

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 165
JUNE 2022

Virginia Tech's
Construction and
Engineering
Management

3D Home Construction

Sports Haven

Business Continuity

vbFRONT.com

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black blazer over a red top, is smiling and holding a blue hard hat and a roll of blueprints. The hard hat has the 'BUILD SMART INSTITUTE' logo on it. The background is a blurred hallway.

Building Up Construction

Alicia Smith
Build Smart Institute



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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Some good news for the Commonwealth recently, albeit for northern Virginia – Boeing will move its headquarters from Chicago to Arlington, right across the river from DC. The aerospace giant is a big player when it comes to defense contracting orders with the Federal government. U.S. Senator Mark Warner says he knew late last year that the deal was done. Wouldn't it be nice if Boeing decided to build another plant in southwest Virginia, or convinced some of its suppliers to set up shop here?

Warner is also lobbying heavily for a semiconductor chip manufacturing plant to be built in Virginia, noting the supply chain shortage that has impacted the auto industry, and a too-heavy reliance on overseas chip making plants. Speaking of shortages, this month we have several stories about trying to attack that problem at both ends in the construction industry – the project management/engineering side of the equation, and the construction worker shortage, the boots on the ground so to speak.

Also in this issue, part two in Kimberly Whiter's continuing series on the caregiving crisis – and how employers can offer a related benefit to workers that are caring for a loved one. Whiter, the CEO of Roanoke-based Eldercare Solutions, is planning a major conference this November at Hotel Roanoke, The Care Colloquium, on that very subject. It is officially summer this month as well. Get outside and enjoy. Happy Reading.

Tom Field
Publisher

Gene Marrano
Editor

“”

Recruitment, succession planning and sustainability are required forward planning. — Page 10

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vbFRONT.com

COVER STORY PAGE 8

Build Smart Institute Addresses Construction Labor Shortage

By Nanette Levin



“Trust me, something always happens. — Page 42



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Jennifer Poff Cooper



Zack Jackson



Mike Leigh



Michael Shelton



Nicholas Vaassen

Advisory Board

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

2022 CONTRIBUTORS



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Tom Field



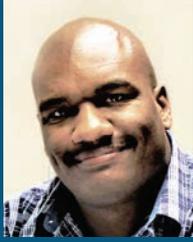
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commercial real estate

“Diversity in your client base is important.”
— Page 14

“You would be surprised how loyal people are to their teams.”
— Page 28

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

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Rob Leonard, Alicia Smith, and Gary Feazell

Tom Field

Build Smart Institute Addresses Construction Labor Shortage

By Nanette Levin

Businesses in the construction industry have faced challenges recruiting new hires for decades. That's become even more of an issue today as the median age continues to rise. One local company in the business decided to do something about it.

According to the National Association of Home Builders, construction workers aged 55+ rose from 16.8% to 22% from 2010-2018 while the number of younger workers declined. Gary Feazell, owner of F&S Building Innovations in Roanoke (founded in 1976), envisioned an answer to this challenge close to a decade ago. Today, that dream has become reality in the Build Smart Institute.

Chartered on February 11, 2020, two weeks before the pandemic hit, the Build Smart Institute initiative launched in August of 2020 with a grand opening on October 30. The 10,000-square-foot

facility is housed on Gainsboro Road in the Northwest section of Roanoke City. 275 trainees have gone through the program as of early this Spring.

According to Rob Leonard, Director of the Build Smart Institute (BSI), they're working with students ranging in age from 14 to 60+. Their pathways approach to learning allows for flexibility in the curriculum, which includes customization. Study plans can be mapped out for both individuals and organizations. Course work ranges from hands-on construction training to remote teaching managed through online courses and video chats.



Tom Field



Submitted

Core training



Tom Field



Submitted

Teaching inside workspace

CONSTRUCTION STATS

12 Jobs in Construction that Pay Well:

- heavy equipment operator (\$20.95 per hour)*
- mason (\$21.40 per hour)*
- ironworker (\$23.04 per hour)*
- boilermaker (\$25.05 per hour)*
- plumber (\$25.07 per hour)*
- pipefitter (\$25.78 per hour)*
- electrician (\$26.02 per hour)*
- construction inspector (\$26.04 per hour)*
- building engineer (\$28.14 per hour)*
- civil engineer (\$36.29 per hour)*
- construction superintendent (\$36.31 per hour)*
- construction manager (\$45.95 per hour)*

* national average salary
(Indeed.com; 4/14/22)

Construction workers aged 55+ rose from 16.8% to 22%

(National Association of Home Builders; 2010—2018)

“It’s still challenging finding people. And probably some of the biggest challenges is with the journeyman electricians, the journeyman carpenters — they are continuing to retire out; the skilled workers are some of the biggest challenges. We are seeing where school systems are trying to look at doing more to encourage graduates out of high school to get into the industry, but that is a slow go as well.”

