

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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FEBRUARY 2022

8 Career Switchers

Carilion Clinic's /
Virginia Tech Carilion
School of Medicine's
NL Bishop

Regional Technology
Champion Henry Bass

Roof Maxx

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CAREER SWITCHERS



Deb Squire
Directions—Career/Life Transitions



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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

With COVID impacting the labor work force and many dropping out for a while as they figure out what they really want to do, transitioning from one line of work to another might be considered “a thing” these days. But people have been doing it for years and you’ll meet some of them via our cover story – not to mention the feature on Nathaniel “NL” Bishop at Carilion, who has reinvented his career more than once. His latest role involves diversity and inclusion in the healthcare workforce, something many employers in various sectors have been reckoning with more seriously over the past few years.

You will also notice a theme among several of our columns from the gifted authors we feature this month, centered around goal setting and taking stock for 2022. “SMART” goals come up more than once – and that’s okay. Give them a look, take stock of where YOU are, and Happy Reading.



Tom Field
Publisher



Gene Marrano
Editor

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bring you
your slippers

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“ Squeeze every bit of joy out of your days. — Page 42

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FEBRUARY



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Advisory Board

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

2022 CONTRIBUTORS



Shannon Dominguez



Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Mike Leigh



Gene Marrano



Michael Shelton

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Don't gamble
the rent on it.
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Neal Cummings
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Kevin Holt
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legal

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wants to
protect is their
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Jeff Merritt
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technology



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finance – banking



Michael Waldvogel
Waldvogel Commercial Properties /
commercial real estate

Biographies and
contact information
on each contributor
are provided on Page 56.

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I ran away from
the circus. — Page 11

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Switches and other railroad items shown in this report are artifacts curated by Virginia Museum of Transportation.

Career Switchers

By Tom Field

A lot of us have changed jobs.

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics most recently reported an average of 12.4 jobs held in a lifetime of employment (when tracking baby boomers who worked from age 18 to 54). In the US, the trend has climbed higher with each generation since employment data has been tracked.

Increasingly, however, it's not just the number of job changes that keeps growing; more of the transitions involve complete career changes.

Throw in the 2020—2022 global pandemic, and employment agents and resources are experiencing the most dramatic career changes on record.

Is “career switching” just a trendy blip in our US labor market, or is it a significant indicator of real change coming to our society that businesses will need to address?

“It’s real,” says Deb Squire, a consultant in the Roanoke region, whose very title acknowledges the new economy: she’s a Career Pivot Strategist.

“The average job is eliminated or completely changed every three to five years,” Squire says. “Interestingly, most people’s lives change every three to five years, as well.”

“The pandemic has brought to attention our value systems,” she continues. But the COVID disruption is still not the main catalyst for switching careers, Squire explains.

WARNING

Do not play on or around railroad tracks or trespass on railway property. The FRONT cover photograph was taken with approval on the grounds of Virginia Museum of Transportation, a dead track, fenced in property for visitors. The Federal Railroad Administration reports more than 400 fatalities per year average from trespassing along railroad rights-of-way, making it the leading cause of rail-related deaths in America.

How Will You Contribute?

"Work environment is everything. I don't just find someone a job; I find where they can contribute." Indeed, Squire's email signature includes a quote from Richard Bolles and the best seller *What Color is Your Parachute?* that says "Exercise those talents, gifts / The ones you most love to use / For the purpose of the world / Most needs done right now."

Squire says her advice "focuses on midlife professionals—not executives."

"I think a lot of employers are confused" [at this volatile time]. "They're trying to solve the wrong problem. It's not pay. They can't answer what makes them the best employer. Likewise, when you get good employees, you get customers."

Squire has always been fascinated with employment, recruiting, talent development and career coaching. She has a Master's Degree in business and psychology, certified in career coaching, and conducts workshops and seminars in the business community. She watches the statistics closely; and her experience and approaches are listed on her website, www.debsquire.com. She has a solid list of recommendations for job-seekers; including ways to take on the challenge—even if you are switching careers.

"People look at job boards," Squire says, "but only 3% are actively open. Seventy percent of jobs are acquired through referrals. You have to put yourself in the right place and the right time."

Much of her advice is what she calls a "well, duh..." moment. "I have a seven-step process in my workshop; but people still discover so many things they overlooked. People spend more time buying a microwave than they do getting a job." A big tip, she says, is to find someone in the position you want, and ask that person what would make someone successful in this organization.

Perhaps the most optimistic observation Squire notes, is how much opportunity has opened up for today's job-seeker.

"Employers create jobs if they meet the right person."

Say Goodbye to Happenstance

Shonny Cooke has also been involved in the vocational development and employment industry for a long time—her whole career in fact, the last seven years as Career Services Manager at the Hall Associates Career Center at Virginia Western Community College.

Cooke has witnessed a significant uptick in individuals who want to change careers or move into a new direction.



Deb Squire

Tom Field



Shonny Cooke

Submitted

GO TO JAIL



Some organizations are recognizing the increase in “career switchers” and capitalizing on that trend. In our market, the Western Virginia Regional Jail runs a television ad specifically addressing those looking to switch careers. The ad even encourages those interested to run up to the TV and scan the QR Code.

“There are a lot of reasons [for people changing jobs],” she says. “We have non-traditional, adult learners, and people who have lives outside of school.” Cooke says many students have been in the workforce but are ready to transition to different careers for various reasons.

“Some don’t enjoy where they are; they are looking for something they are more passionate about.”

And then, of course, there is that big reason:

“They are looking for more of an economic return.”

A bit hesitant to identify specific vocational areas, since any one industry may not be a good fit for any one student, Cooke admits there are fields that are more popular and offering more opportunity at this time.

“A lot of them are leaning toward healthcare,” she says. “With healthcare you get a double benefit: one is the passion—they like the idea of giving back and making an impact. Two, there is security and income stability.

“Of course, many understand the importance of technology...” she continues. The STEM fields are quite popular and promising. Cooke also says certification (especially for people working in a trade who never got credentials) is another high interest area.



"We have so many services now that are free," Cooke says. "Back in the 80s, you'd pay a counselor \$500 for an assessment."

"So many people are victims of career happenstance." Cooke says people just end up where they happened to land. But now, more of them are finding "it's time to reinvent."

Cooke enjoys her line of work. She says she empathizes with people who are now looking to "connect to a deeper level" with their vocation.

"I like helping people find their path." She appreciates the formula where "passion plus purpose equals profession."

Exploring and navigating a new career can produce anxiety, Cooke acknowledges. And she sees individuals who are overwhelmed and are not sure how to proceed.

She doesn't throw all the confusing possibilities and challenging academic or vocational tracks at them.

"I ask them, 'what's the FIRST thing you want to do?'"

The Big Switch

We all know folks who have made dramatic career changes. We have written about so many of them that turned into intriguing or inspiring stories in this business journal. Here is a handful of local examples. Their reasons differ; their stories differ; but all of them are satisfied they made the right decision. As we just discovered, if they don't remain satisfied... well, it's not unreasonable to expect another career switch. They'll look for that lever to pull, switch tracks, and move on down the next line.

Just wait.

* * * * *

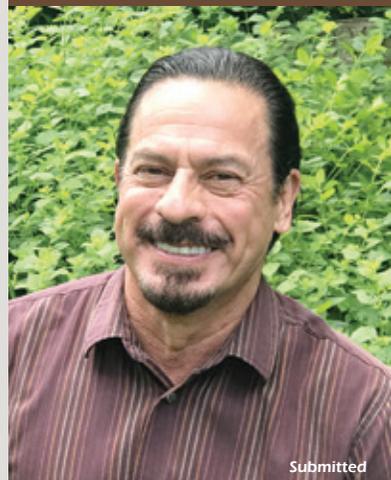
From the Circus to Mediator

"People joke about wanting to run away and join the circus," says Kim Kristensen. "I ran away from the circus and joined life."

Kristensen is a small business owner, mental health coach, certified mediator, and trainer. His website, wariormediator.com presents a scrapbook portfolio that's as colorful and eccentric as any you've likely run across in the professional consultancy arena.

Yes, he grew up in the circus. And yet he says (it almost sounds ironic) "I wanted something more."

Than the circus?



Submitted

Kim Kristensen

"I didn't make one big pivot... I made 50 of them."

Kristensen spent 24 years with his parents in the Ringling Brothers Circus, performing and traveling through 49 states, Canada, and Mexico. He said at one point, "I asked myself what it is I am meant to do" which led to the idea of "ikigai," a Japanese concept that he applied to a Venn diagram of four circles: "what I'm good at; what I'm passionate about; money; and what the world needs."

He left the circus, worked as a trainer for Caterpillar Company which ultimately brought him to Roanoke, moved on to VDOT (24 years), got his bachelor's and master's degrees; went into teaching psychology at universities, took early retirement, and now runs his coaching practice (and EAP program with Lyra Health workforce mental healthcare organization). He lives on 4 ½ acres in Salem with his wife and two cats.

"I like training," says the man who used to fly through the air with no net below.

From Chemistry Lab to Art Studio

"My beakers wouldn't talk back to me."

So says Pamela Golden, about her experience when she worked as a research chemist. She moved on to a successful stint in pharmaceutical sales in Baltimore, and then relocated to Roanoke.

"I was raising my two boys, and I just made the decision to do my own thing," Golden says. "I absolutely love what I do."

What she does is own and operate Glazed Bisque-It (glazedbisquit.com) a paint-it-yourself pottery studio now located on Starkey Road in Roanoke County. (A much more convenient location than downtown she says, with better facility and parking).

Golden says she was the number 5 rep in the country for Zanax sales; "but I never took one until my divorce!"

She's owned Glazed Bisque-It now for fifteen years, and loves to name all the activities, from ladies nights to summer camp to birthdays and special events for children and adults who love making their own pottery designs, glass fusing, canvas paintings, mosaics.

"People say to me, 'I guess you're a really good artist' [because she runs a studio]. "No," Pamela confesses. "I suck. I'm my own worst customer. I'm a scientist; I have the tools."

Art studio life has been fun. Golden says she now serves the children of people who had birthday parties with her years ago.



Submitted

Pamela Golden

HELP WANTED ADS: DIRE AND SPECIFIC

Another new trend we've witnessed is the placement of employment ads that previously did not appear in mass market media anywhere close to this level today. Employers are purchasing television, billboards, and radio ads for positions and skills that are incredibly specific and only applicable to a tiny fraction of the viewing and listening audience. Examples include:

- certified, skilled, experienced labor in construction sectors
- truckers, from highly experienced to no experience
- manufacturing positions using specific equipment
- welders, most seek specific certifications
- heating and air contractors, experienced and no experience
- nurses, from CNA to LPN to RN to APRN
- restaurants, all positions regardless of experience
- teachers, education still clings to preferred degrees (but some are exempting that short term)

Enticements include sign-on bonuses and training (both perks, often whether you're experienced or not). NOTE: Restaurant and other service sector positions are often posted on Help Wanted ads at the location.

From Campus Grounds to Roadways

"I did a total industry switch," not just a career switch, says Anna Muncy.

Muncy, who lives in Roanoke with her husband Brian of Muncy Fine Photography, worked for seven years at Hollins University in the development department as a fundraiser.

"Sales and fundraising have a lot in common," Muncy says. "The skill set is very similar."

That understanding was important when she attended Leadership Roanoke Valley, a community leadership development program managed by Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce. It was at LRV where Muncy learned about Lawrence Companies in Botetourt County. Old-timers still refer to Lawrence Trucking; but the transfer and storage business is a business leader in the region, becoming an ESOP employer in 1998.

Moving from higher education to the transportation and service sector wasn't as problematic as it could have been for an applicant, Muncy recalls.

"The position was still about relationships," she says. "What both (Hollins and Lawrence) have in common is relationship-building."



