and the region, its speaks to the demand in vehicle sales in the market." Meanwhile Discount Tire currently building a new sales and service facility along Electric Road in Southwest Roanoke County where Ragazzi's restaurant once stood. "Historically the high traffic commercial corridors in the county and throughout the Roanoke Valley have been attractive to auto care, service, auto retail-oriented establishments," notes Loope.



Courtesy of Roanoke County



Profile-raising time >

With the help of some marketing funds via a grant from Roanoke City – using federal American Rescue Plan money, the non-profit **The Spot on Kirk** live music venue on Kirk Avenue will look to raise its profile as it kicks off (hopefully) a full year of on stage performances in a number of genres. “You’ve got country artists that are doing rock and roll, rock people that might do ballads,” says The Spot board chair **Bruce C. Bryan**. “That’s what people

love, the proximity with the performers; it seats about 100-120 people.” Bryan also notes that some high-profile artists like country star Morgan Wade appeared at The Spot (at one time Kirk Avenue Music Hall, then a Co-Lab business lounge) before making it big in Nashville. “Get to know them before they become super-famous, if you will.” Tickets are typically in the \$10-25 range notes Bryan.

Another technology advance for LewisGale >

The Sarah Cannon Cancer Institute at LewisGale Medical Center has opened what it calls a state-of-the-art infusion center for patients to receive treatments ranging from chemotherapy and new targeted anti-cancer treatments, antibiotics, and hydration fluids to red blood cells and platelets, as well as non-chemotherapy injections. “Our new infusion center greatly expands our ability to provide the latest, most sophisticated therapies for our patients in the Roanoke Valley, as well as provide them with a comfortable environment they so deserve,” said **Dominique Dempah, MD**, general surgeon at LewisGale Medical Center. The \$1.3 million infusion center includes 21 private bays that are equipped with new chairs that offer patients heat and massage for comfort during treatment, as well as mobile workstations that allow for private communications with staff and to schedule future appointments.



Robotic surgery milestone >

A **LewisGale Hospital Montgomery** robotic surgery program recently celebrated a patient treatment milestone, with one of its surgeons completing her 500th robotic surgery. Since 2013, **Amanda Reese, DO, FACS**, a board-certified general surgeon, has routinely performed surgeries in robotic and laparoscopic operations including single site cholecystectomy, inguinal and ventral hernia repair, colectomy, anti-reflux surgery, and surgical endoscopy. In addition to completing her robotic surgery milestone, Dr. Reese also recently performed the first robotic transversus abdominis muscle release (TAR) procedure at LewisGale Hospital Montgomery, making it the first such surgery completed in the New River Valley. TAR is a technique used to repair very large hernias, which “used to be considered irreparable, depending on the size. With the TAR method, repair of these large hernias is now possible,” said Reese.



Honors for Taubman Museum >

The **Taubman Museum of Art** was honored with the Virginia Association of Museums' Innovation Award during VAM's annual conference in Richmond last month. The Innovation Award was created to recognize museums that demonstrate a commitment to use their platform to build relationships and "create meaningful impact within their community." The award can be given in one of three categories: Diversity and Inclusion, Expanding Audience, and Community Engagement. The Taubman Museum of Art won for Community Engagement. Said **Cindy Petersen**, executive director of the Taubman Museum of Art: "our focus is always on meeting the community where they are with our outreach programming, gauging and addressing issues that are important to those living in southwest Virginia; providing art as a means for people to discover, learn and grow."



Roanoke County economic development news >

Wine Gourmet in southwest Roanoke County celebrated their re-opening with the addition of **Medmont Mercantile** to their storefront brand. Wine Gourmet acquired the vacant space beside their existing shop in Promenade Park to expand their wine, chocolates, and gift offerings, as well as introduce the local online retail brand, Medmont Mercantile into their adjoined space. Along with Wine Gourmet and Medmont Mercantile, **The Veganaire** held a soft opening in the Shoppes at West Village across Electric Road/Route 419. Alt Offices opened their second location on Brambleton Avenue and **The Slay Room Nails** held a grand opening ceremony for their relocation to a Brambleton Avenue space.



