

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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AUGUST 2022

Visit Franklin County

Let's Party Creatively

David Wiley, RSO

Jenny Nolen
Powerlifts

Goodwill's
Michelle Darby

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Labor of Lakeside Love

Dennis Crumpler
The Coves
at Smith Mountain Lake



TIM BRADY
BRADY'S DISTILLERY

I FOUND MY FREEDOM BANKING WITH FreedomFirst

When Tim Brady, Owner & Head Distiller at Roanoke's very own Brady's Distillery, needed a banking partner, Freedom First was the right fit. Starting a business - especially a distillery - is no small feat. And entrepreneurs just don't have the time to jump through extra hoops with their banking relationship.

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WATCH THE FULL STORY AT [FINDYOURFREEDOM.FFCU.COM](https://www.findyourfreedom.ffc.com)

WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Creating a live music venue in a more remote part of Smith Mountain Lake. If you build it, will they come? That's what developer Dennis Crumpler is hoping when it comes to The Coves, a high-end community he is pitching as the perfect place to retire to, for those in the higher income brackets. It's an interesting concept, using live music events to attract prospective residents who may come for the music, be taken by the area's beauty and its removal from the hustle and bustle of, say, Northern Virginia or the Research Triangle in North Carolina. Read our story inside.

Not to mention David Wiley's 25th anniversary with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra or the new Director of Marketing and Tourism for Franklin County, that piece written by a Valley Business FRONT first timer but a familiar name in these parts – Ray Cox. And as she gets ready to host a major conference on family caregiving at Hotel Roanoke in November, columnist Kimberly Whiter is back with part three of her series on that same subject in our Perspectives – focusing on how businesses can help address the caregiving dilemma their employees may be facing. In fact, we have a number of relative, timely columns from our valued professional associates this month. Please spend some time with them. Enjoy the rest of your summer. Football is around the corner. Happy Reading.



Tom Field
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Gene Marrano
Editor



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Finding That One-In-A-Thousand

Developing Residential Living at The Coves at Smith Mountain Lake

By Gene Marrano



“ ”
One day, I just decided I was going to do it. — Page 61

FRONTcover photo of Dennis Crumpler by Gene Marrano



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Dan Dowdy



Zack Jackson



Jennifer Leake



Dan Smith



Nicholas Vaassen

Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Advisory Board comprised of a selective group of diverse business professionals who support our mission and have an interest in how our business journal best serves our local communities and region. As a sounding board throughout their term, board members have been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry "fronts." This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia. An additional contribution by the Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year. In keeping with our policy of being "the voice of business in the valleys" we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by contacting us with your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

2022 CONTRIBUTORS



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William Hall



Frazier Hughes



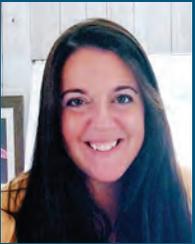
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“Companies... are finding that their teams need to have a creative outlet for productivity.”

— Page 14

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

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Gene Marrano

Dennis Crumpler

Finding That One-In-A-Thousand

Developing Residential Living at The Coves at Smith Mountain Lake

By Gene Marrano

“We’re in the business of finding the people that don’t know they’re going to live here... yet,” says Dennis Crumpler.

Dennis Crumpler grew up in North Carolina about 100 miles from The Coves, the sprawling waterfront property along Smith Mountain Lake in Union Hall he and

a partner have been working to turn into an idyllic retreat – the reward at the end of the rainbow – for those with the means. A handful of custom homes have been

Cloudy Bobby Photography



built and there is room for several dozen more. It's out of the way, peaceful, and a trip to any major shopping centers. The kind of place where you plan to watch the lake from the porch, cruise on your boat or walk the trails. Or perhaps, go listen to some live music right on site at The Coves live music outdoor amphitheater, now in its second season after launching in 2021.

The Mavericks, Marty Stuart, Kenny G, Michael Franti and the Marshall Tucker Band are just some of the notables Crumpler has enlisted veteran music booker Gary Jackson to bring to The Coves. Elvis Costello is a possibility in 2023. Jackson helped launch the Harvester Performance Center in Rocky Mount; before that he booked shows at the Kirk Avenue Music Hall in downtown Roanoke (now The Spot on Kirk).

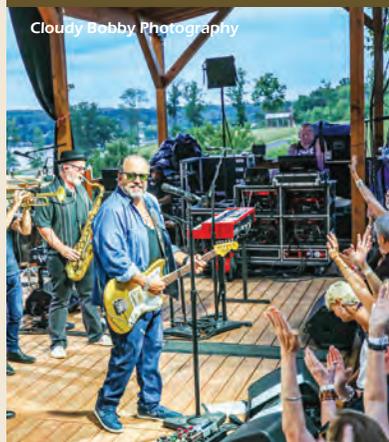
Crumpler is using live music at The Coves as a focal point for a unique business model: some of the people attending a performance at The Coves may be so taken by the development's beauty and serenity they will consider it as a place where they want to live, in retirement or perhaps working remotely. They can build their own home (there is a book with design guidelines) and must be prepared to spend a million dollars or more to do that.

After a stint in the military, college and then grad school (including MIT) Crumpler landed in Atlanta in the early 1980's, just as the computer software market "was exploding," as he puts it, in its early days. "A lot of that geeky soup came out of [Atlanta]." Crumpler got wrapped up in that, building and selling software companies, "having a blast." By 2002 (after finding his wife and starting a family) Crumpler had sold off his third company and was looking

“ ”

You can't just 'half-do' a real estate project.

Cloudy Bobby Photography





Gene Marrano

for a new challenge. Then it was off to Charlottesville for a decade. He now splits time between a farm in eastern Kentucky that his wife runs (a family legacy) and The Coves site, living in a smallish bungalow there with his guitars – Crumpler says however there are much better musicians in the family.

The Coves was supposed to be a five- to six-year project, starting in 2006, but two major recessions since then has made bringing the high-end development to its full potential, “difficult to say the least. As financial bets go, this is probably the least attractive thing I’ve ever touched. But you can’t just ‘half-do’ a real estate project.” That’s a recipe for bankruptcy, for him, partners and friends, he says.



Gene Marrano

SPA HOPES TO BENEFIT FROM THE COVES, OTHER NEARBY DEVELOPMENTS



Gene Marrano

Lori Dupier

Lori Dupier says the Southlake Spa and Salt Room she operates in Union Hall, near, appropriately, the southern end of sprawling Smith Mountain Lake (and The Coves), “is something unique and different,” for her clientele. That includes salt therapy sessions, sound bowl therapy, yoga, reiki, wellness workshops and massage. (Dennis Crumpler gets some of his physical therapy there, the result of a biking accident years ago when his two-wheeler ran into a logging truck. He once rode his bike from Atlanta to Front Royal during his distance cycling days.) He’s a regular, says Dupier.

Those salt therapy sessions are held in a part of the building that is actually a repurposed grain bin. “It’s quite a surprise for them to drive down this little dirt road into the woods and find a world-class spa here,” says Dupier, who among other local products in the spa’s front room also sells honey that her beekeeper husband collects on site. “We’re certainly hopeful to be working with a lot of The Coves members in the future and be their wellness facility also.”

—Gene Marrano



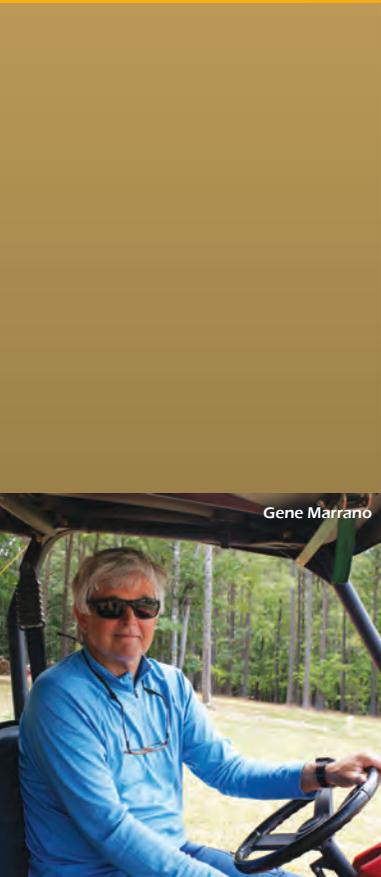
Gene Marrano

Southlake Spa



Gene Marrano

Salt Therapy room



Gene Marrano



Gene Marrano



Cloudy Bobby Photography

As a board member for the Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville, where he helped raise money, Crumpler got to know his way around the real estate world, particularly when it came to the conservation easements he helped set up. Since he and associates purchased The Coves property, Crumpler says he “has had to learn a lot about how to do this.” While other real estate buy and sell transactions were more cut and dried Crumpler says they realized the only way “to get to the other side of this one [what is now The Coves] was to build it out. I was not supposed to be a real estate developer. It’s been quite the journey.” That journey is now close to 20 years in the making.

A handful of homes have been built, but Dennis Crumpler (now 70) says he has no real aspirations about making money from the development; so building something he can be proud of and that is environmentally sound was the next best thing. “It’s a rich complicated story.”

A solar power array that can power ten homes and progressive ways the development handles wastewater, and the design standards, also came with questions from prospective homeowners about the Confederate flags seen along local roadways and the two now-fired and convicted Rocky Mount police officers who were present at the January 6 Capitol riot – is this a place I want to live out my golden years?

COVID-19 forced many to look at where they wanted to retire or work remotely from, wealthy people from Northern Virginia, North Carolina and Richmond for example – and that’s when some found The Coves. “It became very clear that we needed our little story to be visible to more people.” With a building partner (D.A. Peters, who owns Southern Heritage Homes) that also had a strong interest in music, the idea for The Coves live music outdoor venue as a way to attract more people was conceived. “This place will sell out – it’s a question of how long it will take,” says Crumpler of the 30-odd lots that are planned.

With COVID muddying the waters at the Harvester in Rocky Mount, Gary Jackson retired from his position with the town and teamed with Crumpler to stage two small pilot shows at The Coves, where people watched from their cars and trucks under the Harvester Outdoors banner. “Gary was exquisitely talented – Willie Nelson on his speed dial [for example].” Bruce Hornsby and the Allman Brothers helped launch the venue with shows last year, “showing up in the middle of nowhere.”

Jackson serves as The Coves amphitheater General Manager. “It’s a labor of love, I’m enjoying it,” he said in an earlier interview. Show attendees are welcome to show up early; walk the five miles of trails, maybe throw a frisbee around. “It’s their experience that makes it special,” adds Jackson. Some concertgoers have brought small tents for



Cloudy Bobby Photography

their kids to play in or nap while they listen to music and hammocks to hang between trees. Down the road, Jackson notes there may be treehouses that can be rented out for shows.

A renovated and rustic 100-year-old barn now serves as a “green room” and a place where performers can stay overnight. A preserved chimney on the property was built by former slaves that worked for the family that once owned the 90-plus acre tract; “relishing history,” is important to Crumpler.

“Excess cash,” as he puts it from the shows being staged is targeted for non-profits, like the Smith Mountain Lake Good Neighbors. From the amphitheater grounds attendees can see the “gorgeous lake,” and the Peaks of Otter. Targeted digital marketing has helped get the word out to people that might be interested in the arts, solar power and an environmentally friendly lifestyle. There’s plenty of wildlife on the property as well.