Submitted

Anna Muncy



She was invited to make the switch in April 2009. Getting work for Lawrence involves “tenacity and persistence,” Muncy says.

“You gotta keep going... listening... let customers do the talking.”

From Needles to Skewers

Shaheen Mehmood owns and operates KJ’s Grill & Kabab House off of Apperson Drive in Salem. Did she arrive here after working in the restaurant business or culinary arts like so many restaurateurs do? Not exactly.

“I loved my job,” Mehmood explains. She worked for the Red Cross, following up with people after blood laboratory testing for diseases from West Nile to HIV.

“I never intended to stay in Roanoke,” she confesses. She had aspirations to go to the national headquarters of American Red Cross in Northern Virginia. But after a high-risk pregnancy and the need for flexibility so she could care for a premature baby (and five year old, too); an opportunity presented itself.

“I’ve always loved cooking,” Mehmood says. “I grew up in England; I’m Pakistani descent; and the cuisine I offer is not



Submitted

Shaheen and K.J. Mehmood

as hot [as traditional Paki style]; but always made-to-order. People who ate at my home were impressed.”

So, in 2019, a property became available (she’s also a real estate agent with Wainright & Co.) and she opened KJ’s.

“Kabab house food is equivalent to American,” she describes. “Ground beef or chicken or lamb on a skewer, curry...” She insists on fresh preparation and a super clean facility.

“The health department guys were so impressed, they ate here after the inspection!”

From Bed to Beer

Joseph Hallock owned a medical equipment manufacturing company.

“We made beds for people with special needs,” he says, succinctly. “It was gratifying.”

The business employed thirty and expanded throughout US and Canada markets. Hallock says he enjoys something “until I become bored with it.” He also experienced a health scare when he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer (until another doctor disputed that) and he reassessed his vocation.

“I was at a point in my life where I was too young to retire, and I wasn’t very good at golf.”

He said he had been doing home brewing since 1996, along with “a lot of research.”

In 2013, he opened Chaos Mountain Brewing in the back hills of Franklin County (he lives in Boones Mill).

“When I opened, there was 45 breweries in the state. Now, there is over 350.”

Hallock divulges a planned second opening in Natural Bridge (which may be open as early as the time of this publication) called Chaos Mountain Brewing Station.

“I analyze risk,” Hallock says. “But then I take it.”

“Like a shark, you have to keep moving. You must move forward to change.”

From Policing to Photographing

“The only job skills I had done from age 18 to 38 was policing and military.”

And Patrick Perkins loved that world. He served in the Roanoke City Sheriff’s Office, Roanoke City Police Department, and



Submitted

Joseph and Wendy Hallock



Submitted

Patrick Perkins



the US Army. When he was injured, he had to make a decision that turned into a “brainstorming session” as he calls it, with his then girlfriend-now wife.

“I watched kids spend thousands of dollars on education, but still no job. Photography for me was a hobby; but I already had success just from doing weekend weddings. We made a decision to become full time. I resigned the next day, started my business, got my business license and insurance, and within a week, opened the door.”

But Perkins didn’t shut the door behind him.

“All my buddies started lining up” to support him; and with all the referrals and word of mouth, “one job led to another” he says. Men, women, and families in police departments are a tight community.

“This was a big change. A police officer is the most powerful person in the world. He can take freedom from you. I had to get used to people paying you for providing a service.”

PatrickPerkinsPhotography.com boasts an impressive lineup of “Best Wedding Photographer in Roanoke” awards for 2019, 2020, and 2021. Perkins says the “power” he has now, is the power to serve. He says his business is attractive to people who want “get away from the high cost” of wedding photography.

He continues to stay connected to the Blue Line. His “Behind the Badge” campaign gives back to first responders and “the brave and dedicated men and women who serve our communities” with free photography, where Perkins donates his time and has established a contribution site.

“I don’t believe in the idea of change more—do less; I work harder to help people.”

He certainly sees a lot more smiles now than he did in his previous jobs. 

VMT FUNDING

Virginia Museum of Transportation at 303 Norfolk Avenue in downtown Roanoke served as the photoshoot location for our FRONTcover this edition. Senator John Edwards (D-Roanoke) has introduced a bill to transition Virginia Museum of Transportation to a state agency, making it eligible for taxpayer funding like the Virginia Museum of Fine Natural History, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond. In 1984, VMT was designated as the state’s official transportation museum, but when funding for the arts was cut, only state agencies that qualify continued to receive allocations from the state budget.



Mid-Life Makeovers

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

From Retail to Real Estate

At the age of 48, Susan Harrison was at a fork in the road. The retail floor covering business she co-owned with her brother was being strained by big box stores, even though Quality Floors in Christiansburg had a loyal following for its 25 years and had tried to adapt to the times by expanding its offerings. Mostly, Harrison was ready to try something different.

She took two classes in education through Mary Baldwin University at the Higher Education Center in Roanoke and found two things: she did not have a passion for teaching, and its income potential was inadequate for a single mother of two daughters approaching college age.

Harrison always had an interest in real estate – calling herself a “house nerd” – so she took a leap of faith and enrolled in the Moseley-Dickinson Academy of Real Estate for a full-time, two-week course. She said that John Dickinson’s “wonderful stories and great experiences” were especially helpful to her. Soon afterwards she sat for the real estate licensure exam and passed the three-hour, rigorous test.

Neither career was in her initial plans.

Harrison attended Ferrum College before transferring to Virginia Tech and earning a B.A. in English (she recently earned an M.A. in Liberal Studies at Hollins University). That was about the time her brother, Guille Yearwood, was opening the flooring company, so she segued right into the family business. In addition to enjoying relationships formed with customers, she learned about running a business and managing people. There was some flexibility in the job so that she could tend to her young daughters. Still, she felt tied to the retail storefront “day in and day out.”

Now, after 12 years in the real estate business with Coldwell Banker Townside (CBT), Harrison finds it “liberating” not working a 9 to 5 job – though she still doesn’t have full control over her schedule. No matter what she’s doing, if a client calls, she shifts gears to show that house.

Harrison maintains that dealings with clients are one of the best parts of the business. She said, “I have met some wonderful people.” Some of her favorite situations center around client milestones; she calls helping first-time home buyers a “thrill,” and also appreciates helping people downsize, which can be more difficult than they anticipate.

And of course she can indulge that inner “house nerd,” finding it fun visiting different



Susan Harrison



It takes courage
to make a
fresh start.

neighborhoods and viewing houses with clients.

Still, there were challenges in making the career change. With a start-up business like real estate, Harrison said, it can take three years to get established; that period of financial uncertainty was tough. As an introvert, “everything was outside the box.” Meeting people and networking did not come naturally to her.

But Harrison has been successful, achieving Realtor status and winning CBT’s Rookie of the Year, Setting the Standard Award, and Sales Agent of the Year at different points. To what does she attribute those accomplishments? Timing worked in her favor; she could not have made a go of this career when her girls were younger because of the demanding hours. Harrison also felt she chose the right firm in CBT; even though all of the agents are competitors, they are collegial and supportive of one another.

Harrison said, “It takes courage to make a fresh start. As I tell my girls, follow your instincts.”

From Teaching to Massage

The mantra “Do what you love, love what you do” could sum up Lori Lambert’s philosophy. As a state licensed medical massage therapist, Lambert gushes about her career – but it wasn’t always this way.

Lambert earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology, then chose to be a stay-at-home mom to her five children. Motherhood, on top of volunteering extensively in her children’s schools, made her think that taking care of children would be a good fit. So once her own kids all started school, she also entered the education realm – to earn her teaching certification.

It turned out that “teaching was a continuation of what I’d done my while life, being in a room alone with children,” she said. After her divorce, she particularly began to feel that teaching was not psychologically the best choice for her.

How did the drastic transition from teacher to massage therapist come about? Lambert says she liked her inaugural experience with massage during her first pedicure at age 38. At age 45 she had her first full body massage and “it was the best feeling in the world,” she said. She felt like she pushed “stop” on the treadmill of life and for a little while her stress melted away. She thought at the time what a gift it would be to do that for others.

Fast-forward and Lambert, who just turned 60, has been a massage therapist for eight years. She began as an esthetician, and the part of the facials that her clients raved about most was the upper body massage. Capitalizing on that gift, Lambert attended the now-defunct Blue Ridge School of

Massage and Yoga, where she spent an “intense” year in full-time class (600 hours) and logged clinical and volunteer time, too. She passed written and practical tests and a written national exam. Continuing education is required to maintain her license, and Lambert seizes every opportunity to hone her craft, even looking for classes to take on vacations.

The benefits of her new career are myriad for Lambert. She feels “honored” to help women (three-fourths of her clients) to feel refreshed and better able to cope with life. Contributing to people’s health and well-being through human touch is key. She also enjoys the deep conversations, adult interaction, and relationships with her clients.

“Clients give me a strong sense of purpose,” she said.

The greatest difficulty with the transition was a “big pay cut” in the beginning as she built her clientele. She hit her stride two or three years into the new career, after figuring out that her strengths were providing deep relaxation and addressing muscle issues (such as injuries) on a medical level. She also has developed a diverse clientele, from young athletes to the aged. Now, instead of \$13K per year, she is making upwards of \$75K annually.

“You have to be passionate about what you’re doing to be successful,” Lambert said. “I believe completely in the benefits of massage, and I genuinely care about my clients feeling better so that they can live their best lives.”

Regarding switching careers, Lambert emphasized her view that people shouldn’t stay in a job or profession out of obligation. She was afraid of disappointing her family when she left teaching, but now “I’ve never been more fulfilled or happier,” she said.

“I see people on my [massage] table every day who are just waiting to retire. It’s sad,” she said.

As for Lambert, she has no intention of quitting anytime soon. She concluded, “I would enjoy doing massage until my journey on this earth is over.” 



Submitted

Lori Lambert

“

Clients give me
a strong sense
of purpose.





BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

We are now well into the new year; how are you doing on your goals and resolutions for 2022?

Accomplishing goals

Many people are good at setting personal and professional goals. Many companies invest time and money into creating strategic plans. Unfortunately, many of those goals and plans are never completed.

I'm in the business of helping companies and their leaders achieve their goals. After many years of experience, I've learned that although intentions and planning are usually good, leaders and companies struggle in the execution. If you struggle with goal achievement, or strategic plan execution, consider these ideas:

Write them down. Writing down your goals makes them more tangible. It forces you to add clarity to your thoughts as you put them down into words. And the act of writing down your goals helps you to "internalize" them and keep them on your mind.

Be specific. Goals are more readily accomplished when they are written as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-sensitive/Tangible). A vague goal ("Increase revenue next year") will not be as effective as a SMART goal ("Increase revenue in our services business by 20% in 2022")

Track your progress. Making your goals specific and measurable allows you to track them. Without tracking, there is no way to know if you are making progress, or if you need to make an adjustment to your plan. Make your tracking visible and review it often.

Tell others. This is a common trick used to help achieve goals. When you tell others what your goals are, you develop a greater psychological need to be successful and not fail in the eyes of others. Another benefit is that most of us like to help others be successful (which is why Kickstarter works so well), so those we tell our goals to will often help us to achieve them.

Break it down. Goals need momentum. Many fail when they don't get started and are unable to gather momentum. To help build that momentum, break down your goal into small, actionable steps that can be easily accomplished. Assign responsibility and a deadline to each step. As these steps get accomplished and progress is made, motivation increases, and momentum keeps you moving forward.

Check your attitude. How bad do you REALLY want that goal? You need to be honest with yourself and decide if the goal is worth your time and energy. If not, drop the goal and work on something more important.

I define success as the progressive realization of worthwhile, predetermined, personal goals. I hope you achieve your goals and greater success in 2022. 

Send your questions
or comments to Mike@
OpXSolutionsllc.com

Considering banking on crypto?