Harveycutter is Hall of Famer >

The **Virginia High School Hall of Fame** will induct 9 new members on April 24th. One of those in the "contributors" category is **Carey Harveycutter**, the longtime City of Salem Director of Facilities, who has helped bring numerous VHSL state championships and a variety of sports to Salem. That includes football, wrestling, volleyball, basketball and the Spring Jubilee in various divisions. Harveycutter is currently the Director of Tourism in Salem, where he has also been instrumental in landing college championship events. Over the past few decades those events, as well as amateur softball tournaments have helped pour millions of dollars into the local economy, as visiting teams, families and followers stay, shop and eat while in the valley. "To be recognized for something you love doing is really just quite amazing. We've had such tremendous results with the number of high school league championships we've hosted."





LewisGale groundbreaking in NRV >

Officials with **LewisGale Hospital Montgomery** held a groundbreaking ceremony in late February to celebrate a \$15.9 million expansion of the hospital's surgery department. The 7,500-square-foot addition to its existing surgery department will include two operating rooms, a 15-bed post-anesthesia care unit,

storage, and support space. The project also includes renovating 4,800 square feet of the existing surgery department.

Southern Trust pitches in >

The **Upper Craig Creek Volunteer Fire Department** has a new water heater and water treatment system for their station house - courtesy of **Southern Trust Home Services** in Roanoke County. Owner **Ted Puzio** says a Southern Trust employee who also volunteers for the fire department suggested the water system makeover that was worth \$3000 dollars or more: "in wintertime we do Heat for a Hero, for a veteran, and we give them a free heating system. This here [in Craig Creek] was an opportunity to help the community again. We decided to buy the equipment and all our employees volunteered. We had five guys up there putting the [water] system in." Puzio said the Upper Craig Creek station's water quality was so poor they couldn't hold on-site fundraising events that often help keep volunteer fire departments afloat.



STEM tour for high school students at VWCC >

Busloads of high-schoolers from across the region toured **Virginia Western Community College** in mid-March to learn about STEM-H careers. (300 high school students from Franklin County, Salem, Botetourt County, Roanoke and Roanoke County.) Their visit included tours of the new-ish STEM building, with its "fun" Fab Lab and engineering flume. This was the first high school tour of this scale since the STEM-H building opened in late 2019. The tours highlighted Virginia Western's 12 Regional Academies, which offer high school students the ability to attend dual enrollment



classes on campus in specialized, in-demand programs such as health care, Information Technology, Trade & Industry, mechatronics and engineering. Hands-on demonstrations were included at the Mechatronics/Fab Lab, Cyber Security Lab, Physical Therapy Lab, Engineering Flume Room and Biotech classrooms. Students in the Academies have the opportunity to earn an associate degree while in high school. Tuition assistance for some programs is available through the Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Science Careers.

The Gift of Sound returns – at no charge >

While many people take every day sounds of life for granted, one 22-year-old Roanoke woman is not. **Marakot Thach** receive the gift of being able to communicate with the world in late February at the **Valley Roanoke Miracle-Ear** store, after being fitted for new hearing aids, at no cost thanks to the Miracle-Ear Foundation. Despite having to overcome significant communication hurdles – both her hearing impairment and learning English as a second language, Marakot has big dreams, and hopes to become a technical engineer. She's on her way, having graduated from Virginia Western Community College last year. After an ear infection in seventh grade, Marakot started to lose her hearing. She received hearing aids in high school, but after losing them, her insurance denied her a new pair. Unable to afford the cost of them on her own, her audiologist and the local **Lions Club** referred her to Miracle-Ear Foundation.