While it’s great when “local folks” venture out to hear a band, Crumpler is looking for “the one in a thousand,” that may want to build a home there. The Coves also worked out a deal with Franklin County via a zoning change to stage a dozen larger events a year without needing special permitting for each one, and it’s off to the races. Some shows will attract less than 300, others will welcome many more to the site he says.

“We’ve got the bullhorn up; we’re aiming in a certain direction. They’ve got to want the stuff that we’re doing. We’re telling a particular story, kind of complicated, kind of out of the way. There are some awesome people that have found us.” Having a live music venue to amplify that message can’t hurt. 

“ ”

I was not supposed to be a real estate developer. It's been quite the journey.



Submitted photos

Dana Long

Finding the artist in everyone

By Nanette Levin

“A lot of people think they can’t create, draw or paint,” says Dana Long, owner of Let’s Party Creatively. She set up her company and the associated events to change that. Each activity provides simple steps that are easy to follow so that each participant gains comfort and confidence to create their own work of art.

Let’s Party Creatively offers interactive events for the public, businesses, charities and private parties. Long has put a strong focus on team building in recent years. “Companies, especially coming out of the COVID world, are finding that their teams need to have a creative outlet for productivity,” she says. “There are studies that support teams engaging in creativity leads to better production and less mistakes.” Long also cites employee rewards and an excuse to get everyone together after the challenges of the pandemic as reasons company owners hire her.

Business Beginnings

Long started her business in 2017 with a focus on succulent plant parties, then

expanded in 2019 to start offering paint parties and a variety of do-it-yourself craft events. She came from a varied background in banking, government and the parking industry. She was sometimes frustrated by the structure, rules, and limited tolerance for creative thought. “So, when the opportunity presented itself to take the knowledge base and lifelong passion for plants and creative pursuits, I took that opportunity and started my own business,” Long explains.

“I used to attend some paint parties and people sitting around me would say ‘I hate my painting, it’s awful’ and I felt so bad about people feeling bad about what they created,” she says. “I wanted to give everyone the tools, the knowledge and the ability to be creative.”



Her goal was to not only offer the type of parties that were commonplace, but also to focus on unique events not available in the marketplace. These have included working with India inks, jewelry making and succulent and other plant related creations. "I've always been crafty and artsy, and I wanted to bring those skills to other people, I wanted people to feel good about being creative."

Gauntlet Finalist

Let's Party Creatively was a silver award winner in the 2021 Gauntlet competition (staged by the Vinton-based Advancement Foundation), receiving a \$3,050 value prize. Long focused her application on the team-building initiatives she was adding to the business offerings at the time. The live interview was a bit of a challenge.

Led Head
August 5

Mended Fences
August 19

The Kings
September 2

Fuzzy Logic
September 16

The Worx
October 7



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FRANKLIN ROAD BETWEEN JEFFERSON AND WILLIAMSON



She was in Cancun at the time. Like many problem-solving entrepreneurs, though, Long found a way to make it work.

"The Gauntlet is very beneficial for anyone beginning a new business or even thinking of a business venture," she states. "As an established business, it helped to refine my business goals and processes by working through the business plan process including the SWOT and competitive analysis. An added benefit was networking and making connections with other like-minded entrepreneurs."

Team Building Events

These engagements are turnkey, customized and generally incorporate a theme. Long explains these can be everything from icebreaker type activities to programs designed to build deeper understanding and relationships with longstanding fellow employees. Services include developing the project ideas and providing choices when appropriate to the client, facilitating the exercises and conversations, set up, clean up and furnishing all needed supplies.

Long cites a staffing agency she worked with as a good example. They chose a painting the group liked. Participants took photos together and she created talking points to help initiate conversation. Some of these included questions such as "tell us something no one knows about you." Answers ranged from a fish bite to a fear of water. People bonded by talking to and complimenting each other.

Charitable Cause Programs

"I've done a lot of fundraising events," says Long. These have included work to benefit the Heart Association, Angels of Assisi, Daughters of the American Revolution and other organizations. "These are a unique and innovative way for people to come together and raise money for a worthy cause."

Long illustrates with an event at a barn that saves farm animals, where participants interacted and connected with the animals. "People feel like they're not just giving their dollars to an unknown entity. When they can see how their money is going to help a worthy cause they're more likely to continue to support that charity."

For the Public

While Long is putting greater focus on designing customized team-building programs and fundraising events for clients, she continues to offer public parties. These are held at various restaurants, wineries and breweries throughout Southwest Virginia. Her territory range reaches north to Lexington, east to Lynchburg, southwest to the New River Valley and places in between.

"My business is offering creative events where no talent or skill is required," says Long. Projects ideas and announcements of upcoming Let's Party Creatively events can be found on Facebook @CreateRoanoke. 



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BEST JOB EVER

By Jennifer Leake

Executive Summary:

When you act on the information you collect, Stay Interviews can have an extremely positive impact on our employee retention rate.

Jennifer Leake CMC® is a workplace consultant, podcaster and certified assessment expert.

Visit www.AssessmentPros.com/StayInterviews for more information on Stay Interview Best Practices and sample questions.

"Stay interviews": a tool to retain key talent

According to ADP's Research Institute's People at Work 2022: A Global Workforce View, 7 in 10 workers have considered a major career change this year. Studies indicate that 55% of hiring managers are struggling with retention and turnover.

When employees are asked why they quit a company, dislike of their boss is one of their main reasons. Deciding to leave a job is not something an employee does lightly. When they do, you the boss may be giving them a good reason to do so.

One way to focus on employee retention, particularly your best ones, is the use of Stay Interviews. It gives you a proactive understanding of what is on the mind of an employee, long before they decide to find another opportunity.

Robert P. Finnegan, an expert on Stay Interviews defines them as: "a structured discussion a leader conducts with an individual employee to learn specific actions the leader can take to strengthen the employee's engagement and retention within the organization." This two-way conversation with employees helps you discover that they like about their role and what they would like to change.

Stay interviews differ from exit interviews because they are not a conversation to convince a departing employee to stay or glean too late information as they head out the door. Instead, they help uncover what motivates a current employee and builds trust with their manager. They are a useful strategy to identify pain-points before they become full-blown problems. They also create an environment where employees approach you with concerns before they start looking for another job.

When considering the use of **Stay Interviews** with your employees:

- Create questions in advance – don't wing it.
- Schedule two Stay Interviews with new hires in the first 3-6 months.
- Selected current employees (those who have been there the longest or have consistently performed) should have one a year, opposite the annual review.
- Interviews should last 20 minutes to an hour using questions, so the employee does most of the talking.
- Conduct them all within a short time frame so you can act on the data collected in a timely manner. The goal of the interview is to create actionable items so meaningful change(s) can be implemented.

What are the benefits of Stay Interviews?

- Employees recognize you care about how they feel about their work, and you appreciate their loyalty.
- They help build trust and communication with your employees, but only if you make changes based on their input.

Close the interview by summarizing the key reasons you heard the employee offer for staying or potentially leaving their job. Work with the employee to develop a “stay plan.” Use a SHRM suggested closing statement such as “I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me today. I am committed to doing what I can to make this a great place for you to work.” 📄

“ [A Stay Interview] gives you a proactive understanding of what is on the mind of an employee.

“ ”

Deciding to leave a job is not something an employee does lightly.



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Franklin County
*A Natural Setting
for Opportunity*

Kevin Tosh with the Pigg River at Waid Park as a backdrop. A strong emphasis on outdoor recreation is his focus as Franklin County's new Director of Tourism and Marketing.

FRANKLIN COUNTY: The Attraction

By Ray Cox

No stranger to Franklin County, Kevin Tosh has hit the ground running in his new role.

ROCKY MOUNT – New to the bracing challenges, responsibilities, and anxieties of being a czar, Kevin Tosh spent his first five weeks as Franklin County's Tourism and Marketing director as one might expect, learning the foundational talking points required to spread word of the county's many virtues to a wider universe.

As for necessary knowledge of the geography, economy, people and overall vibe of the county, no learning curve was required. The 35-year-old Tosh is as local as a back road to Smith Mountain Lake, as much a part of the landscape as a weathered tobacco barn.

So, it was no surprise that this county native anticipated a question about his choice of a new career before it was asked. "I saw this as an opportunity to promote Franklin County, a place I've lived at all my life," he said. "There's an excitement here in the county right now. We're coming out of

this COVID time and there are a lot of things folks want to see done."

Similarly, to hard-working taxpayers everywhere, the public projects in which locals are most interested in are those that have a measurably positive impact on the richness of their lives and that of the community, he believes.

What does that have to do with tourism—besides the obvious influx of dollars and the fabled economic impact multiplier? Given that quality of life is a major attractor for tourists as well as those who would invest in a new business or move to the county as a permanent resident, Tosh sees his work as having a double impact locally.

"Developing tourism is as much about improving the quality of life for those who live here as it is attracting new business and visitors to the area," Tosh said.



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ENTRÉ

Tosh took his formal education at Franklin County High (he played saxophone in the band) and Virginia Tech, where he majored in communications and minored in Appalachian studies. After his Tech graduation in 2009, he went right to work back home for Cable 12, for which he had interned as an undergraduate. He stayed for the next 13 years as a full-timer, doing football, basketball, baseball, and softball play-by-play for the high school and Ferrum College, hosting a morning talk show, and doing all the other odds and ends required of a hyper-local television operation.

When the county job posted "I weighed it for a while, for a long while because I had deep ties at Cable 12," he said. The challenge of a new career and love of his community carried the day.

"In many ways, Kevin has become the face of the community over the last few years

as the host of Cable 12's Rise and Shine program as well as announcing Ferrum football games and Franklin County High School football, basketball, baseball, and softball games," County Administrator Christopher Whitlow said in the release announcing Tosh's hiring in May. "Kevin's technology skills in videography, digital media, and content creation, as well as his public information broadcasting work, will be a tremendous complement to our team."

Those skills will be put to good use as part the ample toolbox Tosh has to work with in spreading word of the county's charms. One tool, open communications, is absolutely essential to Tosh's mission in his view. "We can't promote this county if we don't stay informed about what's happening here," said Tosh, who has a wife Avery and 2-year-old son Abraham.

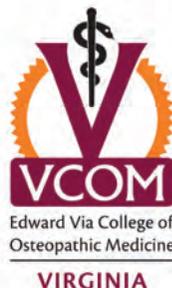
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The new tourism czar is operating on an \$88,000 annual budget, up \$8,000 from previous levels. His promotional focus is roughly in three main areas: the natural beauty, serenity and outdoor-recreation ready landscape that includes two major lakes, Smith Mountain and Philpott, to go with a breathtaking expanse of mountain and piedmont vistas; an abundance of food and drink options; and the community's longstanding musical and cultural traditions.

Of the last category, the former marching FCH Eagle speaks with particular zest while rattling off a long list of venues, starting with the hugely successful Harvester Performance Center in downtown Rocky Mount, to the commercial docks on Smith Mountain Lake (a community in and of itself) and beyond.

Tosh spoke of the upcoming anniversary

of the founding of the decades-old Crooked Road traditional music tour and hopes of reigniting the energy and enthusiasm of its founding. "That would so bolster Franklin County, particularly Rocky Mount and Ferrum, as the eastern gateway to the start of that journey."

Tosh is also a proponent of what is known in organization-speak as reverse engineering. "Ask people what they need to be successful in Franklin County. Then working with that framework, help them figure out how to make it happen. What is the goal we want to reach? What are the means we have to reach the goal? Then we help them work inside the means to reach the goal."

To borrow another organization-speak cliché, Tosh has hit the ground running. No map did he need to find his way around the county. 