It's hard to get through a week without hearing about some new millionaire, or billionaire, who has amassed their wealth from a cryptocurrency bet. Should you give it a shot?

That depends on how much you need the money you have. Don't gamble the rent on it, but if you have extra cash to play with and FOMO, this volatile market could be exciting.

Know most of this industry is unregulated. That adds risk. If you decide to invest directly, choose your exchange wisely and insist on 2-factor authentication as hackers play here too. Regulated funds are new to the scene and performing poorly, but that may be a future, safer option.

Grasping the crypto scene

Bitcoin appeared in 2009. It now has a market cap of almost \$700 billion. Blockchain technology was invented as a place to put it. Thirty other digital assets are now valued at over \$1 billion. Shiba Inu is a standout, with a \$100 bet a year ago now worth \$53 million now. Crazy, right?

Like just about anything else, you'll pay fees to participate. These can include trading fees, maker fees, taker fees, and miner fees. Different exchanges have their own ways of charging you.

Don't forget about taxes. With crypto, anything you buy with it is considered a sale and therefore capital gains. It's not like using dollars or credit cards. Even PayPal is allowing cryptocurrency now, but those small purchases can add up to big tax debt. Most exchanges won't keep track of your initial purchase price, so that's something you need to do.

Decentralization

Blockchain's open ledger approach offers new models. The global computer network takes control away from individuals, companies, or governments trying to manipulate the market.

Decentralized Finance (or DeFi) is becoming a thing. Banks, Wall Street and insurance companies are taken out of the picture with blockchain. Instead, costs are assessed by algorithms based on computer resource demand at the time of transactions.

Where this all gets interesting is with new apps and NFTs. It won't be long before blockchain apps work like today's banking systems without the associated corporate controls. NFTs are setting the stage for creators to get lifetime royalty compensation for their work, paid each time a work sells. These bonuses can go to early investors too, through smart contracts.

Most people are talking about the possible coin windfall gains. What could be more exciting about the crypto movement, though, is what's being called Web 3.0. Lookout Facebook, Google, and TikTok – creators may soon be directly compensated for their content posts. Some already are.

Crypto is mostly about taking control away from a select few through an open-source environment. It's the wild west now, but what's developing could change the way we do business, not in coins, but in how commerce gets done. 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:

Everyone's talking about cryptocurrency, but what should you do about it?

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



Roof Replacement? Maybe Not.

By Tom Field

Roof Maxx is a relatively new business in our region that offers a less expensive alternative to shingled roof replacement.

Let's just get it out there. Mark wasn't sure about this business. And today, he still runs across people who are skeptical.

The business—is Roof Maxx. And it involves spraying material on shingles that is supposed to restore, preserve, protect, and extend the life of your roof.

Mark Whorley bought into the franchise in March of 2019. He did his due diligence, checking with other operators and reviewing case studies.

"I have worked in construction and remodeling all my life," says Whorley, "starting back when I worked with my dad." He also owns a contracting business, Preferred Renovations, and says when he began looking for other businesses to expand his work, he was attracted to Roof Maxx.

"What interested me about Roof Maxx is that I was very familiar with roofing and shingles; and I knew there could be a product that could rejuvenate shingles. I had an idea how it could work; but I had to trust it."

Whorley admits even after he met with the franchise owners, learned what he could about the product and process as quickly as he could—and even signed on and bought the open territory in this region, he believed in the potential, but wasn't as convinced as he would like to have been.

His hesitancy was a bit unusual for a person who goes ahead, invests, and buys the business. But then he diverged from the franchise preferred system in even a more direct way:

"I dropped out of the 12-week training,"

WHAT ROOF NEEDS ROOF MAXX?

Shingles that have aged, expanded and contracted from all the fluctuations in weather and temperature. As the shingles age, the oil in them evaporates, and they lose flexibility, dry out, and the top layer of granules fall off. When this happens, shingles begin cracking, breaking, molding, staining, curling, and filling up your gutters and downspouts with granules. A roof nearing the end of its life could be a good candidate for Roof Maxx; but Whorley says it's a particularly good investment for the roof at mid-life.

Whorley says, with neither shame nor pride.

"I'm not a salesman," he says, matter-of-factly. "They had a whole system that involved a script, lead processing, assessments, and a five-week expected sales cycle" that just wasn't his style. He's going into his third year with Roof Maxx now, and says many of the operators in other territories are developing their business the same way he did. He often performs the service on the same first day he meets customers to do the assessment.

"I mean, I don't even follow up with people who haven't made a decision," Whorley says. "I like people too much to be a fake. If they are interested, they'll call back."

Although Whorley was hesitant in the beginning, and some people remain skeptical, all of that changed right from the very start. He cites three specific examples that convinced him Roof Maxx was more than legitimate and not just a cheap, quick fix, short-term alternative to roof replacement.

"On our very first house, I was inspecting the roof with the customer, and gently pulled on the corner of one shingle, and a chip tore off. That Monday after the Roof Maxx application, I came back to



Mark Whorley

the house, we went to the same shingle, and it would bend. No cracking, splitting, or breaking.

"Another customer—one of the reviewers who made a post—said he loses three to five shingles every year. After our service, he hasn't lost a single shingle.

"But I really became a believer when a man called me, frustrated with his 17-year old roof. He said he had to constantly sweep his paved walk from all the gravel. The house was designed where there was one section that didn't have a gutter, and all the shingle debris would fall onto his walk. At that time, I was still new with Roof Maxx; so I told him I doubt we could prevent gravel cascading off his roof. I told him if it didn't work, I'd come back and do a second application.

HOW DOES ROOF MAXX WORK?

They're calling it "SoyFusion Technology." The crew applies a 100% natural, plant-based oil that soaks into the asphalt layer of your shingles, replenishing petrochemical oils that have evaporated over time. The process restores flexibility and extends the life of the shingled roof.



And if THAT didn't work, I'd give him his money back.

"A month later, the man calls and says he didn't have to sweep anymore. When we walked across his roof before the application, it made loud cracking sounds; but afterwards, it was quiet. No crackling sound—and no rocks."

Whorley says there are primarily two types of jobs for Roof Maxx. One is when someone wants to buy time. The roof is approaching end-of-life, and the service can extend that another decade. The other type of job is more "maintenance," Whorley says. That's a roof in mid-life; where a Roof Maxx application can keep it looking better and lasting longer than it would have—fifteen or more years.

Whorley says he's serviced 300 to 400 roofs with Roof Maxx, and about 80% are residential, 20% commercial. He and his associate, Brandon, work a market that includes Southwest Virginia; though he is exploring other markets and would like to add three or four more crews.

Originating from Lexington-Natural Bridge area, Whorley moved to the Roanoke-Salem area in 2009. He and his wife spend all their non-working time with their 12-year old daughter, who's in cheer. "It's all about my daughter," he says. "She's spoiled, but she's not a brat."

Whorley says rejuvenating roofs is a

worthy pursuit; but it is different than his remodeling work.

"She called me and raved about how we helped her," Whorley says, recalling a satisfied commercial customer. "And I get so many referrals; and the people I work with are so polite and professional." The response is positive, but not quite the same level as the reaction from someone who just watched their entire bathroom turned into a masterpiece.

"When I started Roof Maxx, I knew I couldn't manage both [remodeling and roofing] businesses full time. It required me to be on site, with projects every day. I had 13 employees and we were flipping five to six houses at a time." He's working on a plan to keep all his businesses running.

And he's not going to take 12-weeks to train for it. 📺

OPTIONS

Mark Whorley says there are no other contractors in this area doing the same thing Roof Maxx does. There are consumer grade products at home improvement and hardware and paint supplier retail stores; but they are essentially silicon solutions that sit on top of the shingle, he says.



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Is your real estate assessment of your home right? Maybe not.

I remember an investor in town who owns over 200 properties saying, you know Frazier, how they figure out tax assessment for your home? I said no; and he said someone from the city drives around and just puts a price on it. Is this true?

This year, on average, in Roanoke City a single-family home saw an 11% spike in its property assessment. While home values have gone up, this means an increase in the assessment will raise your taxes, too. But is the assessment right?

How are Properties Appraised? According to RoanokeCity.gov one way is The Sales Comparison Approach:

Compare a property to similar properties that have sold recently. Requires sales prices to be very carefully analyzed to ensure a true and accurate picture – i.e., was any personal property included in the sale? Multiple sales are then analyzed to arrive at a fair valuation of subject property. Other important factors: size, quality, condition, location, and date of sale.

The assessment can be way off. Thousands off. Here is an example. I sold a home in the city two years ago for \$312k. I then sold the neighbor's home less than 6 months ago for \$438k. Major difference, uh? Yes. The more expensive house has a garage and about 500 extra finished square feet. The \$312k house is much nicer inside with upgrades. If I priced it today, it would be about \$400k or a little more. Guess what my client told me just assessed? Are you ready? \$312k!

You see, the city has not stepped inside of the home to see upgrades, they do not know additions to the home, etc. Was my investor friend right? Seems like it. Zillow is not always right either. I hear people all the time stuck on a Zillow number. These are ballpark numbers across the area and maybe the country too!

To get a real price for your home, have your realtor do a "Comparative Market Analysis" which pulls homes sold within a certain distance of the home (in the city it can be a half mile) and what has sold in the past six months, and include upgrades to get a fair price of what it's worth, and what it can sell for! To go the extra mile, I will call another realtor who has sold or has listed a comparable home near the one I am going to list and pick their brain about the price, appraisal, condition, as well to help make sure my analysis is fair too. This is the best way to have a true assessment of your home in or out of the city. 

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:

While home values have gone up, is the assessment right?

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

Wanna preserve your privacy? Good luck with that!

One of the big buzzwords heading into 2022 in the digital space is "PRIVACY." First ... the word "buzzword" may actually be the most annoying buzzword people use for articles like this, but I'm not sure what other word to use. The point is, everybody's talking about how they want to protect their privacy; and they don't want Big Tech messin' around in their data.

So let's get the facts out of the way ... protecting your privacy ain't gonna happen. All these companies may ACT like they care about protecting your privacy, but if you believe that then you probably also believe that Mark Zuckerberg actually cares about "community" and "bringing people together" on FaceMetaBook or whatever they call it now.

Really what Big Tech wants to protect is their own behinds from any kind of lawsuits, so they may SAY they want to protect your privacy, but they'll also be more than happy to mine all of your digital activity for anything and everything they can.

OK ... rant over. Now let's get to something helpful ... what does this mean for you as a small business owner looking ahead to 2022?

- 1) It means people at least want to THINK that their privacy is being protected. So first and foremost, don't be all spammy and invasive. Lurking around in people's data is the digital marketing version of that creepster in the bar who tries to buy you free drinks and take advantage of you.
- 2) I've said it before and I'll say it this time in all caps ... YOU NEED TO OWN YOUR OWN AUDIENCE. There should be no need for third party data on your customers. You need to be engaging with them firsthand and gathering it yourself. That way once you have it, it belongs to YOU and you are in control of how you use it.

No algorithms, no confusing SEO, just you interacting with your customer base who actually WANTS to communicate with you. Crazy concept, right?

I encourage you in 2022 to have FIRST-HAND interaction with your customer base, whether that be through digital engagement, email communication, or even ... gasp ... actual human interaction in your store, or at an event, or however you connect. Now when you reach out to these people again and again, their loyalty and support continues to grow and grow. 📌



TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:

Don't rely on somebody else to tell you about your customer base; gather that information yourself and own it forever!

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



Henry Bass

It's All About STEM for ACI founder

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Henry Bass admits he's "sneaky." The business organizations and volunteer activities he is involved with – and there are many – all have the theme of helping grow enthusiasm for STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). In turn, this approach helps to staff his company, Automation Creations, Inc.