(construction executive cited on Marketplace.org; 4/26/22)

—Tom Field



Tom Field

Focusing on the need

Since establishing the initial curriculum, Leonard notes requests have come in for more specific and advanced technical studies. Much of this has focused on professional development, including crew leadership, project supervision and project management. Company owners are starting to realize recruitment, succession planning and sustainability are required forward planning, says Leonard.

The Institute has developed cooperative relationships with a variety of organizations and those that take BSI courses do not have to go to work for F&S Building Innovations. Among the collaborators are trade organizations, secondary schools, colleges, Habitat for Humanity and government entities. Through workforce development funding and other grants, they're also putting money back into the Institute.

The learning programs use a combination of full-time staff support, virtual learning tools including modular training courses and adjunct professors. Leonard says the cost to complete programs at the Institute is a fraction of the fees for a higher education degree, but he's quick to point out they work cooperatively with area colleges. In fact, Virginia Western Community College has asked

to collaborate on their CORE program, which covers the fundamentals of construction.

Training rates and scholarship funding

Costs for a CORE class are approximately \$1900, but this is all inclusive: textbooks, instructors, materials, and all equipment needed for hands-on construction learning portions are covered by this fee. Those who complete the curriculum also earn accreditations from both NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) and HBI (Home Builders Institute).

The core fundamentals and construction class is a 90-hour program which includes earning while learning with work-based semester training. This can be done in parallel with college degrees. It's also ideally suited for Generation Z students seeking a quick offramp to income opportunities, Leonard notes.

Alicia Smith, President of Build Smart Institute, explains learning opportunities through the Institute are practical and tactile. "The students are able to actually frame a wall, get their hands-on the tools, hang drywall. All the costs of those materials are in with the tuition."



Submitted



Tom Field



Submitted

Construction site

CONSTRUCTION STATS

Top 10 Construction Jobs:

- construction manager
- plumber
- electrician
- solar photovoltaic installer
- glazier
- equipment operator
- painter
- sheet metal worker
- structural iron and steelworker
- construction worker

(compiled by Constructible using US News ranking report; 2021)

Top National/Global Construction Companies:

- AECOM
- Balfour Beatty
- Bechtel
- DPR
- Fluor
- Gilbane
- Haskell
- Hensel Phelps
- Holder
- Jacobs
- Kiewit
- PCL
- Skanska
- Turner
- Walsh
- Whiting-Turner

(various sources; listed alphabetically)

While the supply chain issues will be corrected over time, the labor shortages plaguing the construction industry are expected to intensify.

(ForConstructionPros.com; 03/21/22)

Construction industry needs to attract nearly 650,000 additional workers on top of the normal pace of hiring in 2022

(Associated Builders and Contractors; Feb. 2022)

—Tom Field



Submitted

Some trainees pay their own tuition. Organizations may cover costs for current employees or those they're onboarding. Grant funded programs cover fees for others. Build Smart Institute also has a BuildU Scholarship Program that's funded by private donors, companies, and construction industry trade groups including HBAC, RRHBA and AGCVA.

Goals for the future

Smith states the objectives include having 45 students a day attending the Institute. BSI has adopted a multi-faceted approach for recruitment. The primary focus is bringing people into the industry. That can include recent high school or college graduates or individuals looking for a career change.

The organization also serves seasoned industry workers looking for professional development or trades training. In addition, the Institute is working to expose more young people to construction industry opportunities. This includes workshops in middle schools and even elementary school outreach. "We see folks that have put a hammer in their hand for the first time and just light up," says Smith. Youth outreach includes public, private and homeschool systems. The Institute is also involved in CPE (Continuing Professional Education) courses some businesses require.

Customized approaches

Rob Leonard explains a recent example of customization with a small construction

company. "Often times they don't have a defined project manager or superintendent." Instead, someone who's moved from field work to management is filling many roles. The group condensed 225 hours of professional development course work into a 24-hour overview on mentor training. "Anyone who has someone report to them is effectively a mentor," he says. "Nobody's doing anything like that." The Department of Labor and Industry took note and now has the course listed on their website.

While F&S Building Innovations provided initial funding for the Institute, they operate as separate entities. A large team of adjunct professors helps support changing Institute needs. The entity serves Roanoke, New River Valley and many throughout the Commonwealth with virtual learning resources. They even have a BSI bus - because the staff discovered "transportation can be an obstacle" and they wanted to eliminate that as a concern, Leonard explains.

"This is an opportunity for construction companies to invest in their future, invest in the industry, invest in the succession of their company" says Smith. "At some point, everybody's got to put some skin in the game."

"The industry doesn't realize how dire it is," asserts Leonard. "If they don't invest in Generation Z, the manufacturing industry is going to start doing much more pre-fabrication . . . the folks that aren't investing in this today, it's very likely they're not going to innovate in these lanes and will be at risk for sustainability." 