The Miracle-Ear Foundation provides qualified patients with free hearing aids and a lifetime of follow-up services at no cost. Since its founding in 1990, Miracle-Ear Foundation has donated more than 34,000 hearing aids to more than 18,000 children and adults nationwide, who could otherwise not afford them. At the top of Marakot's list – listening to music. "That's what I'm most excited about, and also to be able to go walking in nature and hear all the different sounds, like water running and birds chirping. As for having lost her hearing aids previously: "I've learned my lesson," she said after being fitted with a new pair that were fine tuned for her with a computer-based audio program.



Gene Marrano

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

FINANCIAL FRONT



Chapman

Bank of Botetourt has welcomed **Robert Chapman** as AVP - Senior Systems Administrator within the Bank's IT Department. He will work at the Care Center in the Town of Buchanan. Chapman has been in the financial industry for more than twenty-one years and has specialized in the information technology sector.



McClure

The Bank also welcomes **Shannon**

McClure as the Compliance and Risk Administration Officer/ Training Officer. She will also be based at the Bank's Care Center in Buchanan. She joins the Bank with more than ten years of industry experience in numerous departments.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT



Weiss

Robert Weiss, a professor in the Department of Geosciences, has been named the director of the Academy of Integrated Science, part of the Virginia Tech College of Science. Weiss takes over the role previously held for six years by Michel Pleimling, a professor of physics and associate dean for undergraduate

programs for the College of Science.



Mabry

Curtis Mabry, a longtime member of the Hokie Nation as both an alumnus and a member of the human resources team, has been named assistant vice president for consulting and strategic services. He is one of the longest tenured members of Virginia Tech's human resources (HR) division, joining in 2001 as an HR specialist. Since then, he has held multiple roles, including senior compensation analyst, human resources manager, director of staffing and recruiting, senior director of human resources initiatives and partnerships, and executive director of consulting and strategic initiatives.



Smith

Chris Smith has been named as the postdoctoral affairs program administrator at Virginia Tech. Housed in the Office of Research and Innovation, Smith now leads the establishment of a new Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at Virginia Tech, supporting postdoctoral associates across the institution, including those based on the main campus in Blacksburg, Virginia Tech Carilion Health Sciences campus in Roanoke, and in Northern Virginia. Most recently in his role as North Carolina State University's postdoctoral affairs program manager in the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at the Graduate School, Smith supported the

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university's postdoctoral scholars regarding current training roles, career and professional development, and developed and improved policies and procedures.

WELLNESS FRONT



Notari

Delta Dental of Virginia has announced the addition of veteran executive **David Notari** as senior vice president and chief operating officer. A health care and insurance executive, Notari brings decades of expertise in revenue growth strategy, organization visioning, strategic leadership and financial discipline. Inside Delta Dental of Virginia, he leads the oversight and management of sales, account management,

marketing and dental networks. Previously, Notari served as the senior vice president at EmblemHealth, regional vice president at UnitedHealthcare, regional head of sales and national head of distribution and channel management at Aetna and chief executive officer at Innovation Health.

LewisGale Medical Center has hired **Willie Payton, Jr.** as chief operating officer for the 506-bed acute-care medical and surgical facility. Before joining LewisGale Medical Center in Salem, Payton served as vice



Payton

president of operations at Johnston-Willis Hospital in Richmond.

MUNICIPAL FRONT

Roanoke County has appointed **Susan Goad** as director of the Department of Social Services. Goad has been serving in Botetourt

County as director of Social Services. She previously served for 17 years in positions at Roanoke County as a Benefits Program Specialist, Social Worker and Family Services Supervisor. Goad brings more than 20 years of experience in social service programs and policies at the local, state and national level.

The City of Roanoke has hired **Deborah H. Bell** to serve as one of two Communications and Community Engagement Specialists, replacing recently retired staff.

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com

Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.





Bell

She joins the City of Roanoke after serving for nearly eight years as the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Office of the Attorney General, Mark Herring, where

she led outreach and communications efforts for a 21-county region. Her work includes community outreach and engagement, media relations, preparation of various communications for dissemination, digital content, and crisis communications.