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Kimberly Whiter

Executive Summary:
Before 2020, one might think of professional development and conjure images of workshops or lunch-time sessions listening to speakers. Now with the world functioning so differently, so should our professional development.

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 through their unique technology-driven solution.

Community partnerships allow students to thrive

In Part 1 of this four-part series, we covered how 1 in 5 individuals in the workforce is a family caregiver. These are individuals caring for a loved one with a chronic condition, often an elderly parent. (VBF April 2022) In Part 2 we discussed WHY employers should seriously think about supporting their caregiving-employees and included numbers around productivity and retention. (VBF June 2022) Now let's dive deep into the inequities within care and how supporting caregiving-employees is a vital piece of your inclusivity efforts.

Women - Currently, 67% of individuals providing unpaid care to a loved one are female-identifying. Women are more likely than their male counterparts to carry the responsibilities of care. In fact, if we painted a picture of what a typical caregiver in the U.S. looks like, it would be a working woman, with children, also caring for aging parents. Two big challenges this places on women are emotional stress and how much of their time is being consumed by juggling a career and care. It's no wonder working caregivers seriously consider quitting their job (20% do) or reducing their hours (44% do).

People of Color

Black and African American Caregivers - Caregivers in the Black and African American communities provide more chronic care than other demographics. Black and African American elders have more chronic conditions like heart disease, complications from stroke, high blood pressure, Alzheimer's/dementia, and diabetes. This means that caregivers from these communities find themselves caring for longer periods of time.

American Indian and Alaska Native Caregivers - Family caregivers in the American Indian and Alaska Native communities experience higher financial strain when caring for their elders. These communities face unique difficulties facing financial situations and paying for elder care expenses.

Hispanic Caregivers - Hispanic family caregivers experience the highest difficulty coordinating and arranging care services for their elderly loved ones. Many times, health professionals and health services are not positioned to effectively translate care needs into this community's native language or cultural contexts.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Caregivers - Family caregivers in the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities face significant barriers accessing affordable health insurance and quality health services, contributing to health disparities as major chronic health conditions often go undiagnosed or untreated.

Southeast Asian American Caregivers - Family caregivers in

the Southeast Asian American community are caring for elders that have limited English proficiency rates (as high as 90%) and may be affected by traumas of war, resettlement, and recent mass deportations. This promotes distrust in formal care services making care difficult.

For all family caregivers within the above communities, care functions within a context of familism. Familism is the subordination of personal interests and prerogatives of the individual to the values and demands of the family.

LGBTQ+ Caregiving - Important contexts for LGBTQ+ caregiving is recent history. Being gay or queer was considered a mental illness until the 1980s. Marriage equality only happened in 2015 and is under attack again in 2022. LGBTQ+ elders have not experienced tolerance, therefore caring for them has unique challenges. Many members of the LGBTQ+ community rely on families of choice to provide care. Families of choice still struggle to have rights to medical, financial, and legal information to provide good care. Because of intolerance, many LGBTQ+ elders have a fear of healthcare services, making it harder to get them the care they need to age healthily. Even now, many senior communities don't have the education to provide safe places for LGBTQ+ elders.

Socioeconomic Status - Those families within the middle-socioeconomic class have the most financial strain when caring for aging loved ones. With Medicare only covering hospital care, doctor visits, and skilled-nursing level

care and Medicaid's eligibility parameters making it difficult to obtain this benefit without losing substantial assets, middle-class families are often caught in a catch 22. They end up paying significant sums of money out-of-pocket.

Intersectionalities - It is important to consider the likelihood that family caregivers fit within more than one of these identities. 73% of working family caregivers are people of color, making it likely that a family caregiver is a working woman of color in the middle-socioeconomic status, presenting her with a compound of care challenges.

By understanding the unique challenges that family caregivers face, employers can help their employees feel seen with support that gives them what they need during a very stressful life stage.

Supporting family caregiving-employees is a national conversation and key leaders on the topic will be in Roanoke from November 14 - 16, 2022 participating in The Care Colloquium. These conversations will include leaders from The Elizabeth Dole Foundation, AARP, Working Daughter, and more. To learn more visit www.thecarecolloquium.com

AARP. "2020 Report: Caregiving in the U.S." (2020); Diverse Elders Coalition. "Caring for Those Who Care." (2021); Morningstar. "100 Must-Know Statistics about Long-term Care: Pandemic Edition." (2020); Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers. "Working While Caring: A National Survey of Caregiver Stress in the U.S. Workforce." (2021) 



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Anne Sampson

Michelle Darby

Look for the helpers

By Anne Sampson

Valley Business FRONT introduces the newest patron advisory board member, Michelle Darby, representing the community service sector.

If you find yourself struggling to keep up with Michelle Darby, don't feel bad. You'll have to run marathons, do some pretty challenging hikes, hit all the music festivals you can, raise a couple of teenagers and shatter your ankle. It's a tall order.

Michelle is the still somewhat-new director of marketing at Goodwill Industries of the Valleys. Her journey there, while winding, has always had marketing and communications as its lodestone. It's her passion.

"When I finished school, I drove out West for six weeks and when I got back, I just needed a job," she says. "I walked into The Record Exchange on a whim."

The Record Exchange was a chain of stores where customers could buy and sell gently used music media like LPs, CDs and cassettes. Michelle quickly advanced from store manager to marketing, including writing for the music chain's magazine, The Music Monitor. The job dovetailed with her own love of the music scene.

"My parents were hard-core into music," Michelle says, "and I grew up listening to old-school Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and the Statler Brothers." She discovered the Grateful Dead and followed them from California to Canada to Mexico. When Jerry Garcia died, she started following the band Widespread Panic, "which I do to this day."

Her first music festival was in 1991, long before you could go to a festival every single summer weekend. "I'm doing four or five this year," she says. "It's a thing."

Marathons are also a thing. Michelle's vanity plates read 'RNRMMMA', which stands for 'Runner Mama,' although she's regularly mistaken for a nurse who's into mixed martial arts. In 2018, she missed her marathons because, while training to hike the Grand Canyon, she fell on the Appalachian Trail and shattered her right ankle. She calls the AT "The Path of Hateful Rocks."

"I won't bore you with the whole long story, but I almost died," she says. It took search and rescue five hours to get to her and her companion. She went into shock.

The pair were assisted by a section hiker

"IN BRIEF"

EDUCATION: Alumna – Roanoke College, Hollins University, Indiana School of Business

CHILDREN: Kemper, 19; Ryland, 17

MOTTO: "I won't lie, I have struggled," says Michelle. "If I had to lean into anything, it has to do with the whole fearless theme. I often use the following quote:

"What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

(Michelle mentions that the quote is controversially attributed to Emerson. An internet search turned up the information that the author is Henry Stanley Haskins, in his book, 'Meditations in Wall Street,' published in 1940. The quote appears nowhere in Emerson's papers or books.)

from San Diego with the trail name Sierra, who was also a search and rescue member back home.

"She covered me with her sleeping bag, kept taking my blood pressure – she stayed with us the whole time," says Michelle. "I text her every July 23rd and say 'Happy Saving My Life Day!'"

After intensive rehab and "a whole village of helpers," Michelle hiked the Grand Canyon – rim to rim to rim – and picked up the marathons she had missed, including the Blue Ridge Half and the Richmond.

Michelle honed her professional skills at Barnes & Noble, US Cellular, Anthem (overseeing a Federal Employee Program), as Executive Director of the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce and as VP of Resource Development at United Way.

Michelle had barely gotten traction at United Way when pandemic-fueled workplace shutdowns put donations on hold. Like everyone else, United Way had to pivot.

"I always knew we lived in an amazing place," Michelle says, "and I saw it in action at United Way. They convened all the helpers – like Mr. Rogers said, look for the helpers – on a



Anne Sampson

Michelle shows off her charm bracelet, which includes Salem landmarks and a St. Christopher medal from her step-mother, as well as her tattoo, which says "fearless." "Fearless is something I lean into a lot," she says.

Zoom call every Thursday at nine. There were people from every facet of the Roanoke Valley, people who helped with housing, with food distribution, with jobs and job training, legal help. They're still doing that once a month."

About a year later, Michelle had an opportunity to follow her passion for marketing to Goodwill Industries.

"I really believe in what Goodwill does," she says, "and Goodwill has a great story to tell. We celebrated our 90th anniversary last year. That's a ton of history, and a fantastic foundation to build on."

Still in the midst of the pandemic and under new leadership, Goodwill did a brand refresh, updating the website, reorganizing internally and focusing more on team and individual contributions.

"A lot of the folks who work for us are part of our mission. We work to provide opportunities to people who have barriers, whether those are physical, cognitive, or perhaps they're part of our re-entry program, where they've been involved with the judicial system, or maybe they just didn't

have the opportunity to get job training."

The non-profit also removes barriers by providing services to businesses, such as custodial, healthcare, manufacturing and packaging. Goodwill does the hiring and training, and markets the services, bringing a labor force to market that wouldn't otherwise be available.

A new five-year plan, rolled out in January, includes more community visibility, greater investment in the retail stores and becoming more-self-sustaining and less grant-based.

"We're a pretty big organization," says Michelle. "We're in 35 cities and 14 counties. It doesn't make sense for us to go after \$5,000 grants that would be of great benefit to a smaller charity."

Goodwill wants to take a multi-generational approach to its investment in the quality of life in its communities, searching for partners to provide services to demographics that Goodwill doesn't serve, such as infants.

"We want to be good stewards of our community," says Michelle. 

What Cox is Doing to Help Close the Digital Divide

One of our country's pressing problems is the digital divide. This is the gap between those who have access to reliable internet service and those who do not.

The digital divide runs deep. And while the American Jobs Plan proposal contains a budget of \$65 billion to close the gaps in digital infrastructure spread over eight years, it's just one piece of the puzzle.

Internet infrastructure is part of the cause of this divide, but addressing this issue alone neglects the other significant cause of limited adoption and use. Harvard Business Review points out "Local and national institutions, affordability and access, and the digital proficiency of users, all play significant roles – and there are wide variations across the United States along each of these."

However, Cox is committed to closing the digital divide because we care. In fact, doing so is key to our community relations efforts because ensuring digital equity for households of all incomes and economic statuses in the communities we serve matters.

We're doing this through by participating in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides financial support to families in need so they, too, can gain access to the internet to stay connected with others. ACP is a U.S. government program that helps low-income households through discounted internet service and equipment.

Those eligible will be given access to Cox's 100 Mbps high-speed internet service for free. Most folks with household incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line are likely eligible. So, too, are those receiving government benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, WIC, Pell Grant and Free or Reduced-Price Lunch.

We recently doubled download speeds of Cox's low-cost internet products Connect2Compete and Connect Assist to 100 Mbps. With the ACP \$30 subsidy, we're chipping away at the digital divide by providing more people with free internet access at higher speeds.

Further, Cox has designated more than \$400 million to expand our footprint to reach underserved communities, including rural ones. This commitment will be carried out over the next three years so 100,000-plus new homes and businesses near our existing footprint can access fast, reliable internet service, with several of those projects based here in Roanoke County.

For more information on the ACP, and other accessibility measures we're taking to close the digital divide, visit www.cox.com/digitalequity.





Positive mindset

In 2017 I was the salesperson of the year at Berglund Luxury Roanoke; little did I know I would be voted best realtor in Roanoke a few years later. I don't tell you this to toot my own horn but to let you know I've worked really hard to get where I am; and I know that some of you have as well and may be able to relate to this article or it could help you too in your career.