2021 Graduates



Alicia Smith

CONSTRUCTION STATS

Regional Construction Leaders:

- Alam Design Group (A/E – Daleville)
- Avis Construction (GC – Roanoke)
- Balzer & Associates (A/E – Roanoke)
- Blake Construction (GC – Roanoke)
- Branch Group (GC – Roanoke)
- Building Specialists Inc (GC – Roanoke)
- Coleman-Adams (GC – Forest)
- Dollman Construction (GC – Roanoke)
- English Construction (GC – Lynchburg)
- F&S Building Innovations (GC – Roanoke)
- Faulconer Construction (GC – Charlottesville)
- Friendly Structures (GC – Blacksburg)
- G&H Contractors (GC – Salem)
- HHHunt (GC – Blacksburg)
- Hurt & Proffitt (A/E – Lynchburg)
- Lee Engineering (A/E – Forest)
- Lester Group (GC – Martinsville)
- Lionberger Construction (GC – Roanoke)
- MB Contractors (GC – Roanoke)
- EJ Miller (GM – Salem)
- RL Price (GC – Roanoke)
- Star City Construction (GC – Roanoke)
- Virginia Building Services (GC – Roanoke)
- Wiley/Wilson (A/E – Lynchburg)

(various sources; non-subs, trade-specific, or specialties; listed alphabetically)

The demand for multi-unit construction in Richmond, Charlottesville and Roanoke is higher than average.

(Constructionwire.com; 2022)

“The construction industry desperately needs qualified, skilled craft professionals to build America.”

(Michael Bellaman; ABC president; 2/22)

—Tom Field



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

The pandemic forced many organizations to take swift and drastic action to stay in business, and to consider how resilient they are in the face of adversity.

Stay in the game - resiliency

In every organization there is risk, but in my experience, there are few companies that do a good job of comprehending and evaluating their risks, and then subsequently planning how to remain resilient if those risks occur. Insurance is a valuable tool to mitigate many risks, but it doesn't cover everything. Consider some of the risks that most businesses face.

Labor – I recently attended a CEO conference where I learned that the USA could experience a labor shortage for the next 10 years based on demographic trends. Is your business prepared for extended labor shortages? How would you handle the loss of a key employee?

Business Strategy – As we've learned from the pandemic, the market for goods and services can change very fast. How nimble is your business? Successful businesses in the future will be able to quickly adjust their business strategy to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions.

Financial – Nothing brings a quicker end to a company than negative cash flow. How resilient is your revenue stream? What would happen if you lost your top one or two customers? Diversity in your client base is important. Having a bank line of credit as insurance to short-term cash flow challenges is another tool to help stay solvent.

Energy/IT – Due to an aging power grid, more severe weather, and the retirement of carbon-based power plants occurring faster than new renewable sources, the frequency and severity of power outages is likely to worsen in the future. Additionally, IT systems continue to be vulnerable to cybersecurity threats. What would be the impact to your business from extended power or IT outages?

Supply Chain – The pandemic demonstrated the risks associated with overseas supply chains. But domestic suppliers can also fail. What would be the impact of having your most important supplier suddenly fail?

The top priority for every business should be to stay in business. These risks are real and potentially devastating, but all of them can be handled with prior planning. Leadership teams can identify their biggest risks and run "what-if" scenarios, then take proactive measures depending on the severity and likelihood of occurrence.

Identify your risks. Develop a mitigation plan. Stay in the game. 

“Insurance doesn't cover everything.”

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

National debt, interest and taxes

Federal spending on pandemic relief, the war in Ukraine, and a variety of other non-typical areas has caused national debt to skyrocket. What's owed by the public – that's you through your taxes – increased from \$14.6 trillion in 2017 to more than \$21 trillion in 2020. As of February 2022, the federal debt was about \$30.29 trillion. It's not just the debt we owe. According to Treasury Direct, a government site, interest expense on outstanding debt for 2021 was \$562,388,232,682.17. Ouch.

People often forget when they advocate for more "government support" that someone pays for that. That someone is you. As you start to look at investment strategies, consider the cost of interest alone on that debt. Now might be a better time to invest in a ROTH instead of a traditional IRA, for example. Chances are your taxes will be higher tomorrow, even with reduced retirement income.

Responding to rising interest rates

Interest rates on borrowing, which are tied to inflation, are rising. Because of this, it's a good time to shop around. Different banks offer different products. That includes everything from business lines of credit and expansion loans to mortgages and variable-rate personal loans. When rates are rising, it's usually smart to lock into fixed-rate solutions.

Think about what you're doing with savings and investments too. Higher interest rates mean you can make more with FDIC insured options. These have paid little or nothing recently, but now that's changing. It makes sense to find the best rates.

Controlling taxes

Don't forget, different income gets taxed at different rates. For example, capital gains are taxed at 0-20%, depending on your income. Those who make \$41,675 or less pay none, earners making over \$459,750 owe 20% to Uncle Sam. If you're a high earner, you might want to consider flipping some of your income strategies. As laws and personal circumstances change keep an eye on what's working for you.