NON-PROFIT FRONT

The Roanoke-



Spellman

Blacksburg Technology Council, a Verge affiliate, has hired **Taylor Spellman** as Associate Director of RBTC. Spellman comes to the RBTC (from Visit Virginia's

Blue Ridge) with a background in marketing, public relations and brand management for a variety of small businesses, startups and non-profit organizations.

*Compiled by
Gene Marrano*

“” There is just something about baseball that is hard to put into words. — Page 29

“” The battlefield is set yet again. — Page 26



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COX goes green

During Earth Month and always, Cox finds ways to actionize its sustainability values

Jeff Merritt | Technology Advisor, Valley Business Front

April is Earth Month, which is a great opportunity to reflect on our stewardship of this planet. At Cox, we've set three primary sustainability goals: to send zero waste to landfill by 2024, and become water neutral and carbon neutral by 2034. These goals communicate our commitment to building a better future for the next generation.

Investing in the Future

At Cox, we know that doing good is also good for business. Since 2007, our parent company Cox Enterprises has invested nearly \$1 billion in sustainable businesses and technologies.

In Virginia, we've made significant strides toward our carbon neutrality target. Our Roanoke operations are now 100% powered by landfill gas, thanks to a partnership between our New River Clean Energy facility in West Virginia and the Raleigh County Solid Waste Authority. We look forward to building on this progress throughout the state and the country.

Waste Not, Want Not

Recycling is one of the easiest ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Cox makes it easy for folks to engage in this environmental practice. By partnering with Roanoke County, we've established our Fallowater Lane facility as a drop-off location which offers several recycling trailers. Through this initiative, and our own company-wide recycling efforts, we're helping our community reduce the number of harmful items sent to landfills.

Leading by Example

Our goal isn't just to reduce our own impact on the environment, but to encourage others to do the same. That's why we show up in the communities we serve, offering our time and resources to beautify and sustain them.

In Roanoke, we've partnered with the local Kiwanis Club to transform a tract of land on Melrose Ave., next-door to a school and library, into an inclusive Nature Park. Cox employees are currently fostering seeds, which will be planted during a festival on May 21 to create a pollinator garden.

Pollinator gardens support important wildlife populations including bees and monarch butterflies, and nature spaces help create safer, healthier neighborhoods for all. Cox Volunteers, who are granted 16 hours of paid time off to give back each year, will be on-site at the festival! Cox is proud to be part of this local effort.

To learn more about Cox's conservation projects, visit coxenterprises.com/cox-conserves.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Poff Cooper is a senior correspondent for FRONT, and a graduate of the RB Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Hollins University. She is a native of Christiansburg, where she lives and writes in her family's home place. [cooperjpp91@gmail.com]

Neal Cummings is senior vice president, commercial lending at Freedom First Credit Union. He brings over 25 years of experience in commercial and retail banking, commercial real estate lending, and small business development. The Commercial Lending team at FFCU provides local underwriting and personalized services that benefit a variety of individuals, operating businesses, and non-profit organizations.

Michelle Darby is Vice President, Marketing & Communications at Goodwill Industries of the Valleys. A graduate of Roanoke College, she previously served in executive roles at United Way of Roanoke Valley and the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce. She has developed marketing and communication strategies for over 15 years, emphasizing productivity and measurable results.

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]

Christopher Finley is the Director of Marketing and Public Relations for LewisGale

Regional Health System. He leads the marketing and communications functions for 44 HCA Virginia Health System-owned patient care facilities, including four hospitals, two freestanding ERs, two regional cancer centers, and affiliations with both employed and independent physicians. Since 2004, he has also served as an adjunct professor for the School of Communication at Radford University where he earned his master's in corporate communications. [christopher.finley@hcahealthcare.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.fraim.cpa/blog and is frequently interviewed as a business financial expert in national media channels. [micahfraim@fraimcpa.com]

Kevin Holt is a partner at Gentry Locke's Roanoke office where he has worked since 1998. His specialty practice area is commercial, real estate, intellectual property, and ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act) litigation. He enjoys sporting and attending games of his two sports-active daughters and enjoys traveling (visiting 27 countries and 38 states).