Henry Bass, founder, owner, and President of ACI, landed in the New River Valley when he and his wife, Lisa, a teacher, found Virginia Tech a good fit for both of their master's degrees. As a graduate student, Bass earned an advanced degree in mechanical engineering and was active in the university's solar car project.

"I asked why I was the only grad student

participating and they said grad students didn't have time," said Bass. But he wasn't going to let the interesting opportunity pass him by.

ACI provides a myriad technology of services, including custom websites, software applications, mobile development, and hosting and IT support. The customer base consists of companies seeking custom

work in these areas. High profile clients include Blacksburg Transit, the Global Pet Care division of Spectrum Brands, and Raines Real Estate. Some ACI employees are subcontracted to 1901 Group and Kronos, which deal in government work.

Not much passes by Bass. He just finished his tenure as the board chair of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, during which a huge task was finding a replacement for its retiring leader, and he continues on the Chamber's executive committee.

Since 2003 Bass has been on the board of the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council, which he touts as a "good networking organization between Blacksburg and Roanoke."

He is also on the board of the Montgomery County Education Foundation, a non-profit that awards teachers local charitable funding to keep them from having to dip into their own pockets to compensate for government underfunding.

One of Bass's passions is the LXCouncil; locally, it is two CEO peer groups in which he is Senior Moderator and was recently awarded the Most Valuable Player and

Impact Awards. Bass calls an LXCouncil an "intimate group" that gets CEOs together to listen and give advice to other CEOs. They strategize about business solutions and even talk about home life.

"It is actually a time saver, not just another meeting to attend," Bass said of its benefits.

Still, taken together, these activities consume a lot of time. Bass reiterated that his reasons for participating are not totally altruistic. There is "way more demand than supply" in the technology field. Bass wants ACI to find the best developers who will stay a long time, so he feels it is important to grow talent locally and keep it here. Typical turnover for software developers is 12-18 months, but at ACI it is over eight years.

Bass's other passions include Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, as well as robotics under the umbrella of the New River Robotics Association. These organizations train up future leaders. Robotics provides tech skills that Bass sees the need for in the workplace. It even offers experience in areas like marketing, spreadsheets, and other skills not specific to the engineering discipline. Bass continues to lead these youngsters with wife Lisa even though their sons have graduated



Henry Teaching RoboticsMB to scouts at VT



into young adulthood. Why?

"I have a problem saying no," Bass laughed.

In reality, the Basses enjoy helping youth, and they see a need for team-based activities for youngsters because the emphasis on SOLs (Virginia's Standards of Learning tests) in school focus so much on the individual.

"In the work force, there is a need for teamwork," said Bass. "So, there is a professional tie-in."

It has even become a family affair; the Basses' younger son, Ethan, a Tech engineering graduate, actually coaches a team now.

Bass began his career with higher education at Washington University in St. Louis, where he was part of the scholarship Army ROTC program and also earned an MBA in 1989. ROTC students committed to four years of active duty and four years of Reserves. After graduation, Bass headed to Huntsville, Alabama, then to Germany, and then deployed to Desert Shield in the early 1990s.

Bass continued in the Army Reserves and deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2008-2009. He said taking his deployment turn to Iraq was the "right thing to do," as some of his fellow soldiers had been overseas multiple times.

"The toll it takes on family life and personal well-being is very high," said Bass.

While he was gone, Lisa ran ACI with the help of Bass's LXCouncil. When they decided more assistance was needed, the LXCouncil helped find an interim head in Jim Wyers, who is retired Army and continues today as ACI's CEO.

Bass said skills learned in the military translated to business and vice-versa. In Iraq, there was a need for people to transition leadership from the British to the Americans. Bass fit the bill; having been an entrepreneur, he was familiar with long hours, hard work, and self-starting. On the flip side, Bass calls ROTC "the best leadership teaching in the world," with a strong tie to both academics and the practicality of leadership. Knowing best Army practices has had a "big influence" on his role as Senior Moderator with the LXCouncil, he said.

From 1994-2014, Bass served Virginia Tech's Army ROTC as Assistant Professor of Military Science. He retired from the Army Reserves as a Lt. Colonel in 2017 with 28 years of service.

While his peers flirt with retirement, Bass said he may slow down but that he and Lisa enjoy what they do too much to stop. "Retirement is a fuzzy thing when you're already doing what you love," he said. "We'll keep doing this until we can't." 

Know the signs.

Save a life.

- 1** 2-3 pounds of weight gain in one day or 5 pounds in one week
- 2** Shortness of breath with little change in activity, dry cough or discomfort lying down
- 3** Increased swelling in feet, legs or abdomen
- 4** Fast or irregular heart rate
- 5** Extreme fatigue or exhaustion

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

SIGNS OF HEART FAILURE

More than 5 million people in the U.S. are living with heart failure, a condition in which the heart cannot pump enough oxygenated blood to meet the needs of the body's other organs. The heart keeps pumping, but not as well as a healthy heart.

Education and close monitoring are key to managing heart failure. Develop healthy habits to avoid a potentially debilitating illness, and encourage your family and friends to too.

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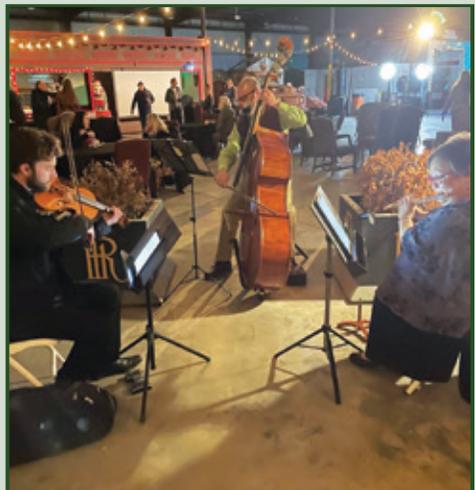
Submitted photos



Plenty of Buzz >

Michael Hemphill, the creator of the Buzz TV show (Blue Ridge PBS) and the **Buzz4Good** radio version (WFIR) called it “The 12th Day of Christmas,” on January 6 (the Epiphany or “Little Christmas” for many Christians,) a party for local nonprofits that Buzz has featured (while also offering marketing support), held at the 9th Street SE industrial park in Roanoke. The venue was used for a house of horrors (Blue Ridge Nightmares) during the Halloween season; Center in the Square operates the facility and is making it available for rentals. Vintage storefronts and old vehicles provide much of the atmosphere.

As for the 12th Day of Christmas, when Hemphill also let some of the organizations tell others their story (filming some of it for a future Buzz episode,) “nonprofits do so much vital, yet underappreciated, work in our communities – homeless shelters, food



pantries, free clinics, historical museums, arts and culture festivals, animal shelters and on and on,” says Hemphill. “We want to celebrate these life-giving organizations and give our entire region one final holiday festivity as we start a new year.” The event included live music by Roanoke Symphony Orchestra musicians and some bad dancing.



Submitted

Tudor House supports Bradley Clinic >

Tudor House, a non-profit that was created 18 months ago after the death of Louis Tudor (Tudor's Biscuit World) to focus on suicide prevention - donated a \$25,000 check to the Bradley Free Clinic in January, to support the new Robinson Behavioral Health Wing now under construction. Tudor House does not have a physical location as of now and has been providing free support groups at the Bradley Free Clinic. A group counseling room in the new wing - expected to open by April - will be named for Tudor House.

Ruth Cassell is director of operations for

the Bradley Free Clinic: "Tudor House is a phenomenal mission. It really complements Bradley Free Clinic's mission to meet the needs of our community, and to help those that are not served oftentimes in the health care system. Tudor House focuses on suicide prevention, education and outreach; its already been providing free support groups at the Bradley Free Clinic in downtown Roanoke. Louis Tudor committed suicide after the popular biscuit shop closed down at age 64. **Kathleen Thorell** is executive director for Tudor House: "we felt like Bradley Free Clinic matched our mission. They are seeing the need in our community and building this whole new wing in order to meet mental health needs. We wanted to help them."



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SMALL BUSINESS TOOL KIT

By Shannon Dominguez

Executive Summary:

There is no denying the energy that comes with a new year. For many, this increased energy turns into dynamic New Year's resolutions. In the business world, this can manifest as a strategic plan.

Shannon Dominguez is Director of Operations for Building Beloved Communities LLC

Strategic Planning: A Guide to Keeping Your 2022 New Year's Business Resolutions

It's February, so if you don't have a strategic plan yet, that's okay – it's not too late to start on one. Strategic planning is a wonderful tool for organizations to use in bringing to life their dreams & aspirations. Implementing the elements below will help you to build an easy-to-execute strategic plan.

1.) Set aside time to invest in strategic planning. If the time set aside for strategic planning is not respected, it is easy to get distracted by the variety of day-to-day tasks that face all organizations. At Building Beloved Communities, we met at an offsite location to limit distractions and increase our focus on the strategic planning process. There are local coffee shops like Sweet Donkey Coffee or Chris' Custard who rent out rooms for the day. We chose to go with Hotel Roanoke as they offered everything we needed at a reasonable price. Be creative in finding a space that works for you!

2.) Know the objective of the strategic plan. A strategic plan includes S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound), realistic actions, and specified time to work on the plan itself.

Some things to review every year:

- Your mission, vision, and values. Do they still serve you, your organization, and your clients?
- Ask yourself if you still want to be in business. Are you still enjoying your work or are you looking at retirement and succession planning?
- Define S.M.A.R.T. goals around every aspect of your business (revenue, employees, net income, company culture)
- Create accountability fail safes. Check in on a monthly or quarterly basis with other people who are invested in your success. Think of people inside & outside of your organization who motivate you.
- Establish KPI's (key performance indicators). Use your S.M.A.R.T. goals as a roadmap and KPI's as stops for food & gas along the way.

3.) Involve your team in the process. Co-creation encourages buy-in and increases clarity, everyone knows the roles they play in the strategic plan. Accountability is not a small detail. It is a key element that can often be forgotten. The most successful organizations are accountable organizations - accountable to their employees, their clients, and to their community.

4.) Break down big goals into smaller actions steps. Big goals should be broken down into quarterly, weekly, and daily goals and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Strategic planning isn't scary, and it needs to be done. We can help you get started. Visit www.BuildingBelovedCommunities.com to download a free "Strategic Planning Template." 



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Kaitlyn Van Buskirk

Roanoke Higher Education Center receives \$50,000 grant to further social and racial equity

The Roanoke Higher Education Center (RHEC) has received a \$50,000 grant from the American Electric Power Foundation to launch "Social and Racial Equity: Diversity in Partnerships," creating new opportunities for educational access and job training in the Roanoke Valley. The grant allows RHEC to recruit a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to the Center, and also fund scholarships for minority students. Through this partnership, Virginia State University (VSU) joins the Roanoke Higher Education Center as its newest member.

"The American Electric Power Foundation is pleased to be able to support the work of the Roanoke Higher Education Center," said Larry E. Jackson, Director of External Affairs, Appalachian Power. "Access to education is critical to unlocking the true potential of our region and the addition of Virginia State University to the Higher Education Center community expands our ability to attract high potential students. We look forward to seeing what this new partnership brings."

The grant will allow the HBCU to occupy space at the Center at no charge for two years, where they can connect with the Roanoke community, determine sustainable programming, and form partnerships with the twelve other members of the Center. Additionally, the new scholarships for minority students will open doors to career advancement by offering access to new job skills, training, and certification programs.

In doing so, RHEC demonstrates its commitment to social and racial equity, providing access to educational



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Submitted

Larry Jackson, Appalachian Power

opportunities to all people, and serving first generation, low income, and minority students.

"One of the primary goals of Virginia State University is in direct alignment to the mission of the Roanoke Higher Education Center," said Dr. Donald E. Palm III, Executive Vice President and Provost, Virginia State University. "Both VSU and RHEC are committed to providing greater educational opportunities to increase the economic outlook for our communities. Our VSU team is committed to the success of this partnership with the RHEC team to do this community building work in tandem."