The last president who paid off the national debt was Andrew Jackson. That was in 1835. It's unlikely we'll ever see zero federal debt owed in our lifetimes. Smart future planning includes considering rising federal debt in investment strategies. 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:
Smart future planning includes factoring rising federal debt into investment strategies.

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



Courtesy photo

Jacob Brown

Best of Both Worlds

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Construction management - or engineering? A Virginia Tech program exposes students to both disciplines.

In the construction industry, there is a divide between design and building, VT student ambassador Jacob Brown contends. The Construction and Engineering Management (CEM) degree at Virginia Tech “walks the line,” allowing students to obtain education and real-world experience in both.

The major is designed for students who wish to pursue a management or engineering career in the construction industry. It is part of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction (MLSoC), along

with the Building Construction major (established in 1946). CEM is newer, born in 2008 as part of the vision for the MLSoC, which was formed in 2006.

The curriculum incorporates courses from engineering, building construction, and business, according to Sharon Williams, advisor in the CEM program. CEM has several hallmarks. One is that an industry board helps lead the curriculum. Recently, for example, the board felt that more technology such as drones should be part of the curriculum,



Courtesy photo

Jacob Brown

and the school was responsive by incorporating a robotics course the very next semester.

Brian Kleiner, Director of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction, said, "We take our relationship with the industry seriously." As a result, the curriculum is hands-on and relevant. Students apply theories learned in the classroom, such as estimating and scheduling a job. They even visit job sites as part of some classes.

Having two capstone classes differentiates the CEM program. Students, working in teams, receive plans and specifications for real construction projects and must make decisions based on their knowledge. Then they compare their solutions to what actually happens in the end.

There is not a typical CEM student, said Williams. Some students have become interested in construction through the family business or a summer job in high school. Some have no background whatsoever in construction and have heard the buzz about CEM through word of mouth or recruiting efforts. CEM has around 250 students, according to Kleiner, calling that, "tremendous growth" from 20 in the early years.

CONSTRUCTION ... ITS MORE THAN JUST BUILDING SOMETHING

Typical Jobs

- Project Engineer
- Project Manager
- Superintendent
- Estimator
- Virtual Design Coordinator
- Business Development

Types of Employers

- General Contractor
- Design Build
- Specialty Contractors
 - Heavy Civil Contractor
 - Geotechnical Contractor
- Subcontractor
 - Concrete
 - Electrical
 - Mechanical
- Engineering Firm
- Owner

(Source: CEM brochure at vt.edu)

Kleiner said the success of the construction industry, booming since about 2011, drives demand for professionals such as CEM graduates, who offer the "perfect combination" of technical engineering skills (CEM graduates can pursue a Professional Engineering license) and professional skills (such as management, leadership, and communication).

Trends in the industry, what Kleiner called moving toward "Construction 4.0" or "smart construction," bode well for the CEM discipline. He pointed to technology-based advances such as using robotics and drones to perform potentially unsafe tasks, such as inspecting rooftops or trenches, without putting people at risk. Automation does not put workers out of jobs, he emphasized, but rather advances their skill sets and results in higher paying jobs.

Tech's CEM program is accredited



Sharon Williams

by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) and is one of only a handful that meet two ABET accreditation commissions, one for management and one for construction engineering.

Brown said that the biggest challenge in CEM is taking rigorous math and science courses while also assembling full proposals that are “worth putting your name on.” The CEM program requires 131 credits for graduation, versus the general university’s 120.

On average, graduating seniors have five to seven full-time job offers, with an average starting salary of \$65,000, said Williams. There is a 100% job placement rate within three months of graduation, with the majority of students signing employment contracts during the fall of their senior years.

Beyond typical CEM jobs (see sidebar), Williams added that some students work “outside the box” in areas such as consulting or industrial sales. One graduate is working on monument restoration for a government agency, while another is employed by Disney World to help renovate hotels on their resort properties.

Kleiner recently had a visit from a CEM graduate who was featured on the cover of a well-known trade publication. Just a



Brian Kleiner

few years out of school, she is managing billion-dollar projects. Kleiner noted that there is a “desperate need” for women in the industry, as only 10% of professionals in construction are women.

Brown, the graduating senior, said he would like to start working with a heavy civil engineering contractor to gain experience and build relationships, then eventually invest in his own business. Those types of “heavy” projects are typically larger and new construction, perhaps a major infrastructure or government project.

Though Brown will be pursuing an accelerated master’s degree, he said CEM is “one of the more practical degrees,” where you can use much of what you learn immediately.

“I could go out into the field now and transition fluidly from school to work,” he said, because of the work ethic and skill set he has garnered through the program plus his internship.

Another advantage of CEM is its portability. “Construction is in everybody’s backyard,” said Williams. “Students can use these skills anywhere.”

The CEM program also aims to dispel misperceptions about today’s construction industry. Kleiner said, “It’s not just digging in the dirt.” 