Frazier Hughes was recruited by the CEO of Keller Williams Realty after being named 2017 salesman of the year at Berglund Luxury of Roanoke. He also hosts The Roanoke Real Estate Podcast, is Dale Carnegie Trained, a former radio personality, and is a Social Media Influencer. [frazierhughescom@gmail.com]

Zack Jackson is the host of the K92 Mornin' Thang radio show on WXLK and co-founder of The JPG Agency, a freelance marketing and creative consulting department for small businesses. He can be reached at [zack@thejpgagency.com]

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A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com]

Gene Marrano is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy. He also now hosts and co-produces "Business Matters" on Blue Ridge PBS. [gmarrano@cox.net]

Jeff Merritt is vice president of Roanoke operations for Cox in Virginia. He is responsible for leading employees and the day-to-day operations across the Roanoke market. He holds leadership roles in a variety of organizations including Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia, Western Virginia Foundation for the Arts and Sciences, and Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association. He resides in Roanoke with his wife and two children.

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 and two children.

Shawn Nowlin is an award-winning writer, photographer and content creator. In addition to the Roanoke Tribune, his byline has also appeared in ColorsVA Magazine and the Salem Times Register, among other publications. Born and raised in Roanoke, Virginia, Shawn is a proud product of the Star City. [shawnnowlin1989@aol.com]

Polly Raible is the executive director of Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation.

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 a Roanoke-based writer and journalist, former editor of FRONT, whose new novel (8th book) NEWS! will be out this summer. [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]

Michael Waldvogel is the president and chief executive officer of Waldvogel Commercial Properties, founding it in 2004. With three decades of commercial real estate experience, he was also the founding principal of Waldvogel, Poe & Cronk, a business development director for the Better Business Bureau, and executive director of the Downtown Business League. He is active in a number of business, professional, trade, and service organizations, and is an outdoor enthusiast and runner.

Kimberly Whiter is CEO and Cofounder for Elder Care Solutions, a Roanoke-based remote company focused on helping caregivers across the U.S. face the financial challenges of long-term care needs. [kimberly@eldercareolutionsinc.com]

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The State of Vinton

Vinton Mayor Brad Grose gave his annual State of the Town address last month during a breakfast meeting organized by the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce. The eastern Roanoke County town has seen new eateries (Joe Goodpies, RND Coffee for example), an expansion at Rosie's Gaming Emporium (already a major tax revenue producer for Vinton) and a deal to build a downtown hotel among its success stories over the past year. "Our finances have improved; we are finally generating some revenues as a result of some of the investments we've been making recently. I think our plan is working very well. The revenue is arriving at just the right time. It's absolutely imperative that we make some investments in our infrastructure." Speaking of which, on July 1 the Western Virginia Water Authority will assume control and care of the town's aging water utility, which is often beset by leaks and in need of emergency repair work.

New mixed-use project in downtown Roanoke

Lucas Thornton, who develops downtown Roanoke living spaces with Hist:RE Partners LLC, will soon get to work remaking the former Campbell Court transit station downtown into a mixed-use development. Thornton swapped several properties with the City of Roanoke to obtain Campbell Court, which will mostly be torn down, except for portions of the building with historical

significance. "We've got 90 apartments, 15,000 square feet of retail and office [space] currently programmed to be 50,000 square feet," says Thornton. The first phase of the project – which will also include a new short street section in downtown Roanoke – could be open in about 18 months. Roanoke City and Valley Metro have relocated the bus depot to Salem Avenue and 3rd Street, where they are building a new transit center.