For more information, please visit www.education.edu. 



American Electric Power Foundation contributed \$50,000 for "Social and Racial Equity: Diversity in Partnership."



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Nathaniel L. Bishop

A LIFETIME OF CAREER TRANSITIONS – AND A NEW MISSION THESE DAYS

By Gene Marrano

At first, he yearned to be Christiansburg's top cop – now NL Bishop strives to welcome more people from diverse backgrounds under the healthcare tent.

Nathaniel L. Bishop's business card is two-sided these days – reflecting his status as the senior associate dean for diversity, inclusion, and student vitality at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, and since early 2021 the Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Carilion Clinic.

What does diversity and inclusion mean in the healthcare field? To "NL" Bishop as he is widely known, it's similar to what is taking place in other fields – especially over the past few years after the national movement spurred by the death of George Floyd. "More and more we have seen in healthcare the

need for understanding and appreciating the need for diversity, equity and inclusion. We are a nation comprised of persons from a beautiful array of ethnicities and heritages. It is important for patients to be served and cared for by persons from their own background. As well as [others] that come from different backgrounds than their own.”

Inclusion and equity in healthcare – or the lack of it – became evident says Bishop when the COVID-19 vaccine rollout began in early 2021. “At our first vaccination clinic in January, more than 4,500 people went through the Berglund Center to get vaccinated. It became clear, however, that the people being vaccinated didn’t reflect the makeup of our community. African American and Latino groups—who are at higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 or being hospitalized from the virus—were underrepresented,” says Bishop.

Carilion then used already-established relationships in the community to identify about a dozen community connectors – individuals who have established influence and could help pinpoint people who were eligible for the vaccine but weren’t able to make an appointment. “The connectors were people with various occupations—including pastors and civil service employees—who were plugged into their communities.”

It’s also important says Bishop for the young people Carilion (among others) want to recruit, to see people from their own backgrounds in those fields they may aspire to – to see themselves in those roles, as a nurse, a physician, as a healthcare administrator or a technician. Bishop notes that Carilion President & CEO Nancy Howell Agee has even acknowledged that the regional healthcare giant “was complicit,” going back to the era of segregation in not being as welcoming to people of color in the past. Bishop says he is “so pleased,” to see how far Carilion has come. That includes an inclusion council established more than a decade ago, where Bishop was the co-chair.

With the national shortage of workers in the field, from physicians on down, it also makes sense from a business operations aspect to welcome more people from different backgrounds to the tent. The

NATHANIEL L. "NL" BISHOP

- The first African American Member of the Christiansburg Police Department. Became a detective and aspired to become Chief before leaving the field. Bishop says while there were some culture and race-related issues they were few and he “felt accepted.”
- Became a licensed long-term care administrator and joined Carilion in 1997 as executive director of the Burrell Nursing Center in Roanoke
- In 2002 he was named vice president and administrator of Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital
- Served as president of Carilion’s Jefferson College of Health Sciences from 2010 until its integration with Radford University in 2019.
- Was named senior vice president of administration at Carilion and senior associate dean for diversity, inclusion, and student vitality at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, and since early 2021 has also assumed a similar role at Carilion Clinic.
- Bishop attended New River Community College, Radford University and then on to Virginia Tech, where he earned a Master of Science and Education.
- He is also “Doctor Bishop,” having attended Wesleyan Theological Seminary of the United Methodist Church in Washington DC., earning a Doctorate of Ministry.

“There are bits and pieces I use every day,” says NL Bishop of his diverse professional and education background. “I live with an understanding that “unto whom much is given, much shall be required” and it is in that vein that I strive to be a positive influence on those who come behind me.”

work of that council led to the offices and the titles NL Bishop now holds, after a career that took him from law enforcement in Christiansburg to long term care facility administrator, to President of Jefferson College of Health Sciences (now Radford



Courtesy photo

University Carilion) for a decade, and now to the dual role at Carilion Clinic and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

“A lot of progress has been made. We didn’t just get ‘woke.’ I’m proud of that.” But adds Bishop the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer and the summer of unrest that followed across the country helped prompt Carilion to take that next step by launching the inclusion and diversity offices. He hails the VTC Med School for launching a task force in 2020 to advance the issue further – with significant input from medical school students. There’s still a monthly meeting at the school on the progress being made in various healthcare disciplines. That means casting a wider net for VTCSOM applicants – and encouraging graduates to practice or do their residencies in underserved areas. With many department heads at the Roanoke-based school having roles at Carilion Clinic as well, Bishop says “there’s a good meshing,” on both campuses.

A paucity of role models and financial resource issues have historically kept the poor and people of color – even after the doors opened wider after the end of Jim Crow and segregation – from considering

healthcare in many cases. His opportunity to join the field “came out of nowhere,” after he became a police officer in 1975. He turned it down twice before being convinced to try “something completely different. It was the best thing that happened.”

The Burrell Nursing Center – formerly a hospital for African Americans – became Bishop’s entry point to Carilion. As a small child he had undergone surgery at Burrell in the era of segregation. Returning as the administrator was somewhat surreal. Then it was on to Community Hospital and then to Roanoke Memorial. He worked in the early 2000’s on the effort to move all in-patient services from Community to Memorial. In 2010 he was asked to become president at Jefferson College of Health Sciences, which was then operated by Carilion. “Never saw myself being in any of those positions ... including this [current] one.”

Things are easier now for young people of color says Bishop, who had “no role model to look to,” in his early professional years. No African American police officer for example in Christiansburg; growing up he had never seen anyone who looked like him serving as an administrator in the health care realm



either. "In none of the things I have done had I'd seen that before." He remembers going to Richmond and seeing Black politicians like Douglas Wilder and Henry March for the first time – and being dumbfounded. Closer to home Roanoke's first African American mayor – Noel C. Taylor – became a role model.

Does Bishop consider himself to be a role model? "I do try to be. I recognize the importance of modeling. I never had it." He has worked with TAP and Apple Ridge Farms, Virginia Tech's Achievable Dream Academy and other to expose young people

to the healthcare world in Roanoke, spending time with them – so they could see a role model that looked like them in the flesh. While president at Jefferson College, "I would let them sit in my chair and take [photos]." The message there was simple, says Nathaniel L. "NL" Bishop: "if I see it, I can dream it, I can believe it – I can be it. That's one of my favorites."

"As an organization, we know that we must maintain an environment where everyone feels welcomed, supported and valued both for us as employees and for patients and families we serve," Bishop concludes. 

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WELLNESS

By Valarie Angle

Executive Summary:
If the future is bright, shouldn't you be honing your personal and professional skills to maximize your chances of success?

Valarie Angle is the owner & director of The WellNest Roanoke, and is a holistic Life Coach. Contact her at Connect@TheWellNestRoanoke.com

Make 2022 your year

Holistically speaking, a multifaceted approach will give you the balance and wellbeing that you need to stay the course. Here are 10 holistic steps to make 2022 your year:

10. Get Organized: If you use your digital calendar and notepad for work, but you never take the time to look at it or review it, suck it up and buy a high-quality notebook planner. If it was good enough for Ben Franklin, it might just work for you.

9. Set Intentions: Aside from goals and task planning, name your intention for the year and practice visualizing it every morning for at least a couple minutes.

8. Be Consistent: What's lacking in your routine? Family time, social time, fitness, spiritual or personal development? Pinpoint it and do some time-blocking on your monthly calendar so that you're well-rounded. You'll see the difference in your productivity and outlook.

7. Pre-plan as much as possible as soon as possible.

6. Be proactive and diverse in networking. People tend to get comfortable and stick with a tight circle of influence. What happens when your needs can't be met there? Actively pursue new relationships and connections and treat them with respect.

5. Want respect? Give respect. How do you feel about the person who looks at their phone or responds to emails or messages during your business meetings? They feel the same way about you. Not only is distraction a big red flag of disorganization and lack of discipline, but it rapidly disintegrates respect in a working relationship. Treat people well and keep your focus on the task at hand at all times.

4. Create systems and procedures where there is repetition in your routine.

3. Put your money where your mouth is. Own a local restaurant or shop? Shop and eat local. Sell Teslas? Drive a Tesla. Authenticity is powerful.

2. Be intentional with personal development and care. Without a plan, it's tough to fit it all in—workouts, meditation, community, hobbies. But it's impossible to fit it all in when you are sitting in a hospital bed because you let yourself go and didn't manage your stress. Make time for health so that your body has your back.

1. Be present. Science affirms what monks have known for centuries: you only have now. Squeeze every bit of joy out of your days and live fully in the present and you'll see everything else fall into play. Elevated emotion, prayer, appreciation, and wellness fast track success. 🙏

Rail is better

Adding two new lanes in each direction on I-81 across 325 miles of western Virginia to be used only by trucks, and making I-81 a toll road to pay for the expansion, didn't sit well with residents of the I-81 Corridor. STAR Solutions, a consortium put together by Halliburton, had proposed to privatize the highway and develop what it called a concrete freightway.

Capitalizing on resident disaffection, RAIL Solution was created in 2003 to promote a rail alternative. A Norfolk Southern rail line parallels I-81 from Harrisburg, PA to Knoxville, TN; and RAIL Solution aggressively promoted an upgrade of this rail corridor as an environmentally and economically preferred solution for managing freight growth.

Working with lots of like-minded groups and individuals up and down I-81, RAIL Solution ultimately defeated the STAR proposal. Buoyed by our success (because STAR was solidly backed by powerful highway engineering and construction lobbies and we were a grassroots upstart), we could now focus our time and treasure fulltime on rail advocacy.

Compelling energy, economic, and environmental benefits accrue to society from moving goods and people by rail; so our message has been a consistent one: as much surface freight should move by rail as possible.

RAIL Solution is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer non-profit with no corporate or government support, relying on dues and donations from our member participants. Major advocacy campaigns include the Steel Interstate, a national system of multi-track railroad mainlines, grade-separated, electrified, and analogous to what the Eisenhower Interstate Highway system did for roads. Trucks on trains is also something strongly favored. Carrying through trucks on trains through Virginia is the one capital expenditure in the I-81 Corridor that might actually reduce the number of trucks on the highway. Such truck ferries have been widely used in Europe, but never tried in the U.S. 

Rail Solution is updating its online communications and contacts; current email is railsolution@aol.com



David Foster, chairman of RAIL Solutions, addresses Buzz4good event on Jan. 6

GOOD WORK

By David Foster

Executive Summary:
RAIL Solution is an advocacy group that promotes increased utilization of railroad transportation and freight systems.



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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Is there a connection
between company
culture and employee
retention?*

Cultivating culture

A physical change in her face and body—how she held herself. Her eyes, discernably more animated. Even the tone of her voice and pace of her speaking; excitable but not stress laden. It's almost as if she were on a new planet. From a former one that had more gravitational pull, weighing her down—to a new one, where she was lifted, and her feet barely touched the ground.

And what, pray tell, caused this astonishing transformation?

She changed jobs.

Same industry. Same product and service. Same market. Even the same customer base.

New employer.

But here's the truly interesting part of this story: there remains satisfied people at both companies.

What differed in this young lady's case, was primarily a big difference in culture.

One company...was about as "chill" as a company could be. To begin, it was headquartered at a beach town. The employee demographic was young, predominately male. The processes—hardly existed; there was virtually zero administrative support; the projects seemingly worked from one's own personal timeline. And the goals, were more or less rough approximations with an expectation of "hit 'em if you can."

Some people like that culture. High-five your fellow dude in the hallway. Celebrate when you sign a contract. But don't be too hard on yourself if performance isn't up to par. Tomorrow's another day. Let the chips fall where they may.