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INNOVATION

By Erin Burcham

Executive Summary:

There's a strong team working diligently to construct an amazing technology and innovation cluster here in the Roanoke-Blacksburg region.

Erin Burcham is the President of Verge and Executive Director of RBTC

Building a technology future one entrepreneur at a time

Those entrepreneurs, business owners, and researchers were on display at TechNite in mid-May, presented by Woods Rogers. The event was a celebration of the tech community and everything we are building together.

Victor Iannello was named to the RBTC Hall of Fame for lifetime achievements. The "serial innovator" and entrepreneur founded several well-known companies including Radiant Physics and Synchrony. He also served as Past Chairman of the Carilion Medical Center Board of Directors, Past Co-Chairman of Valleys Innovation Council (now part of the Verge consortium), and Past President of the Roanoke Regional Partnership. Iannello attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and holds the SB, SM, and ScD degrees in Nuclear Engineering.

Other TechNite winners include:

Kathleen O'Dell, STEM-H Educator Award, which recognizes an educator that promotes math, science, and/or use of technology in creative ways. O'Dell became a math teacher at Christiansburg Middle School 15 years ago through a non-traditional route, incorporating real-world experiences into her curriculum, and realized it was the dream job she was looking for.

Ticket Spicket, Rising Star Award, which recognizes an early-stage technology company. Ticket Spicket (a RAMP business incubator graduate), is a no cost digital ticketing platform for schools, districts, and associations. In two years, the tool has grown to 1.4 million unique users, conducting 2.7 million transactions.

Dr. Robert Gourdie, Innovator Award, which recognizes an individual, a team, or organization that has blazed new trails in the areas of research and innovation. Rob Gourdie is an entrepreneur with a wealth of startup experience. He has founded or co-founded three start-ups. First String Research has three active clinical trials. Acomhal Research and Tiny Cargo Company are on their way to revolutionizing drug delivery and glioblastoma treatment.

Wendi Pannell, Regional Leadership Award, which recognizes a member who leads by example. Pannell, Vice President of Content Production at Ozmo, is a connector of people and ideas. She has shown dedication to growing the WoTech (RBTC women in technology) community.

Martin Angst, Entrepreneur Award, which recognizes a leader exemplifying what it means to be a risk-taker. Angst is co-founder of Blacksburg-based Rendyr, an emerging

desktop robotics company developing a portable laser cutter that improves access to rapid prototyping and digital fabrication.

P1 Technologies, Leading Tech Company, which recognizes a company committed to advancing the region's technology community. P1 Technologies delivers cabling and injection molding products as well as custom specialty designs. They focus on three main service lines: medical, audio, and in vivo preclinical

research from their facility in Roanoke County.

Kathy Claytor, Ruby Award, which recognizes an outstanding member and regional asset. Claytor has contributed to the technology industry, working to attract, grow, and retain technology talent for the Roanoke Region. She has benchmarked best practices in human resources and employee engagement strategies while serving on state and national boards. 



FRONTcover archives featuring RBTC members



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Submitted photos

Alquist Pulaski project

"WE ARE DUE FOR ADVANCEMENTS"

3D printed houses: a reality coming to the region soon

By Gene Marrano

With home ownership becoming more out of reach for many, 3D “concrete ink” may be the answer. A pilot project in Pulaski to build lower cost 3D houses is underway.

As home sale prices skyrocket in the region like they are in many other places, owning a house could soon be out of reach for many people, especially those on the lower end of the income scale or just embarking on a career that pays well – but not well enough to buy a dream home perhaps. On top of that lumber prices are up sharply since the pandemic began – 50% by some accounts. “A typical stick built home now costs, on average, \$25,000 more than it did in 2020,”

according to Iowa-based Alquist 3D, which adds that, “now is the time to address the shortages nationwide, with bold action.”

Here's where 3D comes in – printing some of the materials used to build a home, ditching the lumber in many cases needed for concrete forms churned out by a “printer,” where the dimensions are programmed in digitally. Alquist 3D, which partnered with Habitat for Humanity Peninsula & Greater



Rep. Morgan Griffith at Pulaski 3D build

Williamsburg to create the first 3D-printed home to be owner occupied in the United States, has now embarked on an ambitious plan to produce 200 lower cost, affordable homes in the Commonwealth. Project Virginia is what Alquist 3D Founder & CEO Zachary "Zack" Mannheimer calls it. That project got off the ground recently in Pulaski, where the first 3D houses are in the process of going up. 9th District Congressman was among those who showed up for the groundbreaking, as were officials from the Volvo Trucks plant in Dublin and other nearby manufacturers.

"We have so many people that need affordable houses right now," said Town of Pulaski Mayor Shannon Collins at the late April groundbreaking, "we've got jobs coming to town. We really need it. Hopefully this will be the beginning of something huge for Pulaski."