VCT announces new season

Virginia Children's Theatre (VCT) has announced the Company's upcoming 2022-2023 Season of productions. The 2022-2023 Season will be the company's 15th. The new season includes THE SECRET GARDEN, and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST for the Christmas holidays. Virginia Children's Theatre will again tackle issues that face teens with an original production through the VCT4TEENS program. LIFT EVERY VOICE, based on a true story, is a play focusing on racism in the U.S The VCT KIDS ON STAGE production for the new season will be WILLY WONKA, JR. In spring 2023, VCT presents JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, THE MUSICAL. This production will be performed on the mainstage at Jefferson Center and will tour all over the state. VCT will also showcase a summer concert with A WHOLE NEW WORLD: A CELEBRATION OF DISNEY. See the Virginia Children's Theatre

website for more details and dates.

Higher fuel prices could impact ROA flights

The sharply higher price for crude oil means seen in recent months also means increased costs for airlines. Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport officials said recently they are working to keep that from negatively impacting service here. ROA spokesperson Brad Boettcher says that leaves airlines some basic choices – service reductions, fares increases or perhaps both. "Any place that your air service is comprised primarily of regional jets [higher fuel prices] will put a strain on that." Boettcher says they're in touch with the major carriers in efforts to keep service here at least at present levels, noting that, "as fuel gets more expensive it's going to get much more expensive to operate those aircraft. You just don't have the number of seats on them to spread [out] increased fuel costs."

New River Valley winery honored

The Virginia Governor's Cup® says it received an unprecedented number of entries from across the Commonwealth for this year's wine competitions, with gold medals awarded to 127 wines from 65 Virginia wineries after "a series of rigorous blind tastings." Among those honored was the Beliveau Farm Winery in Blacksburg, for its 2017 Soul Singer and 2019

Syrah. The Beliveau Farm Winery has also become a top-rated venue for weddings and other special events.

Mini-grants for outdoor amenities

The fundraising arm of the Roanoke Outside Foundation - Project Outside - has recently awarded around \$50,000 in grants to 10 recipients. Among other things, those funds will help purchase tools for trail building, repair a park bridge, connect more youth to the outdoors and increase parking at a public access point on the James River. Pete Eshelman is with the Roanoke Outside Foundation: "in this particular one we had two more citizen-driven initiatives. That's part of the goal, if you see something you'd love to see happen, whether it be improved or built or [its] an initiative or a program, [Project Outside] is something to help facilitate that."

This is the second release of funds from Project Outside (the first round was over \$100,000), created during the height of the pandemic when a sharp spike in outdoor recreation usage due to COVID meant more wear and tear on local amenities. Eshelman says the application process for future grants opens up gain late this year.

Homeplace property for lease

The iconic Homeplace Restaurant located in the Catawba Valley (Roanoke County), which shut down

during the pandemic and never reopened, is now available for lease. Potential uses for the 8,500 sq. ft. property include another restaurant, wedding venue, meeting/banquet facility, bed and breakfast, brewery or winery. Built in 1982, the Homeplace Restaurant has long been recognized as an iconic and significant economic development asset for Roanoke County. The Homeplace served family style southern cuisine for nearly four decades before closing last year. Jill Loope, economic development director for Roanoke County said, "The Homeplace Restaurant served as an important destination that

gave Roanoke County character and provided scenery and cuisine that was beloved by Roanoke County residents and visitors alike."

High electric bills

Some homeowners who have electric heating systems reported a sharp spike in their bills this winter. So, Valley Business FRONT asked APCO spokesperson Teresa Hamilton Hall for an explanation: she writes that, "it was a cold January with temperatures below freezing for an extended period. The colder temperatures meant that furnaces and heat pumps were

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working harder and using more electricity to keep homes warm. With that said, customer bills have increased over the past year. The monthly bill for Appalachian Power's Virginia customers increased roughly 17% last year. The three largest increases are tied to costs associated with transmission

improvements, environmental compliance, and fuel. Customers struggling to pay their bill should contact us to discuss payment options. In the meantime, we are encouraging customers to sign up for the Average Monthly Payment (AMP) plan. This plan is different from budget billing,