One day I was on the car lot, and I walked inside, and I sat down, and I spoke to my manager and sadly said "I wish I was selling more cars. I just felt like I wasn't doing good enough." She told me the rest of the dealerships were slow and that I was on top and selling more cars than anybody else. And this hit me pretty hard. My fear was made up in my mind!

They say the real estate market is changing, but if I didn't turn on the news or listen to any negative chatter I would never know, and I wouldn't have known that day as well that the rest of the dealerships were slow if I had not asked my manager. I don't watch the nightly news. Motivation author Alan Cohen states "what is presented as the news is a carefully distilled entree of mayhem, culled for commercial sale-ability, playing on base fears and sensationalism."

If we turn off the news of negativity it's all about mindset; and if you have a positive mindset then the outlook on the world is quite different. That's my slogan: "Stay Positive" and I try to live by it even though it's not easy to do. It takes constant practice, journaling, self-reflection, and working with a mentor. Some of my keys to success are treating people well, communicating well, becoming genuinely interested in others, and seeing things from their point of view. Maybe I learned this in my Dale Carnegie Training. Maybe as my late friend Brandon said, "No, it's just Frazier Hughes."

I'm not sure if the real estate market is declining. I honestly feel it's great. The last house I listed went under contract in 24 hours with two offers over asking price. I am about to list 8 more. Maybe if we tune out the negative and tune into our own positive mindset, we will have more success than others. That's up to you. 📌

“Alan Cohen says "what is presented as the news is a carefully distilled entree of mayhem, culled for commercial sale-ability, playing on base fears and sensationalism."”

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:

Tune out the negative and tune into our own positive mindset. Here's a pep talk.

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



Happening today, this month, this weekend!

Behind every event, venue, or sound check is the legal fabric to set the project in motion. From buying or leasing property to establishing contracts with vendors, licensing and permitting, establishing new entities for liability protection, or creating a trademark for the brand, Gentry Locke's attorneys are behind the scenes of some of the most significant venues and projects in western Virginia. We are privileged to help owners, buyers, sellers, developers, employers, vendors, investors, landlords, and tenants with responsible, creative, and solid solutions.



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Submitted photos



Gauntlet finalist crushing it >

One of the startups at this year's Gauntlet competition has launched a business that the owner says will keep more waste out of regional landfills - while providing extra income as she approaches retirement from her "day job." A Facebook video on YouTube about crushed glass being turned back into sand in New Zealand piqued the interest of **Kathy Wirtanen** and led her to launch **EarthMagic Recycling LLC** in Buena Vista. EarthMagic was one of the big winners at the 8th Annual Vinton-based Gauntlet Business competition this spring. Wirtanen has already collected several tons of discarded glass bottles and jars from localities in the Roanoke and Shenandoah Valleys: "a 55-gallon drum [of glass] in three rounds of

less than five minutes can be compressed into a 5-gallon bucket."

Her advice for others with a "great idea" that may want to move forward with a mentoring program like the Gauntlet-Wirtanen's prize package during the competition phase was valued at more than \$10,000 - \$4,000 in cash: "there's no time like the present. Talk to people, see what they think about your idea from a business standpoint. Is it sustainable?" Wirtanen says she is just getting started with EarthMagic Recycling - also holding drop-off events in Buena Vista at the Virginia Innovation Collective Building - turning all of that glass into eco-friendly sand for projects large and small, "from mixed media crafts to construction projects." She's also setting up an online marketplace. Follow EarthMagic Recycling LLC on Instagram says Wirtanen.

Ian Price



A second train for Roanoke >

Five years after passenger rail service rolled back into Roanoke for the first time in decades, a second **Amtrak** daily train was welcomed to town last month. In downtown Roanoke dignitaries were on hand to greet the new train service, which originated in Washington DC earlier in the day. Roanoke Mayor **Sherman Lea** was there to note the occasion - and the city's long history as a railroad hub: "for a century the city of Roanoke was the headquarters of Norfolk & Western Railway, operating passenger trains. Since Amtrak's return [in 2017] it has consistently been one of Virginia's most popular state-supported routes."

It seemed appropriate that when **DJ Stadler**, executive director for the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority spoke a train was rumbling along on tracks adjacent to the Amtrak station: "we've [now] doubled our frequencies to Roanoke. That's our short-term goal. That's not the end of what we're going to do. In 2026 this service will be extended to the New River Valley. You'll be able to go to Christiansburg and Blacksburg." The VPRA was created to 2020 by the general assembly to promote the expansion of passenger and commuter rail service in Virginia. Roanoke Sherman Lea Sr called yesterday's debut of a second daily train to and from Roanoke another example of Virginia as a "national model for state-supported rail service."

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TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:

I know what you're thinking as you read that title, "What the heck is wrong with you? Why are you excited for a recession?"

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

Marketing during a recession: time to get excited!

To be clear ... I ain't. I'm just as annoyed, frustrated, and stressed out as you. Every trip to the grocery store feels like a gut punch where the bill is high and every item you buy looks like it's been shrunk down to the size of a Snickers mini. Not a fan!

But when it comes to those of us who run a business, I'm excited because now is the time where we can truly separate ourselves from our competitors. Super rich guy Warren Buffet once said, "be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy only when others are fearful." That's where we are right now. Fear is HIGH. Budgets are being slashed, jobs cut, plans changed.

So what do we need to do? The exact opposite! I know it's scary. Trust me, I spend times at night thinking, "what in this house can I sell on eBay if I need extra money?" but I also know now is the time that those who ACT are the ones who succeed. And the best part? There's TONS of research to back this up.

In terms of marketing, companies who stayed the course not only saw an increase in business during a recession, they also saw continued growth AFTER the recession. And this is from data going back to the 1920's. Marketing budgets are one of the first things to be cut during a recession, so those that don't cut theirs are met with decreased competition and higher audience share. Their brands appear as strong and stable, and their customer base responds accordingly. One can easily argue that now is the perfect time to INCREASE your marketing budget.

At the same time, I know that's not feasible for some businesses, but there's other ways to succeed. Now is an absolutely perfect time to be there for your audience. Think about it ... they're dealing with the same stresses and frustrations, so when you are able to provide something truly meaningful to them, it helps ease that burden (even if just for a short time). That's not something someone soon forgets, and that will connect them to your brand in a very strong way.

The best brands understand they're more than just a product or service, they are something that makes people FEEL. People love brands almost as much as they love people (sometimes more depending on the person), and right now they're desperate for connection and validation. So, when others panic and think small, now is the time to get excited and think big! 📈

“Now is the time when we can truly separate ourselves.”



From RAMP's New Director

Working with technology entrepreneurs has been one of the great delights of my life. It is an honor and pleasure to be asked to dive deeper into this work as Director of RAMP and Vice President for Entrepreneurial Development for Verge. I keep thinking about how the innovation space here is full of an electricity of anticipation and expectation and certainty. It is charged with the collective knowledge that we are poised to take leaps in development.

I have seen collaborations that multiply the shared mission to not only say, but to show, our commitment that this is a place you can live and grow and, likewise, it is a place where your businesses can live and grow, too. I believe this because I have seen it, and I know when it is absent we lose the profit of human potential.

My father was an electrical engineer and my mother was an educator. They created a space that fostered curiosity and risk-taking – especially with technology and tools. Consequently, I have a strong desire to build and create, to innovate on the current models, to explore options. I expect ways to improve to exist.

I recall late nights with my father building electronic projects including an oscilloscope, an early vacuum tube television set and simpler kits for products such as singing doorbell chimes. There was one thing he created that looked no more complex than a circuit board with several leads hanging off of it that was an early version of a wearable health monitor. It was the 1970s. The idea was there. The creativity was there. Even a good portion of the engineering was there. What was lacking was any path to market. The right partners, the right support systems. He lacked what many gifted technologists starting companies lack – all of the business experience and support that comes with living inside an established company.

Many, many technically talented scientists, engineers and researchers are looking for paths to market for their inventions and innovations. Often they struggle with navigating the myriad of business development resources available and the catalyzing introductions to collaborators and mentors and investors. Our team is deeply devoted and ready to connect tech and biotech

startup companies with guidance for the variety of issues that confront them.

I look forward to this work. I look forward to meeting the people who live and work here. And, I look forward to someday looking back and smiling at all that we accomplished together.

Lisa Garcia | Director

RAMP—headquartered in Roanoke's Gill Memorial Building on Jefferson Street—hosts two cohorts each year for startup technology companies.

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Dan Smith

David Wiley

Stirring Up Business at the RSO

By Dan Smith

Conductor David Wiley has a certain level of business acumen and he has used it to the fullest for 25 years.

David Wiley has been at this conducting gig with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra for 25 solid years now and in that time, he has developed the strong impression that music is good for business, as well as the savage breast.

Music education—at all levels—is instrumental, so to speak, in helping with collaboration, conflict resolution and deep listening. All of those are necessary business skills, he insists and Wiley says “musicians learn from an early age that their training is great” for whatever their profession turns out to be.

It is the “culture of a 70-member symphony orchestra” to have a common goal, to work with the conductor “in a collaborative spirit. Those are the qualities of leadership we try to model in a lifelong profession.”

In a business climate, it is healthy, he says “to question assumptions.” Practically speaking, “We have to balance our budget, to live within our means, to grow artistically while living within that budget.”

Meanwhile, as conductor and leader of the RSO, Wiley must work closely with a board of directors and to garner community support, closely watching endowment growth and ticket sales. During Covid, “we had to bridge some gaps.”

He has developed a course for business leaders called “Conducting Change” (see it at davidstewartwiley.com). “We work with a business leadership team in an orchestra setting, which is modeled on leadership.” The leaders sit with members of the orchestra and are asked to equate their jobs with

their instructions, which frequently change.

“We often live in our silos,” says Wiley, and the movement of the orchestra—instrument to instrument for the business pros—offers a new lesson in “working together for the team.”

Wiley says that “most people are blissfully unaware of what happens” within a symphony orchestra but notes, “one of the privileges is that we have built relationships with business, schools, medicine, arts organizations” and the like over the years. “We have been able to accomplish some amazing things,” including winning the Music Education Award from Yale, among a number of other prestigious citations.

The music that the symphony plays, only some of it traditional classical sounds, “ties in with our mountain traditions and heritage. We perform commissioned pieces,” as well as periodic pops concerts, which broadens the audience base considerably. The new season kicks off with the annual free concert at Elmwood Park later this month.

His family—son Misha, 19, daughter Mars, 17, wife Leah—are all musical and they occasionally perform together as a group or in pairs. Most of the symphony musicians with RSO, as with most community symphonies, don’t make their primary living as musicians, Wiley says, but “you’d be surprised as the number of people in the arts who do make their living that way. We can fly anywhere and do what we do.”

In fact, Wiley does a lot of that. He is the conductor of Orchestra Long Island, Artistic Director of Virginia’s Blue Ridge Music Festival in Floyd, and has appeared with symphony orchestras all over the world as a piano player and conductor. He has been performing since he was 10 and has worked in several capacities with the Boston Pops. He has performed with musical icons like Leonard Bernstein, Billy Joel, Aaron Neville, Bernadette Peters, John Williams, Bruce Hornsby, Lou Rawls and Marvin Hamlisch. Not a sour note in the group.

He conducts as many as 65 concerts a year, 25 with RSO and another 15 in this region. He performs about a dozen piano concerts a year, as well.