That's the goal: "there's multiple ways to solve this issue but we believe 3D printing technology is the best way to do it," says Mannheimer. Alquist is named for a character in a 1920 satirical play by a Czech playwright, where robots speed



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up the manufacturing process in a facility – before they take on human emotion and eventually battle with the humans that program them. Mannheimer has a theatrical background incidentally; the Alquist naming is hopefully tongue in cheek and not prophetic. To wit according to the company:

- The single-story, three-bedroom, two-bath home Alquist built for Habitat for Humanity in Williamsburg took only about 22 hours to print the exterior shell. Those are the same type homes that will be produced in downtown Pulaski. Next year will come the first two-story 3D printed home in America says Mannheimer. Multi-family and townhomes are on the to-do list as well within the next 24 months; Alquist is partnering with localities around the state on those upcoming projects.
- It takes at least 2-3 weeks less than the standard construction schedule, cutting nearly 15% off of costs. Mannheimer believes with economies of scale those labor savings will be even greater in the future. And it doesn't take away jobs from plumbers, electricians, HVAC techs etc. that are

still needed to complete the 3D houses.

- 3D printing enables builders to use less lumber — a major benefit since lumber availability and prices have been highly volatile.

Alquist has spent almost four years researching large scale 3D printing and has partnered with Black Buffalo 3D and its NextCon printer on the project. Project Virginia will be the world's largest 3D-printed construction: 200 homes around the state starting in Pulaski, according to Mannheimer. It could take 4-5 years. Why start in Pulaski? Alquist 3D says demand for housing is soaring there thanks to the more than 3,000 new jobs that Volvo, Blue Star Manufacturing, and American Glove Innovations among others will create in the area. The New River Valley was recently identified by Brookings Institute as having one of the highest growth rates in the nation for tech jobs in the U.S. Those workers will need affordable homes near their jobs says Alquist and that's where unique housing that lowers construction costs via 3D printing comes into play.

Alquist says it is investing in research to

build new roads, elevator shafts, retaining walls, and other traditional concrete structures using 3D printing technology. The company is also collaborating with Virginia Tech on smart building applications that will come standard in all Alquist 3D homes under the moniker “Raspberry Pi.” It monitors the indoor air quality, smoke/ fire detection, energy consumption, space utilization and security. Mannheimer says large scale 3D printing is getting faster all the time as the technology keeps developing.

He also says the construction trade hasn’t changed much in the past 100 years when it comes to homebuilding. “We’re due for advancements.” Only a handful of companies on are the 3D house printing bandwagon right now – Mannheimer says they often get several dozen calls an hour as less expensive ways to provide home ownership are sought. Folks in rural America have known this for years he says, but the rest of the country is “waking up,” now to the housing crisis. It will take “both private and public dollars working together” to solve what he calls a systemic problem. After Pulaski look for Alquist 3D homes to be built in Roanoke (maybe in the Norwich neighborhood by late this summer) and Newport News.

Zack Mannheimer said in late April data showed at the time there were just 3-4 homes for sale in Pulaski County priced between \$150,000 and \$400,000. For a blue-collar worker making a topflight



Zack Mannheimer

wage or even for a degreed professional perhaps a few years out of school and doing well, its not much of a choice when it comes to affordable housing. “They can’t attract and retain their talent, and [many] folks can’t get back to the American Dream of home ownership. That’s the goal here – how do we provide these [houses] for folks looking to be homeowners?”

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New construction from scratch

If you are building new on a random piece of property a soil study and/or percolation test is typically performed on land that does not have access to a public sewer system. The test determines the ability to put in a septic system. There is also a water study which indicates if you can put a well on your land as well for water. A failed test means that no house can be built – which is why you should make any offer to purchase land contingent on the site passing the soil and perc tests.

You want to make sure also to check the zoning for setbacks on the house you are building (how far from the property line/a neighbor), and this is why a survey is important too. Attorney Doug Wilson Sr. states “I tell all buyers to get a survey no matter what they are buying.” It’s not fun to buy a property and find out you are on someone else’s land.

Need a loan for new home construction? According to lender Sonia Older of Union Home Mortgage, most mortgage companies require a builder with proven experience. Your loan can cover the cost of the land, building materials, appliances, landscaping, permits, and more. She says construction loans can include manufactured, stick built, and modular homes. Union also has a special program for Veterans. According to lender Kylie Harvell at Bank of The James, sometimes the builder will front your cost, which is great; she also says however you cannot lock into your rate until the end of the build. Harvell says it’s like planning a wedding and setting a budget. It’s easy to go over the budget - things can add up as the process goes along, like finding a different cabinet maker or granite for the kitchen.

Here are some costly mistakes to avoid according to Bankrate.com:

1. Don’t assume you cannot negotiate with the builder
2. Budget for items not included by builder
3. Understand builder’s warranties and timelines. Pick a builder, realtor, and lender with great reputations, and move forward to a new home on your new land. 🏠

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:

“We want to build a new home.” I hear this all the time. There are a lot of factors that come into play. Here are just a few to help you with your decision.