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 6/10 - Dean Ford & the Beautiful Ones | 6/11 - Cinderella's Tom Keifer
 Band L.A. Guns, and Faster Pussycat | 6/17 - Outlaws
 6/18 - Andy Grammer | 6/24 - Absolute Queen | 7/1 - Dylan Scott
 7/16 - Quiet Riot | 7/22 - Rumours LA | 7/23 - Aaron Lewis & the
 Stateliners | 8/12 - Face 2 Face | 8/13 - JJ Grey & Mofro
 8/27 - The Roanoke Wing Fest | 9/2 - Bee Gees Gold | 9/23 - US & Floyd

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where customers pay the same amount 11 months out of the year and one month (the 12th month) is considered the 'settle up' month where you either pay any overages or receive a credit. With AMP, customers avoid a "settle up" month. AMP works by leveling a customer's bill throughout the year to avoid those seasonal spikes."

Even Tooth Fairy dealing with inflation

Every year Delta Dental conducts a survey on the average cash gift the "Tooth Fairy" leaves for children who have lost a tooth. Like just about everything else its gone up - to a record \$5.36 per tooth, the highest in the survey's 24 year history says Senior Manager of Corporate Communications for Roanoke County-based Delta Dental of Virginia, Jeremy Butterfield: "we certainly now there's some inflation in there, some generosity, some added value from the Tooth Fairy," he says perhaps tongue in cheek, "and it typically mirrors the economy's overall direction, tracking with trends of the S & P 500 for 17 of the past 20 years." Butterfield says National Tooth Family Day - held twice a year - is also a good reminder to visit the dentist on a regular basis for checkups.

In Memoriam: Kelvin Bowles

The Salem Red Sox and local baseball fans are remembering longtime owner Kelvin Bowles, who passed away in late February at age

82. Bowles, who made his money in cable TV, purchased the Salem Redbirds baseball team in 1985 to prevent the franchise from being relocated. Carey Harveycutter is with the City of Salem, which built a new stadium that opened late in the 1995 season: "there would not have been baseball in Salem. The baseball team would have moved to Charleston, West Virginia had Kelvin not stepped in and paid a little bit less than \$200,000 for the team, kept it all those years, kept in running, brought it in to the new stadium." Even after Bowles sold the Salem Avalanche in 2006 - several years before the team became the Salem Red Sox - he kept attending games. Bowles was a member of the Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame and was awarded a World Series Ring by the Florida Marlins when he served as a parttime scout for the team.

Grant for Warm Hearth

The Walmart Community Grants Team and Facility #1292 (Christiansburg) recently awarded a \$1000 grant to the Warm Hearth Foundation for the Micah's Program at Warm Hearth Village (WHV). The Foundation will use funds to help fight food insecurity by providing food and meals to village seniors who meet Federal low-income guidelines through the Micah's Pantry. Micah's programs at Warm Hearth Village include a variety of opportunities like fresh produce, prepared meals, gardens on campus to

grow and tend, shelf-stable groceries, pet food and personal care items.

New office for Draper Aden

Draper Aden Associates, a Mid-Atlantic engineering, surveying, and environmental services firm, has moved to a new office in Blacksburg. Located at 2200 S. Main Street in the Town of Blacksburg. This new space provides a more collaborative environment that will foster additional growth in the New River Valley, Roanoke Valley, and throughout Southwest Virginia. Draper Aden has maintained an office in Blacksburg since the firm's founding 50 years ago. This move, literally next door to a more modern facility extends the firm's longstanding commitment to the region. Formerly the Moog manufacturing facility, Draper Aden is the first tenant to occupy space in the transformed office building. The firm's office includes 14,915 square feet of workspace for Draper Aden team members, and a new geotechnical lab to serve its growing client base in the region.