The other company...was jacked up on performance adrenaline. Headquartered in a working town, the employee demographic is also young, predominately male. The processes—plentiful, but effective. You have a team; the projects are assigned to responsible champions all along the timeline. The goals are tough, but clear; you are rewarded if you meet them, and well-rewarded when you exceed them.

Some people like this culture. Celebrate with your team when you win; kick yourself when the deal falls through. Seize the day. Never settle for average.

On the surface, what the young lady preferred seemed to be more stressful. But for her, lack of direction and a

perspective where performance means performing—not winning—was intolerable. For her, the stress-free environment was the most stressful of all.

continued on Page 46

Inflation causation ... and when does it all end?

Pent up demand when the COVID-19 restrictions and people's willingness to venture out again loosened up last year. Historic worker shortages and record numbers of people leaving their jobs, especially in the hospitality industries. Employers having to pay their workers more, many of whom were away from their jobs for many months, supported by payments from the federal government – taking stock of what's really important to them and what they want to do with their lives professionally. Gas prices skyrocket as demand outstrips supply. Inflation around 7 percent at a 40 year high.

Dr. Alice Kassens is the John S. Shannon Professor of Economics at Roanoke College. She places those supply chain issues at the heart of the inflation problem. (In recent years inflation has hovered more around 2 percent – go too low and you get stagflation.) “Those issues wouldn't be such a problem if we didn't have such [high demand],” she notes. And the data shows that despite higher prices for food, gas, services and just about everything else consumers are still spending, which is a good thing in an economy driven by consumer demand. “[But] when there's shortages the market rations those things, and we have upward pressure on prices.”

Kassens, who also conducts a quarterly Virginia consumer sentiment survey via the Institute for Policy and Opinion Research at Roanoke College, doesn't place too much of the inflation bubble blame at this point on the higher wages and salaries many companies have been forced to offer to lure people back to work. “I think it's a little too early for much of [inflation] to be due to that; I think that would be more of a thing we would see in the next year or so, that wage-price spiral.”

The 7 percent inflation rate announced last month is an accumulation of a year's worth of increases notes Kassens, who expects that number to head downward towards the third quarter of 2022 perhaps, as the supply chain kinks continue to be ironed out. If labor shortages continue to plague the U.S. into next year however, she says that may help keep the inflation number from dipping to where it normally is, due to those higher wages and the resulting necessity to hike wholesale/retail prices. Whatever normal is these days.

As for the long-term impacts of high inflation, it is “essentially a tax on your earnings, especially if your wages aren't keeping up with inflation.” Those locked into contracts – like college professors let's say, don't even have a chance to negotiate for higher salaries. That means less buying power, which ripples through the economy. If inflation gets to the point where it starts going up and down – perhaps impacted by the very latest COVID scenario – “that's very hard to plan for,” for businesses, retirement, etc. “Volatile inflation is really a major issue,” says

continued on Page 46



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
The nation's health – and the world's for that matter – is not the only thing being impacted by the pandemic. You have probably noticed that already.

Letters

Airport director responds

Editor:

I read your recent article about the new director at the airport, and you mentioned that I leaked information during a bid process. It was not leaked, I informed the Airport's general counsel and the Commission Chair that one of my employees had shared a budget statement and hangar list with potential bidders that he had obtained from Signature Aviation. [Signature's general manager] offered it freely [and] she was later dismissed.

When I became aware that he had shared that info, I immediately called [general counsel] and he told me that we should share this information with all the bidders so that we could be transparent and "not get caught with our pants down." I complied

with his direction and issued a Request For Proposal amendment. I informed the Chairman what had taken place.

When Signature read the RFP amendment they requested we remove it. I did as they asked. Shortly thereafter they met with the Commission Chair and threatened litigation.

The Commission forced me to resign because they were afraid they would be sued by Signature. I didn't do anything wrong. I did what I was told to do.

All of this can be verified with an open records request.

Tim Bradshaw
Director of Aviation
Cheyenne Regional Airport

Publisher's Note: Above is an excerpt of the letter. Tim Bradshaw served as a Patron Advisory Board Member for Valley Business FRONT in 2020.

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

Field / On Tap

from Page 44

According to one of the more obvious articles in Forbes, "hiring based on shared values and cultural beliefs leads to winning results. Culture fit is the most important aspect of retaining great employees above everything else."

Perhaps the magic formula is not establishing a corporate culture that is easy going or high energy. It's simply making sure the employees are those who complement that culture.

Don't assume everybody is going to fit in with what you've built—no matter how great it is. 

Marrano / There's something

from Page 45

Alice Kassens. She expects the U.S. and global economy to solve the supply chain issue but because that economy is so "huge ... it takes a while to unravel it." Hold on everybody. 

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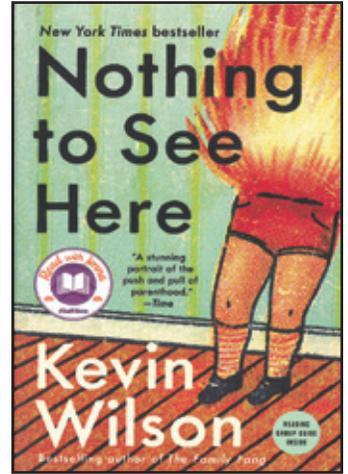
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Check their temperatures

When I discovered the premise of this novel, well... I had to get it. Every part of the story is normal, ordinary, realistic—except one tiny detail. A couple of kids have an uncanny peculiarity: they spontaneously catch on fire.

What makes *Nothing To See Here* (Harper Collins; 2019) by Kevin Wilson truly intriguing, is not the combustible children; it's that we rather easily accept it. You get the sense the whole inferno part is just a metaphor. Something about parenting. Something about abuse: but more like the kind that rests just below the surface. Incompetent parents running around amongst our little circles, but appearing normal all the same.

Are our most vulnerable smallest citizens burning all around us? Are we just trying to extinguish and hide the calamity as quickly as we can—rather than address this most obvious misalignment in any meaningful way? In any case, it's quite the sight. Somebody should do something.

—Tom Field

Trailblazer on and off the court

The 1970's may have been the Golden Age of women's professional tennis. Chrissie and Martina (no last names required), Rosie Casals, Margaret Court, Virginia Wade, Evonne Goolagong ... and Billie Jean Moffitt King, best known perhaps for her "Battle of the Sexes" match against the aging and somewhat chauvinist former Wimbledon champion

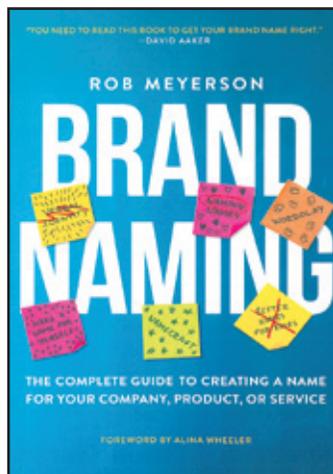
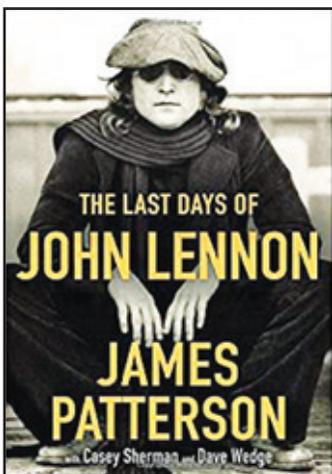
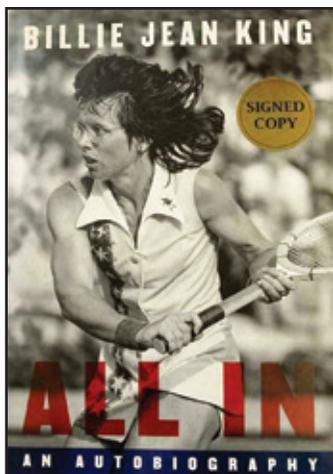
Bobby Riggs in 1973 at the Astrodome (she won). Billie Jean King's autobiography *All In* (Knopf, 2021) is a journey through King's life in her own words as a tennis trailblazer. She fought for better pay for women's tennis, helped found a team tennis league with then-husband Larry King (not THAT Larry King), won more titles than can be listed here, and then after being "outed" as gay in 1981 – which cost her big time in dropped endorsements; hard to believe today, she became an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ rights.

A savvy businessperson, the founder of a leadership program for women, the first female athlete to earn \$100,000 in a calendar year, the first female athlete to win the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the "100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century," according to Life magazine, and still going strong in her 70's. If you remember Billie Jean King the tennis player *All In* provides a peek behind the curtain at a most driven person, a role model for other women and a spokesperson for a host of worthy causes. A true national treasure who also happened to be a dominant champion on tennis courts around the world.

—Gene Marrano

Still hard to fathom - 41 years later

December 8th, 2021 marked 41 years since former Beatle John Lennon was shot multiple times outside his home in New York City by an obsessed Mark David Chapman, who travels from Hawaii and stakes out the Dakota building



on Central Park West for several days before having his copy of Lennon's *Double Fantasy* album signed by John – there's even a photo of that. Several hours later he returns to the scene and guns down Lennon. Those around then probably remember where they were when they heard John Lennon had been murdered on 12/8/80. I found out like millions of others did – from Howard Cosell of all people on a *Monday Night Football* telecast. *The Last Days of John Lennon* (Grand Central Publishing, 2020) by prolific novelist James Patterson of Alex Cross fame deftly intertwines John Lennon's days as a Beatle with the story of Mark David Chapman, building up to that awful day 41 years ago, just as Lennon was feeling reborn as an artist while raising young son Sean with wife Yoko Ono. Such a waste. The recent Peter Jackson 3-part documentary on Disney+ from the *Let it Be* sessions gave viewers a glimpse into John's genius, as he worked with Paul, George and Ringo on the album and last-ever live performance by The Beatles on the Apple Studios rooftop. James Patterson's poignant look back in *The Last Days* makes readers relive that senseless tragedy and the loss of one of the most talented artists of his – or several – generations.

—Gene Marrano

Whatcha Gonna Call It?

If you're in advertising, marketing, or have any influence over naming a company, service, or product, you'll appreciate Rob Meyerson's *Brand Naming* (Business Expert Press; 2021). I was pleasantly surprised, after expecting a

cursory, lightweight introduction to the boutique specialty. It has textbook level provision, but reads like you're attending an afternoon workshop with logical slide-like training.

My favorite parts include anecdotal tidbits (Phil Knight didn't like NIKE at first, but said "maybe it'll grow on us."); the advice to keep an open mind (Caterpillar and Starbucks had to seem silly at first); and the process of naming approach and structure. The lists of resources, such as reference books, online services, agencies, and trademark screening are certainly valuable; as is the simple reminder that a good brand name should be a balance between strategic, creative, and technical.

Lastly, I like it best when our "instructor" states specific advice, such as not worrying about a matching domain over the selection of the name first, which is the primary mission (Nissan.com, for example is a computer company in North Carolina—the automobile company just went with choosenissan.com and nissanusa.com). We also get excellent tips on how to present the naming exercise to stakeholders. My copy came with a bookmark that included the twenty techniques for name generation: smart.

NOTE: A visit to Nissan.com now reveals a domain name legal battle the auto manufacturer is waging against the small computer service business.

—Tom Field

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is publisher of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT.