““
It's easy to go over the budget.

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

Host Your Next Meeting with the Roanoke Higher Education Center

The Roanoke Higher Education Center (RHEC), conveniently located in the former Norfolk & Southern headquarters in downtown Roanoke, is well known throughout the region for offering more than 200 degree and training programs right here in the Roanoke Valley. But, did you know that RHEC can also host events? From in-person trainings to virtual business meetings, RHEC has the space and technology to ensure a successful event.

The Roanoke Higher Education Center is pleased to welcome groups with an education or training component, including professional continuing education, workforce training, professional business meetings, and civic group meetings. With designated meeting and training spaces that can be configured in a variety of ways, the Center can host anything from small conference and business meetings for 15 people, to large gatherings of up to 100 people. The Center's many classrooms are also available for rent, supporting both small group learning and larger lectures.

RHEC has the technology to accommodate any need. Meeting rooms come equipped with state-of-the-art A/V technology, including laptop computers, LCD projectors, and screen. Need to go hybrid? Advanced videoconferencing technology is available for an additional fee. Two computer labs, offering brand new touchscreen computers, a printer, mounted LCD projector and screen, may be rented as well.

The facility and meeting spaces all include WIFI access and are ADA compliant. Affordable rates are available for hourly, daily, and multi-day events, with discounted rates offered for nonprofit 501(c)3 status and government organizations. IT support can also be available the day of the event.

Additional features include a dedicated lactation suite with private rooms, ample parking, as well as access to Seasons and Occasions, an on-site café offering catering services. Roanoke's lively restaurant scene is only minutes away by car or by foot.

For more information or to schedule a tour, please contact reservations@education.edu or call (540) 767-6013. Please also visit www.education.edu/rent-a-space/ to see photos, check availability, or request a space. 



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Submitted photos



Robin Bennett

A little something for everybody

By Shawn Nowlin

In the cards: Sports Haven owner talks memorabilia industry, the impact of COVID pandemic.

Most people know someone who is a die-hard sports fan. Friends and family of Robin Bennett know all too well just how passionate a sports fan he is. Bennett, co-owner of two Sports Haven memorabilia stores in Salem and Roanoke, comes from a tight-knit family where sports of all kinds were appreciated. Growing up, Bennett says his parents taught him countless invaluable things, like the power of Christian faith, manners, respect for your elders and most importantly, a strong work ethic.

At just 12 years of age, Bennett already had a paper route of around 150 customers. "I also had at least 20 yards that I mowed. I picked up pop bottles from the side of the road and house construction sites and turned them in at our local store for five cents each. Sometimes I would make as much as \$25 and thought I was rich." While he grew up playing football and basketball, Bennett's first love was baseball. When his sister's boyfriend (now brother-in-law) took him to his first game at the Salem Civic Center in 1969, he fell in love with ice hockey. Today,

Bennett is a minority owner of the Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs, a team that competes in the Southern Professional Hockey League.

"When customers ask who my team is, I just smile and say, 'whatever team I'm selling at the moment.' You would be surprised how loyal people are to their teams and some will not purchase from you if you are wearing a rival shirt or hat of their team. But they all know we are Rail Yard Dawgs fans." Sports Haven has sold various versions of Dawgs gear over the past five years.

Bennett and his business partner, Shane Parks, opened the Roanoke Sports Haven location at 7541 Williamson Road NE in 2012. Five years later, they opened their Salem location at 4 East Main Street. Because the original name they wanted was taken, Bennett and Parks eventually settled on Sports Haven. "It was actually a customer at the flea market who gave us the idea. It was close to Christmas time, and we had a neat little shop inside Happy's. She walked in and said, 'this is a Sports



Our crew at a Red Sox outing.

Heaven, you have everything that I've been looking for."

New items are the lifeblood of the industry, said Bennett who added, you don't have many sales reps coming around like they used to so you must do a lot of research on your own. "You take a category like NASCAR for example. Twenty years ago, a race team would have one major sponsor and one main paint scheme for the entire season and now teams may have several major sponsors and paint schemes throughout the season. The trading card industry is going thru the roof. It is amazing what people will spend on cards."

Because Sports Haven has a great relationship with several manufacturers, they are always kept abreast of the latest trends and newest items. "Customers keep us informed too. They know of the new items their favorite team authorizes and the manufacturers that make it. We pride ourselves on being the first in our market with a new item," he said. This year he has a "new" pro team to sell as the Washington Commanders (nee Redskins, Washington Football Team) will play for the first time under that moniker.

Multiples times a year, Sports Haven gets involved with numerous area charities. "We love giving back to the community as much as we can. We average donating to 35 organizations and requests per calendar year," Bennett said. "That may not sound like much, but to a small business, it really adds up."