More kudos for Pinnacle

Pinnacle Financial Partners brought home 20 Greenwich Excellence and three Greenwich Best Brand Awards for 2021. These awards are national and regional honors earned by banks who have measurably distinctive brands and service quality for small business and middle

market clients. Nashville-based Pinnacle, which has a branch in downtown Roanoke, won more of these awards than any other bank in the Southeast. Greenwich Best Brand Awards are based on interviews with nearly 23,000 small business and middle market business leaders about experiences with their bank. Of more than 500 banks evaluated, only 13 were found to have a measurably distinctive brand among small businesses.

Arts mean business in Roanoke

Grant funding was awarded from the City of Roanoke through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in the amount of \$30,000 for a Collective Arts & Cultural Marketing project. This project, facilitated by the Roanoke Cultural Endowment (RCE), in partnership with the City of Roanoke, will use the ARPA grant funds as an investment to develop collective storytelling tools around collaborative arts and cultural events, strategies, and challenges. "The goal is to benefit the entirety of the arts and cultural community in the City of Roanoke through a recovery and resiliency marketing project," said Shaleen Powell, Executive Director of the Roanoke Cultural Endowment.

The funding will be used to produce six episodes of BUZZ, a Roanoke-based public television show that features nonprofit organizations receiving pro bono marketing resources. These episodes will

highlight the innovative and engaging nature of arts and cultural organizations as well as the contributions of the arts and humanities. The remaining episodes will likely focus on collective efforts such as Arts in Healthcare, Arts in Education, Long Term Endowment strategies and need, the Year of the Artist, and the overall identity of Roanoke Arts and Culture. Freedom First Credit Union is a major sponsor of this six-episode project.

Botetourt County credit rating boosted

Moody's Investor Services has assigned an initial Aa1 issuer rating to Botetourt County. The issuer rating reflects the county's ability to repay debt and debt-like obligations without consideration of any pledge, security, or structural features. Supporting the county's financial performance is a moderately sized and growing tax base says Moody's. Botetourt

County Administrator, Gary Larowe said, "with this financial rating, we are in the same class with much larger localities like Montgomery and Roanoke County. You just do not normally see a county of our size with a financial rating this high." Series 2022 Revenue Bonds will be used to construct a new county courthouse in Fincastle and for expansion of the current county administration facility (Botetourt Center at Greenfield) for Virginia Western Community College.

Youngkin announces job growth, economic development opportunities

Governor Glenn Youngkin has announced that Amazon will launch a new 1 million-square-foot non-sortable fulfillment center in Augusta County. The facility at 32 Trader Road in Fishersville will be responsible for picking, packing, and shipping bulky or larger-sized customer items such as patio furniture, outdoor

equipment, or rugs. The new facility is expected to be operational in spring 2023 and will add 500 new jobs to Amazon's existing workforce of more than 30,000 full- and part-time employees in the Commonwealth.

The Governor and Salem-based Congressman Morgan Griffith have also jointly announced that grant dollars are now available to assist those looking to make an economic impact in southwest Virginia, as the Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) received a fifth round of funding for the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program. The agency is now taking applications for proposals.

Foundation awards

Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia announced a \$122,450 grant from the Earl L. and Ethel Y. Childers Fund awarded to the following local non-profits: Bedford Christian Ministries

(\$7,500); Bedford Community Christmas Station (\$62,000); Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Virginia (\$30,000); Kazim Shriners of Roanoke (\$13,350); and The Shepherd's Table (\$9,600).

New Tanglewood Tenant

Burlington, formerly known as Burlington Coat Factory, is coming to Tanglewood Mall in southwest Roanoke County. Burlington will occupy the former Stein Mart space, with interior redevelopment currently underway. Burlington is an American national off-price department store retailer, and a division of Burlington Coat Factory Warehouse Corporation with 740 stores in 40 states and Puerto Rico. The northwest Roanoke Burlington location will close in June.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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There is no 'woe is me' in the book.

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