UPDATING: VICTORIA BOND

David Wiley had a tough act to follow, quite literally, when he took over the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra 25 years ago. Victoria Bond had been a wildly popular conductor for several years and was known as an innovator, a classicist who would as soon appear on stage with Ray Charles as with Yo-Yo Ma.

Says Wiley, “She was wonderful in building the orchestra. Without her leadership, it would not have been at a certain high level when I got here.”

Bond has been in New York—where her husband has lived all along and where she commuted from when she was in Roanoke—for the past 25 years, making a splendid name for herself in that cultural center, as well as musical hot spots across the country.

Bond is a blueblood: daughter of a vocalist for the NYC Opera and a concert pianist, granddaughter of a composer and conductor. She has been artistic director of Bel Canto Opera Company in New York and was director of the Southwest Virginia Opera at one point.

Her individual compositions, especially her operas, have been roundly praised and she has been considered for Grammy Awards upon occasion.

According to the Dallas Symphony website, Bond “is the only woman composer/conductor to receive commissions from major organizations and to hold music director positions with leading ensembles ... [She is also] the first woman to be awarded a doctorate in conducting from The Juilliard School.”

—Dan Smith

“We want to continue innovation,” he says, “changing to meet the need and the demand. We want to create demand, as well, expanding to three or four pops concerts a year. The pops concerts, he says, “are a great way to network with an entertaining concert.” A lot of business is done at the concerts, he believes. “We put people together. It’s the kind of thing we can do.” 



AshleyEaglesonPhotography

How can learning, impact your business?

Henry Ford may have said it best, "Surround yourself with people that know more than you. One does not need to be able to do it all- one does need to know how to get the task at hand accomplished." As a consultant, I spend a lot of time being the one that "knows how to get the task at hand accomplished." However, I'm always trying to learn and surround myself with people that know more than me. I'd like to think that in doing that on occasion I learn something that I can apply or keep, to use down the road.

Recently, I attended the Roanoke Leadership Breakfast at Hotel Roanoke. There the guest speaker was Jeremie Kubicek. He spoke on building better leaders and likened it to the Sherpa, genetically predestined to be able to operate in extreme altitude situations [most notably as guides in the Himalayan Mountains of Nepal] that most humans can't sustainably function in for longer periods of time.

I found the analogy very interesting personally and in reading the room, found that most people did as well. I spoke with Jeremie afterwards and discussed how our business could begin to offer their leadership training as part of our offerings. He said they had a certification process for partners and that would certainly be open to having a further conversation about what that might look like for us. After LEARNING about how they thought about things, did business and the tools and resources they were able to provide, it was a natural fit. These past few weeks as I have worked through the certification process (still not quite done). I've learned an enormous amount about myself, my interactions in relationships and with my team.

Two key takeaways I've had so far: one, you can't give what you don't possess. Second is that having impact is about multiplication. They use it in a leadership setting but for me personally, I see it across more than just that. By being able to learn and possess something and then teach it to someone you are in a sense multiplying your success. As the adage says, "Give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime." That's ultimately what my goal is in any client interaction and what I feel like makes us good at what we do. Anyone can be told what to do, but teaching someone how and the WHY is super important to sustained success. And in business, isn't that what we want, to make an impact and have sustainable success? 📌

“By being able to learn... and then teach it to someone, you are multiplying your success.”

BEST PRACTICES

By Will Hall

Executive Summary:
I can't give what I don't possess, but through learning I can possess endless possibilities.

William R. Hall III is Chief Executive Officer for Beacon Partners Consulting in southwest Roanoke County. Reach him at will.hall@partnerwithbeacon.com

Race to benefit

First things first: This organization is not a nonprofit; however, most of the work it does benefits nonprofit and community service organizations in our region. Who are we talking about?

Blue Ridge Racing.

Here's a race (running) management, consulting, training, and certification business that provides expert competency in event branding and operations. Many of the race events we are most aware of in this region are managed by Blue Ridge Racing.

"BRR is a for-profit company," starts Molly Bullington, "but every event that I have worked on thus far has a non-profit component to it. For instance, the Blue Ridge Marathon is owned by Roanoke Outside Foundation; the Salem Half Marathon supports several non-profit organizations [such as the Salem Food Pantry]; and of course, the Drumstick Dash is owned by the Rescue Mission of Roanoke."

Blue Ridge Racing has been built with more than 15 years of race experience from husband and wife team, Molly and Matt Bullington. Their credentials include managing adventure racing, triathlons, trail and road races, 5k-8k, half and full marathons, and gigs with known entities such as Odyssey Adventure Racing, Blue Ridge Marathon, Anthem Star-K, LewisGale Salem Half Marathon, Virginia's Blue Ridge Salem 8k, G&H Contracting Salem Kids Fun Run, and IronMan competitions.

One of the most recent exciting announcements (June) is that BRR partnered with the Roanoke Rescue Mission to manage its extraordinarily popular Drumstick Dash 5k run and family walk that is held every Thanksgiving morning. 

“”
Blue Ridge Racing [will] manage the extraordinarily popular Drumstick Dash on Thanksgiving morning.



Courtesy of Blue Ridge Racing

Molly and Matt Bullington

GOOD WORK

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Blue Ridge Racing is a running/race consulting firm that's behind many of the charity events in our region.



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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
Staycations are easy when you live in a great place.

Get away. Here

First of all, I'm *gonna* take a vacation. I'm *gonna* get out of here. At least for a week. At no point in my lifespan have I ever not taken a vacation—even at times when I was so financially strapped, we did the multiple day-trips to Virginia State Parks. Delightful and memorable, by the way.

The “get out of here” mantra is simply for the spiritual replenishment one gets from a simple change of scenery. And the absence from day-to-day affairs that hit us when you don't exit your zip code (plus the dozen or so around you).

But as our electric bill now hits \$550 and gas exceeds \$4 a gallon and inflation easily blows past double-digits and travel expenses are twice what they were just a year ago... I'm remarkably reminded of how beautiful it is this place where we live (!). Perhaps we'll add more staycations to our summer getaways. It is August. Better hop on them.

First stop: Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge. Now there's a repository of all things recreational and regional. The state's tourism resources are fine, too—but VVBR (visitroanokeva.com) offers a nice compilation of all the best short-drivable ideas right here and now.

You might be surprised at the plethora of staycations that are entertaining and can provide a lifetime of memories with your family and loved ones. Staycations can be crafted around events or experiences or environment. Three Es that you can EEEase on through without a lot of hassle.

EVENTS.

Festivals, fairs, and all sorts of gatherings are quite plentiful in Virginia's Blue Ridge August. See a concert you like and tie a few days around it so you're not rushing to and fro. Go to an event or even a trade-type conference where ideas, hobbies, and interests you appreciate are shared. Music, motorcycles, animals, food, culture, arts, sports—you name it; it's all within a 100-mile radius.

EXPERIENCES.

Well, this part of Virginia certainly has its share of the great outdoors. Canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, boating, sailing, skiing, swimming, climbing, shooting, fishing, running, four-wheeling—all here. Just sitting lakeside, riverside, mountain side is perfectly suitable, too. Eateries, wineries, breweries, distilleries—one could spend plenty of time just doing a circuit tour of these sites and agritourism opportunities. Inside we have our museums and small town boutique shops, to name a few possibilities.

ENVIRONMENT.

A lot of us forget that a great getaway can involve just kicking back at a unique or special place. We have some

continued on Page 43

FloydFest finds a new home for 2023 and beyond

FloydFest 22 "Heartbeat" at Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 170.5 near the Floyd-Patrick County line, which concluded at the end of July, was the last after two decades plus on that mountaintop leased property. As of 2023 CEO John McBroom with Across the Way Productions, the organization that stages the music and outdoors family-friendly festival every year, says it's on to their own property in Check - in the heart of Floyd: "its always been in the back of our mind, having more of our destiny in our hands, so to speak, and not having it be a leased property. For the last few years we've been looking."

And now Across the Way productions has found it, just off US 221/Bent Mountain Road in Check, in the heart of Floyd County. 200 acres - as opposed to the current 80-acre festival site and several other off-site parcels used to park and shuttle patrons. That's a plus says McBroom: "we are planning to be able to park every patron on site - so when you get there you're there, there's no shuttling"

McBroom - a musician who performed at the Festival with several of his own ensembles has also retired after 22 years as a teacher to work full time on moving FloydFest to the new location by July 2023. That includes new stages, utilities and roads. "We were actually looking at a property across the street [in Check]. The owner [of a long-time family farm] showed up and said he would never in a million years sell it. Then we ran into him a month later and the conversation continued." A lineup that included headliners like Melissa Etheridge, Trampled by Turtles and Old Crow Medicine Show at sold-out FloydFest 22 was an appropriate sendoff for the annual event, co-created and curated music-wise by Kris Hodges for over two decades.

What McBroom hopes doesn't change with the move after all these years: "keep the continuity of what we've been doing, keep the feeling and the vibe. As much as I love the land where we are and as much as I love the land where we're going this festival is about the people that inhabit it, what they bring to it." McBroom in retirement will devote his full attention to transforming those 200 acres in Floyd County into FloydFest 23 and beyond; he's even living in an old house on the property. If the past is prologue, I figure they'll be able to transport that vibe to the new home for FloydFest. 



FloydFest

Gene Marrano



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
It was the end of an era for FloydFest. And a new beginning awaits.



Hibernation: the re-set needed to spring into action

Staring back at me through the screen during a virtual town hall were faces that looked more tired than usual. Fewer smiles. Fewer videos turned on. I wrote on a sticky note: THEY ARE TIRED. They were tired. I was tired. We had worked through twenty-some months in a pandemic, an organization of helpers providing services to children in foster care and individuals with disabilities. 160 employees switched from in-person, office-based work to the isolation and blurred boundaries of home-based work within two weeks. People who thrive on intimate personal contact did their human-centered work through a screen. We had hoped it wouldn't last. It did, and it had taken a toll, one that we could not sustain.

If our people are not in good shape, our work can suffer – and when our work suffers, so can our clients. Additionally, on the other side of the winter would be meaningful future-building projects that would require energy, insight, and creativity, work that would fail if it did not get our best attention.

We asked a question: How could we provide rest that would help our workers re-set and re-energize? Could we design an experience where we collectively honored a time of transformative retreat while client care was not interrupted?

After a series of design meetings, where we moved from our current reality to a new one, we came up with what we called winter hibernation. For three weeks:

1. All internal meetings – town halls, leadership teams, workgroups, and trainings – were paused.
2. Internal corporate communications were paused unless there was an urgent issue or crisis.
3. All employees were expected to respect their colleagues' hibernation period by limiting emails, chats, and meeting requests.
4. All employees received an additional 2 hibernation PTO days.

Staff crafted blends of focused days catching up on work and PTO days where they totally unplugged. They took turns in PTO so that we continued operating, ensuring staff were available for client needs. We provided an optional pre-hibernation prep session to help staff set intention and build strategies to get the most out of their rest and re-set time.

At its conclusion, we measured impact through staff surveys, learning more about how their workloads, levels of stress, and sense of energy had shifted over time, and how those outcomes related to the choices they made about their hibernation. We learned a lot, including which parts of the experience were most meaningful to them.

GUEST COMMENTARY

By Amanda Noell Stanley, MS, President & CEO, DePaul Community Resources

Executive Summary:
The stakes of burnout are high for us. We are not a business of things. We are a business of care.