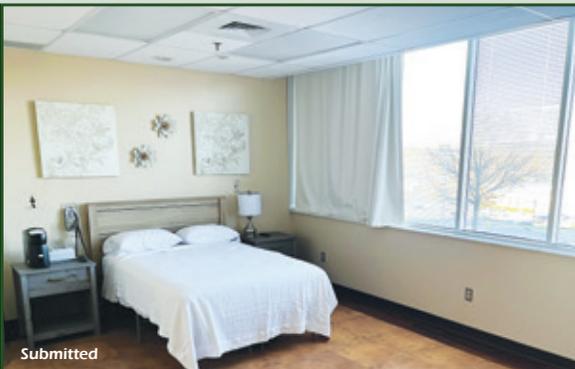
LewisGale will finally open NICU >

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has approved its Certificate of Public Need (COPN) for a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at **LewisGale Medical Center** in Salem, after seeking approval to provide intensive care unit level services to babies since 2011. "After 12 years of vigorously pursuing all possible avenues to secure approval to open a NICU at LewisGale Medical Center for the families and communities we serve, we are excited the Virginia Health Commissioner has approved our COPN application," said **Lance Jones**, market president. The NICU will provide critical care to newborns who are ill or premature.

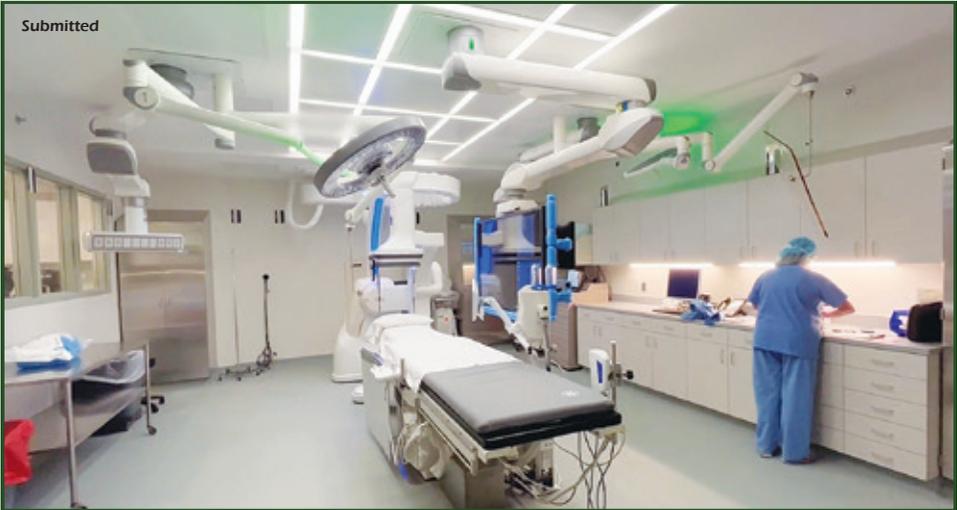
"Opening a NICU is the latest example of our commitment to expanding our women's and children's services to meet the maternal and child needs of our growing community," said **John Harding**, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist at LewisGale Medical Center. Virginia Senator **David Suetterlein** (R-Roanoke County) wrote and carried the legislation that exempted a NICU at LewisGale from the COPN process; he long supported efforts to being a NICU to LewisGale, as has Senator **John Edwards** (D-Roanoke) other state and local legislators.

New sleep study center >

LewisGale Physicians announced it has opened a new **Sleep Center** located on the LewisGale Medical Center Campus in Salem. The Sleep Center is a comprehensive, outpatient sleep program designed to diagnose and treat sleep disorders under the direction of board-certified pulmonologists and sleep medicine specialists. "We offer a comprehensive range of services and tests which will help us develop treatment plans for patients suffering from sleep disorders," said **Nelson Greene**, MD, board-certified specialist in pulmonary diseases and critical care medicine.



"There are a number of sleep disorders, with some of the most common being insomnia, sleep apnea, chronic fatigue, restless legs syndrome, sleep walking, night terrors, narcolepsy, and snoring." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates over 70 million Americans suffer from a sleep problem, with 8.1% of the U.S. population diagnosed with Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).



LG state of the art lab >

LewisGale Medical Center has also debuted what it calls a newly renovated, state-of-the-art Cardiovascular Catheterization Lab, "part of an ongoing investment the hospital has made in enhancing the delivery of cardiovascular services." The new equipment and renovated lab provide advanced treatments, make complex procedures safer and simpler, and provide physicians with leading edge technologies, including a laser-steered platform, to perform a comprehensive range of diagnostic and interventional procedures. "The renovation of our Cardiovascular Catheterization Lab reflects our commitment to providing the highest-level cardiac care in southwest Virginia," said **Michele Gillespie**, vice president of cardiovascular services.



LG-Pulaski Outpatient program debuts >

LewisGale Hospital Pulaski has launched an Adult Substance Use Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), an outpatient service for patients who are experiencing impairment in social, occupational, or family functioning due to substance use that requires intensive and structured intervention. "Our IOP is designed to help patients who may be experiencing behavioral or emotional difficulties related to substance use," said **Leigh Gathings**, program director. Patients can expect patient-centered goal setting and treatment planning; group, individual, and family interventions; life skills practice opportunities; evidence-based recovery model; and continuum of care.

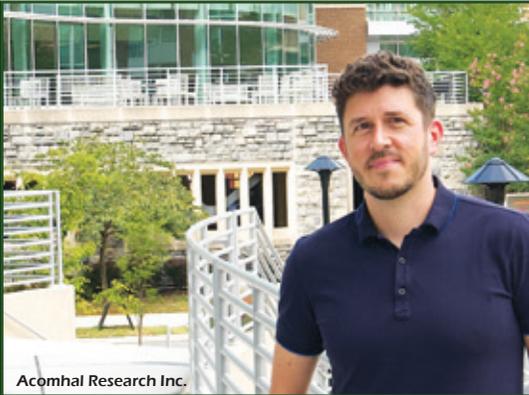


Roanoke County economic news >

RND Coffee, co-owned by brother **Quincy** and **Steffon Randolph** (pictured), held their ribbon cutting in late January, at the recently redeveloped Vinyard Station in downtown Vinton. RND opened their second location (the first being in Wasena in Roanoke City) and RND is the second tenant of Vinyard Station. Elsewhere, Chipotle was the first tenant to open in the new outparcels at Tanglewood off Route 419. This is the first of five businesses inside the two adjacent outparcels - Blaze Pizza, Panda Express, Jersey Mike's, and Aspen Dental are next in line. Chili's and Popeye's will open later this year, each in their own outparcel at Tanglewood. Neely's Accounting Services has also opened their third location in Roanoke County on Brambleton Avenue. Neely's offers customers many services including personal and business financial assistance, tax assistance, and more. *(from Roanoke County Economic Development)*

Another Fralin spinoff >

With a wave of new grants and investments, a cancer stem cell research company founded by **Fralin Biomedical Research Institute** at VTC scientists is nearing a million dollars in total funding toward development of a new therapeutic to fight drug-resistant cancers such as glioblastoma multiforme and metastatic disease - including triple negative breast cancer. **Acomhal Research Inc.** was recently awarded \$305,000, including \$150,000 from the Virginia Tech Carilion Seed Fund, \$100,000 from the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC) GAP Funds Program, and \$55,000 from the Commonwealth Angels investment group. Those funds follow \$625,000 the company received in Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants over the previous four years.



"We need to rethink how we treat cancer. Resistance and recurrence result from distinct mechanisms to the original tumor," said **Samy Lamouille**, Acomhal's co-founder and chief executive officer (pictured), and an assistant professor at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute. "Having spent over 20 years in the cancer research and drug development field, I am very excited about the direction Acomhal is taking in development of our novel therapeutic approach."



Making the holiday merrier >

RSVP Holiday Tote Bag Program: the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Montgomery County and Radford delivered 110 Holiday Tote Bags to residents of Kroontje Health Care Center the week before Christmas – with the help of Santa and Mrs. Claus of course. The filled totes were handed out individually to residents by Santa and his helpers. **Dennis Minnick** (Santa), **Cindy Minnick** (Mrs. Claus); **Sherri Blevins**, Montgomery County Board of Supervisor; county Human Services Director **Tonia Winn**; AmeriCorps Seniors Director **Atalaya Sergi**; and AmeriCorps Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator **Adrienne Nash Melendez** all helped with the delivery.



Freedom First supports BRL >

A \$6,000 grant will help **Blue Ridge Literacy** provide continuity of English literacy and Citizenship Preparation services to adults in the Roanoke Valley. The grant was awarded through Freedom First Credit Union's (FFCU) Community Grants Program. BRL's Executive Director **Ahoo Salem** says funds from FFCU will support programming for a minimum of 60 foreign-born adults at different stages of their naturalization process. In order to pass the US naturalization interview, lawful permanent residents are evaluated on their knowledge of US Civics and English skills

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



Smith



Smith

American National Bankshares Inc., the parent company American National Bank and Trust Company, has announced the promotions of both **Lutheria H. Smith** and **Mark A. Smith** to Executive Vice President of the Bank. Smith joined American National in 2019 as SVP and Regional Credit Officer and was promoted to Chief Credit Officer in 2020. Smith joined AMNB in

2020 as SVP and Chief Human Resources Officer. Both executives are based in Roanoke, the Virginia Banking headquarters for the Bank.



Hammock

Ridge View Bank, a division of CNB Bank, announces the appointment of two commercial banking professionals and one Senior Credit Officer. It follows Ridge View Bank's recent establishment in the Roanoke Valley with a focus on financial services for small-to-medium sized businesses. **Todd Hammock**, Senior Vice President and Senior Credit Officer has more than 30 years of banking experience, including as Market President of a local area bank. **Rob Shorter**, Senior Vice President



Shorter



Parsons

of Commercial and Private Banking, brings 20 years of banking experience to Ridge View Bank and previously served as VP of Commercial and Retail Lending. **Todd Parsons**, Vice President of Commercial Banking has over 20 years of banking experience and spent the last twelve years as VP of Commercial Lending.

LEGAL FRONT

Gentry Locke had announced the

promotions of **Andrew O. Gay** and **Kirk M. Sosebee** to the partnership. Gay is a member of the firm's Construction Law Group, where he assists clients with construction contracts and resolving construction disputes. Sosebee practices in the firm's Construction Litigation and Business Litigation groups. He represents owners, general contractors, subcontractors, and design professionals.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Yalung

Christiansburg based Inorganic Ventures, a manufacturer of analytical inorganic standards for testing in a range of industries, has announced the addition of a new

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Farnsworth



Borak

Enterprise Development division. Led by **Justin Yalung**, Chief Operating Officer, the company's Enterprise Development arm will have overall authority for developing new products. The company has appointed **Tyler Farnsworth, Ph.D.**, to the newly created role of Head of Product Development, where he will have oversight and responsibility for identifying and developing new products and expanding existing product applications to penetrate markets

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to **news@vbFRONT.com**

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

outside the company's core business lines. Inorganic Ventures also promoted **Tom Borak** to the newly created role of Head of Commercial Development. His responsibility will include overseeing expansion into new product lines and additional services.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimier announces that **Dorothy Sowder** has joined the Roanoke office as Client Coordinator. Sowder has 20 years



Sowder

of experience as an executive administrator in the Roanoke area and will be responsible for assisting both the commercial brokerage and property services teams.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

Kenneth Belton has joined the Board of



Belton

Directors of the Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation. Belton is owner of Your Church Partner, LLC, and is a Roanoke College alum now serving on the college's Board of Trustees. The volunteer Board of Directors guides the Educational Foundation's mission of supporting student scholarships, faculty



CONTRIBUTORS

Valarie Angle is the owner & director of The WellNest Roanoke, downtown Roanoke's holistic hub where dozens of wellness practitioners serve the community through services, classes, and special events. Valarie earned an Educational Specialist graduate degree from Virginia Tech; a master's in liberal studies from Hollins University; and undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Central Florida. She and her partner, Jonathan, are passionate about growing a wellness-focused community. Contact her at [connect@thewellnestroanoke.com]

Jennifer Poff Cooper is a senior correspondent for FRONT, and a graduate of the RB Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Hollins University. She is a native of Christiansburg, where she lives and writes in her family's home place. [coopjerj91@gmail.com]

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

Shannon Dominguez is Director of Business Development for The Advancement Foundation in Vinton and helps run The Gauntlet Business competition. Shannon has a diverse background in planning, finances, human resources, IT and marketing, and has played a leadership role in business development for two law firms. [shannon@theadvancementfoundation.org]

Dan Dowdy is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@vbFRONT.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for 40 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

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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]

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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]

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

Michael Shelton is a Registered Financial Consultant, tax specialist,

and owner of 360 Wealth Consultants. His firm specializes in providing retirement planning and wealth preservation strategies for business owners and astute individuals. What really has the locals excited, though, is his groundbreaking, proprietary software, designed to streamline accounting and wealth planning for business owners of medical practices, real estate properties, and construction industry businesses. [michael@discover360financial.com]

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

Kaitlyn Van Buskirk is a grants associate with Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia. Her experience includes development, planned giving, philanthropy, and fundraising roles with non-profits and community service organizations, and she has a BA from Sweet Briar College focused in business, management, marketing, and related support services. [kaitlyn@cfwesternva.org]

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.

“““

For her, the stress-free environment was the most stressful of all. — Page 46

development and endowment initiatives at Virginia Western.

MUNICIPAL FRONT



Comer



Howard-Woods

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission has announced two recent hires and a new partnership. **Niles Comer** has been named the new

Director of the Roanoke Valley Collective Response and **Emma Howard-Woods** has been named Program Manager. The Collective Response, the Roanoke Valley's regional response to the addiction epidemic, was recently formalized as a program of the Regional Commission building upon the work the Collective Response has been doing as an all-volunteer collective since its inception in August 2018. The program was made possible by funds received from the City of Roanoke via the city's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) award.

Appointed to the *Board of Directors of the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority*: Victoria McNiff of Roanoke, Project Manager, Pulaski County Economic Development Authority; Taylor Spellman of

Troutville, Director of Public Relations, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge; Bill Tanger of Hollins, Chair, Friends of the Rivers of Virginia and Peter Volosin of Roanoke, Realtor, Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors. Appointed to the *Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority*: Beth O'Connor, M.Ed. of Blacksburg, Executive Director, Virginia Rural Health Association and Wendy Welch, PhD of Wytheville, Executive Director, Graduate Medical Education Consortium of Southwest Virginia. Appointed to the *Criminal Justice Services Board*: Mary Biggs of Blacksburg, Member, Montgomery County Board of Supervisors.

NON-PROFIT FRONT

Kate Skelly has accepted the position



Skelly

of Executive Director for the Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation (BMCF). Skelly has over 15 years of experience working in museum environments. She has developed a broad range of museum programs using traditional and modern technologies and state-of-the-art presentation strategies. Skelly will be responsible for programming at both of the BMCF sites – the Alexander Black House on Draper Road and St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall on Gilbert Street.

Compiled by
Gene Marrano

“ ” Volatile inflation is really a major issue. — Page 46



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Meat processing facility in Floyd; upgrade of Franklin County cannery

The inaugural round of the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industry Development (AFID) Fund Infrastructure Grant Program was announced in December. \$160,000 in grants have been issued - including \$23,000 for a new meat processor at Firehouse Farms in Floyd, to help establish a meat processing facility for local livestock farmers. The facility will open as a custom-exempt facility in the next few months. In addition, \$25,000 is ticketed for infrastructure improvements for the Callaway Cannery and Glade Hill Community Canneries in Franklin County. Funds will go toward replacing the boilers at the facilities, which have been in operation for 80 years.

Roanoke-based transportation company hikes driver pay

Lawrence Freight, a 100% employee-owned carrier headquartered in Roanoke, has introduced new pay packages for both over-the-road truckload and flatbed company drivers. The new pay package will pay up to \$0.70 cents per mile, which represents up to a 40% increase. The Freight division will also incentivize safety by including a Quarterly Safety Bonus, which is an additional \$0.025 cents per mile or up to \$3,000.00 annually. "Our drivers have continued to

provide exceptional service to our customers in one of the most demanding periods of time our country has experienced in peacetime," said Chief Executive Officer, Warren Groseclose. "Professional truck drivers are the most important link in the supply chain and without them, our economy would fail." This increase will allow truckload drivers to earn up to \$88,000 and flatbed drivers to earn up to \$92,000 annually.

Site prep funding from Commonwealth

A total of 7 million dollars in Virginia Business Ready Site Program development grants for 11 projects across the Commonwealth were announced last month. Administered by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, this discretionary program identifies, assesses, and improves the readiness of potential industrial sites, which must contain a minimum of 100 contiguous, developable acres. Franklin County's Summit View business park along U.S. 220 received more than 1 million dollars in funding for additional site prep work on the 550-acre campus.

The Botetourt Center at Greenfield received almost \$363,000, New River Valley Commerce Park in Pulaski \$300,000, Roanoke County \$75,000 for the Woodhaven parcel it co-owns with Salem

and Roanoke City. To date Franklin County has secured approximately \$19 million in state and federal grant funding for the development of the park, with \$1 million being the latest announced for the continued development of the 100-acre business ready site pad. The Botetourt County site is 121 acres in the same park where Eldor Manufacturing and several other businesses are located. "It's important to have sites prepped [graded, utility lines, access roads] these days to compete with other localities says Director of Economic Development Ken McFayden - even without a tenant commitment, "those were all items we needed to address before a company could further consider the site." With as little as 6 months from first look until deciding for many companies these days, it's better to be site-prepped notes McFayden.

More local companies in the VALET program

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) has announced the acceptance of 16 companies into its two-year Virginia Leaders in Export Trade (VALET) program. The VALET program assists companies in the Commonwealth that are committed to international exporting as a growth strategy. Black Dog Salvage (Roanoke) and QualiChem (Salem) are part of the new

group of 16. To date 393 companies have been accepted into the program.

Help for farmers

\$1.2 million in United States Department of Agriculture has awarded grant funding for 19 specialty crop projects in Virginia, the result of a competitive grant process established by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to support federally eligible specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and nursery crops. The grants will assist farmers transitioning into high-value agricultural initiatives involving eligible specialty crops, increasing net farm income through high-value or value-added enterprises. It will also assist farmers in finding new ways to market or add value to specialty agricultural products and will be used to help develop pilot and demonstration programs in specialty agriculture that have the potential for transferability within rural Virginia. Various Virginia Tech-associated programs will receive a substantial portion of this funding.

Floyd furniture maker gets a boost

Phoenix Hardwoods, Inc., an artisan manufacturer of furniture and home goods made exclusively from Virginia-grown hardwoods, will expand

its production facility in the county and open a new retail storefront in the Farmer Supply store in downtown Floyd. The new retail and manufacturing space will enable the company to grow its product line, creating eight new focused positions; it will also lead to \$100,000 in new capital investment and allow the company to purchase an additional \$76,000 of Virginia-grown hardwoods over the next three years. Established in 2002 by Bill and Corinne Graefe, Jeff and Annie Armistead acquired the business in 2020. The Virginia Department of Agriculture

and Consumer Services (VDACS) worked with Floyd County and the Floyd County Economic Development Authority to secure this project.

A \$10,000 grant from the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund will be matched with local funds. "The Floyd County Board of Supervisors and the Floyd County EDA are excited about the expansion of Phoenix Hardwoods in the County," said Floyd County Board of Supervisors Chairman Joe Turman last month. "This expansion by local entrepreneurs is bringing

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good job creation to our community and capitalizing on local craftsmanship and hardwoods."

Small business loans from the Commonwealth

A new Virginia Small Business Resiliency

Fund program and more than \$9.7 million in grants has been awarded for 12 projects throughout the Commonwealth. The funding will assist organizations to create programs and products that will expand access to capital and provide technical assistance



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for COVID-19 impacted small businesses. Roanoke-based Freedom First Federal Credit Union (FFFCU) will deploy \$1.5 million in small and microloans, establish a loan loss reserve and an Individual Development Account program for business purposes with a focus placed on small loans and women-, minority- and/or immigrant-owned businesses in distressed communities in the region. The Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project Inc. (SERCAP) will increase its available loan capital in the region as well, providing financing products to underserved businesses in rural areas, with an emphasis on those directly impacted by COVID-19. SERCAP will provide \$150,000 in technical assistance to microenterprises, deploy \$665,000 in microloans to more than 40 businesses, and utilize \$100,000 for staff administration of programming.

Deal finalized for passenger rail service

The Commonwealth has finalized the definitive agreement with Norfolk Southern Corporation to expand passenger rail service to the New River Valley for the first time since 1979. The Western

Rail Initiative expands passenger rail service to the New River Valley and will add a second state-supported round-trip train between Roanoke and Boston later this year, which will be extended to the New River Valley upon completion of a new station, track and signal improvements by 2025. It is expected to add approximately 80,000 new passengers in the first year after service is extended to the New River Valley. The agreement preserves the existing freight rail service provided on the lines. In addition, the Commonwealth will invest in infrastructure improvements between Manassas and the Roanoke Yard to improve the reliability of passenger rail service over Norfolk Southern Railway-owned right-of-way. The acquisition and infrastructure improvements are partially funded by contributions from the I-81 Corridor Multimodal Improvements Fund, Commonwealth Rail funds, and the General Assembly's 2021 Transportation Initiatives.

Virginia has "Best Business Climate"

Virginia has been named the state of the year for Overall Business Climate by Business Facilities magazine. It comes in addition to

Virginia's number one ranking by CNBC as the Best State for Business. "During my term, we've attracted more than \$80 billion in economic investment, creating more than 100,000 jobs—a record for any Virginia governor," said former Governor Ralph Northam when announcing the Business Facilities honor in late December. "The [Youngkin] administration is inheriting a booming economy with record job creation, one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and lower than any of our neighboring states, and back-to-back titles as the nation's best state for business."

GO Virginia funds will help create shared lab spaces in Blacksburg and Roanoke

More than \$3.6 million in Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) grants have been issued to support thirteen projects focused on expanding workforce development and talent pipelines in key industries, fostering business, and improving infrastructure. Included in that total in Region 2 is almost \$600,00 for Project Eagle+, which will help the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC) and the city of Roanoke, Montgomery County, and Johnson & Johnson

JLABS to pilot a shared lab facility in Blacksburg at the VTCRC to meet the demand from small, early-stage companies, many of which are spinoffs from Virginia Tech and/or alumni of the Regional Accelerator & Mentoring Program (RAMP) in Roanoke. Establishing a wet/dry lab that can be shared by startups in Roanoke – to be used by spinoffs from the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute for example – is a long term goal as well.

New owners for Virginia Applebee's

SSCP Management, Inc., based in Dallas, recently acquired a group of Applebee's restaurants across the state of Virginia, putting its total number of SSCP-owned-and-operated Applebee's locations at 80. SSCP's Applebee's locations now span from California to Virginia. The Applebee's markets under the direction of SSCP in Virginia now include Martinsville, Wytheville, Salem, Rocky Mount, Norton, Roanoke, Radford, Danville, Lynchburg, Lexington, South Boston and Galax.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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““ I had an idea how it could work;
but I had to trust it. — Page 22

““ The assessment can be way off.
— Page 26

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“ ”
There is way more demand than supply in the technology field. — Page 29



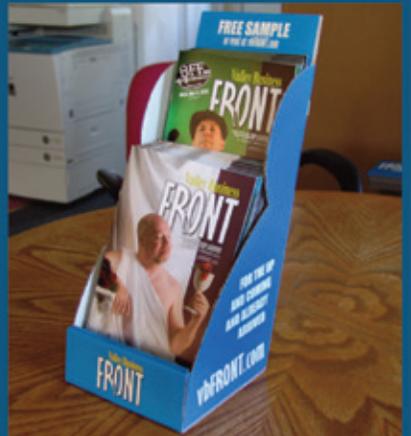
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