While this particular program was a success, staff care is not a program. It's not days off or gift cards or seminars. Staff care is like any kind of care: it requires paying attention with curiosity and meeting people where they are. We saw a need, we set up guardrails for what success would look like, and we tried something new with a sense of wonder about how it might work. It did work. Beyond energizing our teams, it taught them something very important: that they are valued beyond the emails they send and the paperwork they complete. And it taught us once again that no puzzle is unsolvable when we are courageous enough to create something new.

"Plants and animals don't fight the winter; they don't pretend it's not happening and attempt to carry on living the same lives they lived in the summer. They prepare. They adapt. They perform extraordinary acts of metamorphosis to get them through. Wintering is a time of withdrawing from the world, maximizing scant resources, carrying out acts of efficiency and vanishing from sight; but that's where the transformation occurs. Winter is not the death of the life cycle, but its crucible. It's a time for reflection and recuperation, for slow replenishment, for putting your house in order. Doing these deeply unfashionable things – slowing down, letting your spare time expand, getting enough sleep, resting – is a radical act now, but it's essential." (resource: Katherine May, from *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*.) 

Field / On Tap

from Page 40

incredible resorts. Private AirBnB/VRBO-type places are also worthy of consideration. Stay at a unique place in town, along a river, at the lake, up on the mountain. A little booking under three hours away where you unplug and unwind will deliver enormous benefit to your state of mind.

So yeah, I'm *gonna* get away to a place that's not like here. But I'm going to get "barely away" to places that are exactly like here—more often. I'll wave at you when I pass by. 



Staff care requires paying attention with curiosity and meeting people where they are.



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Newsroom ideologue

FRONT co-founder and former editor Dan Smith's new novel *NEWS!* (Propertius Press; 2022) is a quick and engaging read. It is set at an Asheville, N.C., newspaper at a time when there were morning and afternoon editions, layouts were done by hand, and newspapers were still a bastion of mostly male reporters, with women relegated to the Society section. Yet the main character of the story, a young sports reporter named Eb, is thrown into the world of mainstream reporting one day, and over the course of the story, evolves a newsroom shaped through his idealism and tenacity.

In fact, it seems like Eb is the best version of a journalist and woke man at a time when that wasn't a thing – someone perhaps naïve at times, but always seeing the best in people and fighting the good fight. The story weaves together issues that are still in the news today – abortion; Civil rights; drugs; employees with disabilities; and harassment. And it tells the story of how a young reporter who sees only possibilities for a better world and workplace goes about fighting for it. There's also a coming of age and love interest angle woven through the story... and by the end you just fall in love with Eb, a fictional representation of our best self. With Eb (or Saint Eb as I fondly thought of him by the end of the book), Dan Smith has created the person we all hope to become.

—Kathy Baske Young

Another tale of opioid greed

On the heels of the opioid crisis, detailed in books like *Dopesick* by Roanoke's own Beth

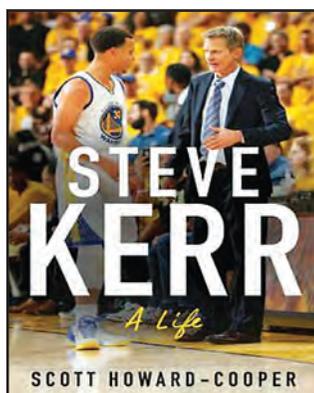
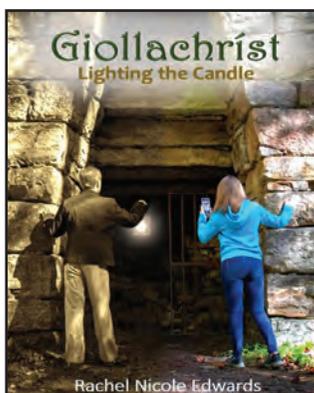
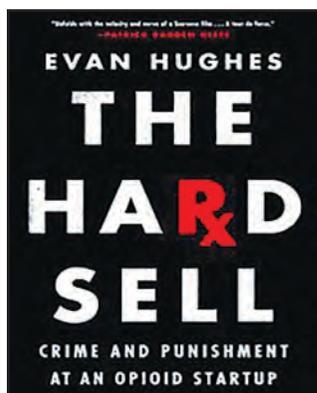
Macy and Empire of Pain, which drilled down on Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family, comes *The Hard Sell: Crime and Punishment At An Opioid Startup* (Doubleday, 2022) by Evan Hughes. Here the devil is fentanyl – much stronger than heroin or the legal opioids pedaled by Purdue Pharma and other manufacturers as ‘the end of pain.’ John Kapoor was a hard driving Indian immigrant and successful businessman late in his career when he founded Insys Therapeutics.

Kapoor gathered a team of young lieutenants looking to make a name for themselves with a spray form of fentanyl that could be administered under the tongue. Then Insys skirted the guidelines about how it was to be prescribed, bribed targeted physicians by paying them to be on a “speakers bureau,” and hired an aggressive sales staff willing in many cases to put fat paychecks and bonuses above the health of patients duped into trying fentanyl and getting hooked. Many became addicted, some died. In the end many of the Insys management team wound up on trial, but only after years of subterfuge and outright lying. Another maddening tale of greed, the power of Big Pharma and the ineptitude of governing bodies, told in a brisk scintillating style that reads almost like a novel.

—Gene Marrano

Spirit with local connections

I met Rachel Nicole Edwards when she received a student scholarship from the Botetourt Chamber of Commerce in June; and I was excited to purchase her debut novel, *Giollachrist: Lighting the Candle*



(SDC Publishing; 2021). Even at my age I enjoyed this Young Adult book that tells the story of a young girl with autism who relocates her home to a renovated farmhouse across from her grandparents. She meets a ghost (a boy the same age, 16) who lived in the house since the 1800s, when the Irish immigrated to America. Through her friendship, she learns to accept and understand her autism and introversion as a uniqueness, as the ghost pushes her to get out of her comfort zone. It turns out, he was “picked on” too; principally from anti-Irish sentiment at the time. She also helps her new ghost friend on his quest to heaven and reuniting with his family.

The setting is current day Botetourt County, which makes the story even more intriguing. It references local landmarks, history, and rural life such as Greenfield, Santillane, Fincastle, the furnaces, mines, churches, farms, rivers, and mountains. You don’t have to be a fan of Sci-Fi or paranormal or fantasy to enjoy this book. It’s mostly an illustration of how a deep friendship can be the best way to help you overcome challenges.

—Emily Field

Unique life for probable HoF Coach

Not athletic enough, too slow, not a great defender, barely recruited out of high school. Yet Steve Kerr went on to spend 15 years in the NBA with a handful of teams, winning four championships with the Chicago Bulls and the San Antonio Bulls. Michael Jordan passed the ball of

to him for a game winning shot in an NBA Finals game instead of taking that shot instead himself – the ultimate sign of trust and respect from the hard-driving MJ. *Steve Kerr: A Life* (William Morrow/Harper Collins 2021) is a fascinating history of the player, the TV analyst standout and most importantly the deep-thinking coach with a world view shaped by events in his life – like the assassination of his father Malcolm in Beirut, where he was president of American University there. Kerr was born in Beirut and spent much of his early life abroad.

That has led Steve Kerr to become outspoken later in his life on political issues – like the presidency of Donald Trump. He was no fan and in fact Trump disinvited the Golden State Warriors from the traditional White House visit for NBA champions. Salem sportswriter Roland Lazenby, who has authored dozens of books, many on the National Basketball Association, is quoted in *Steve Kerr: A Life*, written by Scott Howard-Cooper, who has written extensively about the Warriors and the league. Kerr has now won four titles with Golden State – after taking the head coach position without ever having served as an assistant. The true “players coach,” is almost surely ticketed for the Basketball Hall of Fame at some point.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Kathy Baske Young** of Blue Ridge Resources is an executive and team coach; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT; **Emily Field** is FRONT office administrator.



Submitted

Back in the flesh >

Friendship Retirement Community recently held its first in-person graduation class of Student Nursing Assistants (SNA) since COVID. Friendship had 12 students graduate from an in-house four-week class starting on May 23rd. After graduation, each student was placed at either Friendship Health and Rehabilitation Center North (FHRC-N), Friendship Health and Rehabilitation Center South (FHRC-S), or Salem Terrace. "It was nice to hold an in-person graduation for my students since COVID," said **Melissa Dillard**. "I enjoy being a part of the process to teach and educate our employees to better themselves."



Submitted

Charged up in Floyd >

Citizens Telephone Cooperative (aka Citizens) in Floyd has added an electric car to the vehicle fleet. "A 2021 Chevy Bolt that never needs gas and never needs an oil change," stated **Greg Sapp**, the General Manager of Citizens. "The Bolt has a range of around 259 miles making it a perfect choice for use in and around the New River Valley." Citizens is also making an e-car charging station open to the public, with an EV Charging Station calling it "CitiZap." Citizens installed a Level 2 Fast Charging Station that will fully charge a battery such as in the Chevy Bolt in about 6 to 8 hours.



Submitted

Foundation's 3 awards >

Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia has awarded \$100,000 from a private foundation grant to three local social service non-profits in the Roanoke Valley. **Family Service of Roanoke Valley** was awarded \$40,000 to support the Strengthen Youth Opportunity for Success (SYOC) program. **Feeding Southwest Virginia (FSWVA)** was awarded \$20,000 to support the Community Solutions Center's (CSC) Meal Production Training Program. **Free Clinic of Franklin County (FCFC)** was awarded \$40,000 to support its Medicaid Expansion Initiative. *Pictured: L-R: Mary E. Hodges, Grants Officer of Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, and Linda Hentschel, President and CEO of Family Service of Roanoke Valley.*

Center changes guard >

After 30 years as the President and CEO at **Center in the Square** - interrupted by a short hiatus - Dr. **Jim Sears** has retired. Center in the Square helped lead to the rebirth of downtown Roanoke as a destination spot: "I think [Center] helped clean the Market [area] up. It wasn't just Center in the Square, a lot of small businesspeople put their finances on the line to come down and open up a business. Center in the Square, Billy's Ritz [restaurant], and others. The [City] Market has been turned around." Sears (now 77) will remain as a board member at Center in the Square. The former Director of Development, **Tara Marciniak** (pictured with Sears) succeeds her former boss.



Gene Marrano



Open. Wide >

Henritze Dental Group held a grand opening for their Vinton office which is consolidating with their former practice on Orange Avenue. Henritze Dental Group will also welcome their new Brambleton location in the former Bear Trap Inn building on July 11. You can find their Vinton office at 614 E Washington Avenue and their new Brambleton office at 3604 Brambleton Avenue. (photo courtesy of Henritze Dental Group; Vinton Mayor Brad Grose is on the right)



Wing spreading at clinic >

A ribbon cutting last month for the new 2000 sq. ft. behavioral health wing at the **Bradley Free Clinic** in downtown Roanoke – more rooms for counselors to meet with patients struggling with mental health issues. Requests for mental health services spiked sharply nationwide during the height of the COVID pandemic. **Janine Underwood** is the clinic’s executive director. She says more room was also needed for substance abuse counseling related to the Hope Initiative based at the Bradley Free Clinic. “We knew back in the beginning of 2020 that our behavioral health department was going to expand. We didn’t know it was going to expand this quickly [but] going from 40 patients to a thousand [annually] we needed the space. This is an amazing thing for the community.” **Lionberger Construction** built the new wing; ground was broken last August. Grant funding helped pay for the addition. Roanoke furniture company **Textur** designed and supplied chairs, counter spaces and other furnishings for the new wing.



Courtesy of Roanoke County

Strong business >

M-Power Fitness is a new gym located on Brambleton Avenue in the former Titan Fit Roanoke space. M-Power says it can accommodate a range gym-goers, from cardio enthusiasts to powerlifters, with an expansive inventory of equipment for functional strength training. Owners **Clif Clark** and **Eric Sparrow** both have inspirational stories that helped them overcome adversity, so they emphasize motivation and mental toughness.

Etrucks roll out of Pulaski >

The **Volvo Trucks** plant in Dublin-Pulaski County is teaming with logistics partners to deploy its VNR Electric trucks along the I-81 corridor, aimed at helping reduce carbon emissions on daily routes to Volvo's NRV assembly plant in Dublin. During a recent handover ceremony **Collin Peel**, president of Camrett Logistics, a Volvo Trucks' customer, took delivery of the Volvo VNR Electric (pictured). Pulaski County officials and leadership from **Nacarato Truck Center** in Troutville - Volvo Truck's first E-V certified dealership in the state of Virginia - were also present. Nacarato had to pass "rigorous training, service and sales preparation and infrastructure investments, to be able to sell and service Volvo electric trucks at their site," says a spokesperson.



Courtesy photo



Broadband on mountain >

Cox and **Roanoke County** partnered to extend broadband services to the rural Bent Mountain community. County leaders and community partners gathered to celebrate the availability of services for the 48 homes that now have fast, reliable broadband, as well as the successful public-private partnership that made it possible. Leaders joined to speak on the importance of partnership, future plans for investment and broadband expansion in the region, and the critical role broadband access plays in promoting equity and inclusion in today's connected world.

Donation photo: Board members of the Bent Mountain Center receive a donation of broadband service for one year courtesy of Cox Communications. Speakers photo: (l to r) Bill Hunter (County of Roanoke, IT Director); David Radford (Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, Windsor Hill District); Jeff Merritt (Roanoke Market VP, Cox Communications); Virginia Senator David Suetterlein; Josh Hess (District Director for Congressman Morgan Griffith) [photo credit Roanoke Valley Television]



Hokie's future no slam-dunk >

Virginia Tech student-athlete **Justyn Mutts** will return for one final year this Fall and play basketball for the Hokies while working on a third degree. Social work may be in his future and recently he was at the **West End Center for Youth** in Roanoke, hooping it up with summer campers. His message for the West End Center Kids – work hard to overcome any obstacles standing in your way – nothing substantial comes easy.

"I come from a similar upbringing. I'm from New Jersey but [its similar] in the sense of just trying to make do with what you've got. Hopefully, I can give back the knowledge and information to help them become more responsible." Mutts is also hoping one more season at Tech will enhance his NBA draft status next year. He's also working on some NIL (Name, Image, Likeness) opportunities with a group of advisors, as now permissible under NCAA guidelines.



Courtesy Senator Mark Warner's office

Senator brings big check >

U.S. Senator **Mark Warner** finished off a 3-day trip across Southwestern Virginia in mid-July by delivering a 15-million-dollar check in federal funding to airport officials in Roanoke. At the tail-end of his tour discussing Virginia's infrastructure, Warner has bestowed the **Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport** with its share of the funds promised by the bi-partisan infrastructure bill.

"There's 400 million dollars of guaranteed funding for Virginia airports in the infrastructure bill [passed in 2021]," said Warner, who also toured the facility with members of the ROA Airport Commission and sat in on a roundtable discussion. The 15 million will go towards improving security, cutting down on wait times, and opening new gates, in the hopes of improving customer experience.

In turn, Warner hopes this will drive up traffic through the airport. "One of the things I'm concerned about is the leakage of traffic [to other airports]. If we can make this customer experience better, if we can get an additional gate open that can potentially bring in more flights..."

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



Hayth

Bank of Botetourt has announced that its president and CEO, **G. Lyn Hath, III** has been elected to serve on the Virginia Bankers Association Board of Directors. VBA is a statewide advocacy organization founded in 1893 that represents banks of all sizes and charters—a collective industry today of \$881 billion and 45,000 employees. Hayth has been with Bank of Botetourt for 36 years that now operates 13 branches with more than \$717 million in total assets. He graduated from Virginia Tech, holds a BS and MS in economics, is a graduate of the Virginia Bankers School of Management at the University of Virginia,

and a graduate of the Graduate School of Banking of the South at Louisiana State University. He resides in Botetourt County with his wife, Angela.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Lackey

Vergé has added **Jackie Lackey** as Vice President of Programs. In her role, Lackey will help develop programming opportunities through the Vergé alliance – including RBTC and RAMP – to propel the Roanoke and Blacksburg regional innovation ecosystem forward. Her work will include helping to create a stronger technology funding pipeline, jobs and talent investment, enhanced visibility

for partners, and lead conversations in the industry.



Garcia

Vergé has hired a new Vice President of Entrepreneurial Development and Director of RAMP (succeeding the retired Mary Miller.) **Lisa Garcia** is expanding her role with RAMP, already bringing a wealth of educational and entrepreneurial knowledge to the Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program. She's a familiar face to the organization as a mentor, which just celebrated its fifth anniversary in the region. "She knows what it takes to help companies begin to commercialize technology and propel their ideas forward," said Erin Burcham,

President of Vergé and Executive Director of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council. RAMP is a 12-week regional business accelerator for STEM startups located in Roanoke.

LEGAL FRONT



Scheib

Gentry Locke has welcomed **John M. Scheib** as a partner in its General Commercial Practice Group. He is the former Chief Legal Officer and a former senior executive of Norfolk Southern Corporation. The majority of Scheib's career has been spent working in the legal aspects of the transportation and railroad industries.

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EDUCATIONAL FRONT



Ollendorff

Arthur Ollendorff has been named associate dean for graduate medical education at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM). He will serve in this role while also acting as the official responsible for all of the graduate medical education programs at Carilion Clinic, a role he has held since September 2021. Ollendorff is a professor in the VTCSOM departments of OB/GYN and health systems and implementation science.

The Virginia Tech College of Science has named **Kristy Morrill** as its director of alumni relations. Morrill, who earned a degree in communication in 1991 from what is now the

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



Morrill

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, was most recently the director of undergraduate recruiting for the College of Science.

Debra C. Meade, retired president and publisher of The Roanoke Times, has been elected chair of the Hollins University Board of Trustees. A Norfolk native, Meade holds a bachelor's and a master's degree from Virginia Tech. She also



Meade

attended Longwood College, now Longwood University, when it was a women's college. Meade was appointed by Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine to the Roanoke Higher Education Authority Board of Trustees in 2009 and served until 2014, including as vice chair.

David Ford, a professor of civil engineering at Texas A&M University who will join the College



Ford

of Engineering at Virginia Tech this fall, has been named the Vecellio Professor of Construction Engineering and Management by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. Ford is a distinguished scholar who is internationally recognized in the field of system dynamics with application to construction engineering and management of the built environment.



CONTRIBUTORS

Ray Cox is a Bonsack native and still resident, a 1979 graduate of the University of Virginia, he's written for newspapers since 1976 including 32 years at the Roanoke Times covering sports, local government, and has been a general interest columnist. Since, he's freelanced for a variety of publications, taught high school English, and become a grandfather. [raysportswriter@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 FCCU 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]

Will Hall is the Chief Executive Officer of Beacon Partners Consulting. They specialize in Human Resources, Operational Efficiency and Brand & Marketing. A graduate of Roanoke College, Will has several years experience working in the consulting field with small business owners. When not consulting you can find him at a local pickup game playing basketball.

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 supporting 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]

Jennifer Leake is an expert in employee assessments and their use to better select, engage and lead employees. Jennifer has over 20 years of assessment experience and is certified in multiple assessments, including Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement tools.

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

Gene Marrano is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFR 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.

Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 20 years. Her work highlights the sights of

people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsone7@gmail.com]

Alicia Smith is vice president of F&S Building Innovations in Roanoke. She grew up in the construction business and has served in multiple capacities, currently managing all sales, design, production and marketing of the residential division. She's also the president of Build Smart Institute and serves on several boards, community and church organizations. Alicia enjoys lake-life living and fun times with her family (husband and two daughters) and friends.

Dan Smith is a Roanoke-based writer and journalist, former editor of FRONT, whose new novel (8th book) NEWS! will be out this summer. [pampa dansmith@gmail.com]

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic designer with 20 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 Owner of Elder Care Solutions, a local business with national reach that guides families to a financially positive caring and aging experience through their unique technology-driven solution. She is also the creator of The Care Colloquium, the first annual 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. [kimberly@eldercareolutionsinc.com]



Rashed

Entomologist **Arash Rashed** has been named the new director of Virginia Tech's Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center. Rashed comes to the university from the University of Idaho, where he most recently served as an associate professor and the Idaho State integrated pest management coordinator in the Department of Entomology, Plant Pathology, and Nematology.

Myriam Jimenez recently joined the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine as clinical



Jimenez

assistant professor of production management medicine. As part of clinical service, Jimenez will work at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, which provides routine patient care, emergency services, and referral services



Mason

Kendria Mason has been named the coordinator of First-Year Experiences, the university wide program

supporting the academic transition of new Virginia Tech students. Prior to joining the university, Mason received a master's degree in higher education and student affairs with a concentration in student affairs from the University of South Carolina.



Tedesco

John Tedesco has been appointed director of the School of Communication in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. He's been a faculty member in the School of Communication since 1999 and held the position of professor in the public relations division since 2013.

Tedesco was previously the director of graduate studies and director of research and outreach in the Department of Communication.

Veterinarian, researcher, and educator **Katherine Fogelberg** has been named associate dean for professional programs at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech. This role oversees the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program and is responsible for the design, planning, operation, and assessment of that program. Fogelberg was the director of the Center for Innovation in Veterinary Education and Technology (CIVET) at Lincoln Memorial University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Compiled by Gene Marrano



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Honors for Agee

Carilion Clinic President and CEO Nancy Howell Agee is among the 2022 class of Modern Healthcare's 50 Most Influential Clinical Executives. This award program honors individuals in healthcare who are deemed by their peers and the magazine's senior editors to be paving the way to better health through their executive responsibility, leadership qualities, innovation, community service and achievements inside and outside of their respective organizations. Agee was recognized for her lifelong dedication to healthcare, beginning as a nurse in 1973 and rising as an industry thought leader throughout her nearly 50-year career.

New Cook Out location

Cook Out has purchased the 2,088 square foot retail building that used to house Long John Silvers on Franklin Road in Roanoke for almost \$600,000. This will be the second Roanoke location for the chain (burgers, hot dogs, chicken etc.) when it opens.

Major grant focused on fighting evictions

The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust has awarded \$400,000 to the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Virginia to help provide legal assistance to low-income tenants facing evictions and homelessness in the Roanoke Valley and surrounding areas. The Legal Aid Society has seen a 70% increase in

eviction cases during the past year. The additional resources will allow The Legal Aid Society to hire additional staff to assist more families that are desperately in need of legal help to avoid homelessness. The grant will also be utilized to educate both landlords and tenants about their rights and responsibilities in hopes of reducing the number of unlawful evictions in and around the Roanoke Valley.

High marks for local credit union

Member One Federal Credit Union is one of the best credit unions in Virginia, according to Forbes. The Credit Union was among five in the America's Best Credit Unions In Each State list. This year also marks the third consecutive year Member One has been named to this list. "Just over 3% of all credit unions nationwide are recognized by Forbes, so to receive this prestigious designation just once is incredible. To receive it three years in a row is truly humbling," said Lori Cauley, Member One's Chief Brand & Experience Officer. 2022 marks the fifth time that Forbes has worked with market research firm Statista to name the Best-In-State Credit Unions.

RBTC alumni get grant funding

RAMP alumni companies – and RBTC members – have received grant funding from the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC). Each company that went

through the high-tech business incubator program received a \$75,000 award to support their commitment to innovation and their high potential for economic development and job creation. VIPC awarded funding through the Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) was launched in 2020 to foster innovative and collaborative efforts in Virginia. Recipients include ArchiveCore INC, Chorda Pharma, Corvus Labs, Cyto Recovery and Ticket Spicket.

RoCo in good shape

Roanoke County has been recognized as No. 133 in the country by U.S. News & World Report in their 2022 Healthiest Communities ranking. Roanoke County ranked 24 points higher than communities across Virginia and 14 points higher than national average. Healthiest Communities is an interactive platform developed by U.S. News & World Report, in collaboration with CVS Health. Roanoke County's rankings include better than average scores in the categories of population health, equity, education, economy, and infrastructure. In 2021, The county was ranked No. 196 out of the top 500 Urban, High-Performing communities.

Game changer for those with sleep apnea?

A new treatment option for those with sleep apnea announced by LewisGale Medical Center last fall after five years of clinical trials is taking root in

Salem. And there are no facemasks involved. Dr Brian Gross, a head and neck surgeon at LewisGale Medical Center in Salem, has worked with a Sleep medicine team at the hospital to introduce a new technology called Inspire over the past six months. It can treat those suffering from obstructive sleep apnea - without resorting to the CPAP positive air pressure masks – which he calls the "gold standard," that Dr. Gross says some apnea sufferers just cannot tolerate: "half the people are not getting adequate treatment with positive pressure ventilation. That's 50 percent of the people that could [still] be treated ... in a safe, effective way."

The Inspire method involves several sensors placed underneath the patient's skin - including one on the muscle that controls the tongue. Mild stimulation keeps the airway open during sleep; the patient can turn off the system when they wake up. "At night when you breathe in, it will activate and open the throat up to actually remove the obstruction." Untreated sleep apnea can be much more than just heavy snoring – untreated it can lead to fatigue that causes accidents, impacts on a person's mood and memory, even death if the flow of oxygen to the brain because of an obstructed airway. Gross calls Inspire a "game changer."

More broadband in Craig County

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in at-home

workers, Craig County was at a disadvantage due to a lack consistent internet connections. Member of the Craig County Broadband Committee Jordan Labiosa reached out to T-Mobile CEO Mike Sievert about the issue, and the county ended up cooperating with T-Mobile to increase access to broadband internet. Labiosa on the public-private partnership: "this is one of many creative angles that the Craig County Broadband Committee has explored. We were really honored that T-Mobile chose to partner with us. Ultimately our goal is to have fiber in every home in our locality, but along the way we've been absolutely open to partnerships that expand broadband at little to no cost to Craig County taxpayers."

Roanoke City looks to fund park improvements

PLAY Roanoke has announced the formation of the Roanoke Parks Foundation, dedicated to supporting the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. The non-profit

organization will work with donors, volunteers, and community leaders; to raise funds, accept gifts, and provide additional resources to enhance the department's existing programs, services, facilities, and technology. "Just 2% of the overall city budget is allocated to the Parks and Recreation Department, which doesn't allow for much wiggle room with maintaining the long list of assets we manage," says Patrick Boas, Recreation Manager. Throughout the course of the pandemic, Parks and Recreation facilities saw a dramatic increase in usage which outpaced the department's budget. Funding provided by the Roanoke Parks Foundation will be allocated toward the nearly \$80 million dollars' worth of projects identified in the latest master plan.

More high-profile cycling events

Virginia's Blue Ridge Go Cross has been invited to join the USCX – the prestigious U.S. cyclocross series – further solidifying the region as a premiere

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outdoor recreation destination. "Our overall goal is to host four weekends of premier racing for both elite and amateur fields in the amazing sport of cyclocross," says Scott Page, USCX series co-founder and executive director of Rochester Cyclocross. Professional and amateur cyclocross racers will kick off the USCX series in Roanoke September 17 and 18, followed by Rochester Cyclocross, Baltimore's Charm City, and then the Really Rad Festival of Cyclocross in Falmouth, Massachusetts. All races will be globally viewable via livestream.

"If you look at the history of Go Cross over the last five years, you'll see this constant push to be bigger and better" says Kerry Werner, winner of

the 2021 USCX men's elite field. "Events like Go Cross and the community around the event are a big reason Emily and I moved to Roanoke in 2020. To have an event of this caliber one mile from my front door is like a dream come true." Since its inception, Go Cross has helped bolster the appeal of cycling races in the Roanoke Region to national audiences. Recent events like the VBR Ironman 70.3 and USA Cycling Amateur Road National Championships, and the relocation of Team Twenty24 to the Roanoke Valley have furthered that goal.

Digital Franklin County

Franklin County officials say they have placed fourth in the nation in the

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Annual Digital Counties Survey for communities with a population less than 150,000. Franklin County, at a population of roughly 55,000, competes with counties that are up to three times its size. This is the thirteenth year the County has placed in the nation's top ten annual ranking, which recognizes counties leading the way in using information and communications technology. The national ranking is issued by the Center for Digital Government (CDG), in partnership with the National Association of Counties (NACo).

RC-Carilion work to improve school-to-career pipeline

Roanoke College and Carilion Clinic have announced a new partnership to advance educational opportunities and workforce development for Roanoke College students - and Carilion employees. Dr. Shannon Anderson is coordinator of public health studies at Roanoke College - she notes that RC students have already been interning with Carilion: "I think we can reimagine the internship in ways that will help our students be more ready to contribute, and it will help the folks at Carilion figure out how to work with them more effectively."

The partnership looks to build a better pipeline for non-clinical healthcare professionals, with

increased placement of Roanoke College graduates at Carilion as a goal. "What would help make an internship at Carilion work better?" Anderson wonders, "would it be a semester before they [graduate], really learning about the institution and the department where they'll be - really learning what's going to make them work most effectively?" Continuing education tracks for Carilion employees at the College is another component of the new partnership.

Big boost for RC Science Center

Roanoke College has announced that Dr. David and Susan Gring, the College's ninth president and first lady (1989 to 2004), have committed to making a gift of \$3.5 million to the College to support a student research endowment and the College's planned Science Center. To date, the College has raised \$50 million toward the \$70 million goal for the construction of the new Science Center. Plans for the center include state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces, and a complete renovation of the Life Sciences and Trexler buildings.

Cundiff closes its doors after 6 decades

Another long-time Roanoke Valley independent pharmacy has closed its doors. The

Cundiff Drug Store had served the Vinton area for more than 60 years. It opened in December of 1959 and closed the doors for a final time in late June. Sam Cundiff's father Wallace opened the drug store. In recent years, Sam Cundiff was part owner and the pharmacist in charge. He says independent pharmacies and the big chains both face difficult financial pressures: "there's just no profit in pharmacy anymore because of insurance companies that do not usually pay full reimbursement for the price of prescription drugs." Cundiff says without being widely diversified in what is sold, like at CVS and Walgreen's, it's tough for independent drug stores to survive. A looming retirement and scarce interest in buying the store also led to the decision to close after 62 years.

Chorda OTC pain relief product moves forward with grant

Chorda Pharma, a local pharmaceutical company looking to bring its first product, Capsydn - an over the counter, non-addictive topical cream medication for chronic pain to market next year - has received a \$75,000 grant for testing, manufacturing and marketing. Victor Iannello is Chorda's CEO: "some describe [it] as the holy grail to treating chronic pain in a safe and effective manner. Already

there's tremendous interest in it." With a form of the active ingredient in Capsydn already FDA-approved, the pathway to commercial is shortened and Corda Pharma aims to have it on the market by next year. "This grant [from the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation] will help us get there faster," adds Iannello, the founder of several local companies including Synchrony. "We don't have an abundance of cash and having this grant is a way to subsidize some of our efforts." Chorda Pharma was founded to address the growing incidence of arthritis, diabetic neuropathy, sports injuries, and other ailments among individuals requiring long-term treatment to relieve pain.

Big Spring Mill closing after 172 years

Big Spring Mill in Elliston announced it is closing after operating as a family-owned business for almost one and three-quarter century. The mill gained a reputation for its seasoned flour, but also made "Virginia's Best" self-rising flour, biscuit mix, corn meal, and livestock feed. Some chatter on social media suggested there could be interest from investors, but that is unconfirmed.

*Compiled by
Gene Marrano*

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““

She discovered the Grateful Dead and followed them from California to Canada to Mexico.

— Page 27

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Dan Smith

Jenni Nolen works out at the Kirk Family YMCA, where she is a trainer.

The Big Lift, The Small Woman

By Dan Smith

Jenni Nolen is a tiny woman with a huge heart and the ability to lift three times her weight. And now she holds a world record.

Jenni Nolen stretches out her height as much as she can. “I’m 5-foot-one and a half,” she emphasizes. “Don’t forget the half. I need it.”

Well, “need” is relative, especially for a 52-year-old woman who can lift three times her 101-pound weight (308.8-pound deadlift in this case) and set a world record with that lift recently. She actually lifted 320, but a technical glitch erased that significant accomplishment, saving it for a later day.

The same day, she bench pressed 115.7 pounds, a Virginia state record. By comparison, a football player is generally asked to bench press his weight. She, of course, surpassed that.

Nolen, mother of two grown children (and separated from her long-time husband Rob Clark), has been lifting weights for 10 years, but power lifting competitively for three years. She is already piling up the records: two national deadlift records and state marks in the bench press, squat and dead lift.

Nolen is a trained artist whose work is quickly recognized in the Roanoke art community, and the former co-owner (with Clark) of Cantos Books, a popular store that served customers from the Roanoke City Market for several years. She managed the store and kept the books (not her favorite thing to do).



Jenni Nolen in national competition.



Submitted

She had been lifting weights for several years when the wellness director at the Y suggested she might try power lifting. "I was so scared of the weight room," she says. In her first meet, she broke the national record in deadlifting with a lift of 275 pounds. She was hooked.

"One day, I just decided I was going to do it. I was in my 40s and had no interest [previously]. Most women are intimidated by the weight room, but it is the reason I became a trainer. A lot of women don't know what to do and it is embarrassing. I just asked and found the power lifting community to be so supportive."

Power lifting is generally a young person's activity and Nolen says, "I'm the old woman" of weightlifting. These days, she lifts four days a week, two hours per session. Her work at the Y involves training others and "I specialize in strength training. I've been

doing it for about five years and many people seek me out" for that specific activity. Weightlifting "gives me something to concentrate on" since her kids—Sam, 19, and Morgan, 26—have left the nest.

The Franklin County native and Roanoke College graduate (studio art) paints ("still life and landscapes; I no longer paint portraits because they are exhausting") though her goal "is more for fun than income."

Lifting has "helped develop mental toughness and perseverance. You learn to push yourself, to fail. Some days it's just not there. You compete against yourself, creating this internal competitiveness." She admits that the competitive edge has always been there, but this is a different expression of it. Her short-term goal is to break world records in the bench press and the squat "and I'd like a heavier deadlift." Small woman, big goals. 🏋️‍♀️

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He has developed the strong impression that music is good for business. — Page 36

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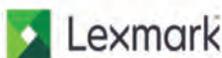
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