Bennett regularly speaks with Chip Grubb,

a fellow Rail Yard Dawgs minority owner and a former Advance Auto executive. He recalls a conversation they had about hockey. "Chip was interested in bringing hockey back to the Roanoke Valley and had met with several different potential partners to find the right fit for our area. He invited me to a few meetings and things just didn't work out," he said. "Chip and I developed a great friendship, and we would meet for lunch every other month and I told him to please keep me in mind if he ever did decide to put something together. That's how I got involved." Finally, the McGinn family put forth a sound ownership proposal and the Dawgs (SPHL finalists this past season) were born.

During the height of the pandemic, Bennett closed his Salem location on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. During that time, the Dawgs pulled down all their merchandise to take in-house. "We understood why. It was a business decision they had to make trying to survive, but it still hurt us. We kept our Hollins location open the entire time. We knew we had to make some changes and get creative, so we installed hand sanitation stations around the store, signage about [face]masks. We were one of the first in the area to start selling team masks and they took off like a rocket."

Bennett is the first to say that without support from the community, Sports Haven would have gone under years ago. "People can spend their hard-earned money on a number of things so when they choose to spend it on us, we certainly don't take it for granted," he said, adding that, "I'm excited about the next chapter of Sports Haven." 



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Kimberly Whiter

Executive Summary:

You have more family caregivers in your workforce than you realize.

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

How businesses can tackle our national care crisis: part 2

In Part 1 (April issue) we covered how 1 in 5 individuals in the workforce is a family caregiver. These are individuals caring for a loved one with a chronic condition, often an elderly parent. We also discussed how employers have a huge opportunity to support this fast-growing demographic.

Why should an employer support family caregivers? You have more family caregivers in your workforce than you realize. Family caregivers represent a significant segment of the labor force, 18% to 22%, with anticipated sustained growth over the coming years.

You're losing money due to lost productivity. When unsupported, family caregivers contribute to losses in productivity, to the tune of a national average of 11%. Why? Caregiving tasks like take place during the typical 9AM to 5PM workday. It is estimated that family caregivers can lose up to 1.5 workdays a week because of the juggle between work and care tasks.

You're at risk for losing key talent. On average, elder care takes 21 hours a week of your employees' time outside of work. With a part-time job in their laps, the juggle becomes more than many can manage alone. Because of the high out-of-pocket costs, employees are spending 20-44% of their income on elder care needs. Many family caregivers simply decide to leave the workforce altogether.

This is also a key DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) issue. Supporting family caregivers is a critical to inclusive benefits. Care is full of inequities.

- Gender inequities - women shoulder family care responsibilities more than their male counterparts.
- Racial inequities - family caregivers in the Black community face higher incidences of chronic care, including Alzheimer's/dementia. LGBTQ family caregivers face more challenging legal issues. The Latinx community is hit hardest in the U.S with family care and face considerable challenges navigating our healthcare systems.
- Socioeconomic inequities - families in lower socioeconomic situations face significant challenges gaining access to adequate elder care.

How can employers get started?

Provide a family caregiver-friendly work environment. Create a safe space for family caregivers to self-identify. Currently 70% of family caregivers won't mention their care role out of fear that if their leaders know it will negatively impact their career.

If family caregivers don't feel safe to talk about caregiving, they can't access supports.

Take a look at current supports and leverage them for family caregivers. Does your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) offer free financial counseling or mental health services? Both can help family caregivers face the financial strain and the stress of care. Could your FMLA policy include time off to care for an elderly parent? Could flexible work schedules put in place during COVID-19 be repurposed for caregivers?

Start investigating the addition of strategic external supports. There is a surge of direct family caregiver supports entering the employee benefits sector. Some offer robust resources to family caregivers. Some provide concierge services to walk alongside employees on their care path. Some provide one-on-one caregiver coaching, while others provide group education/support. Find ways to work with these businesses. You may be surprised at how inexpensive it is to adopt these types of benefits.

For example, Elder Care Solutions has developed a fintech (financial technology) to guide families to a financially positive caregiving and aging experience. It strategically supports working family caregivers and older workers planning for retirement. This benefit is priced so it can be used in tandem with other family caregiver supports.

HR professionals are facing unprecedented challenges combating the Great Resignation, a huge contributing factor of which was the number of employees balancing their career with care demands. Employees are looking at benefits packages more than ever. Something that will clearly stand out are key supports that help balance this major life stage.

Supporting family caregiving-employees is a national conversation and key leaders on the topic will be in Roanoke from November 14 - 16, 2022 participating in The Care Colloquium at Hotel Roanoke. Conversations here will drill down on the different methods that employers have to support their caregiving-employees. These conversations will include leaders from The Elizabeth Dole Foundation, AARP, Working Daughter, and more. To learn more visit www.thecarecolloquium.com 



There is a surge of direct family caregiver supports entering the employee benefits sector. Find ways to work with these businesses.



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Building a better bio ecosystem right here >

VirginiaBio is a statewide trade association advocating for growth in the bio-tech industry and this year its bi-annual conference was held at Hotel Roanoke. During a panel discussion at the THRiVE 2022: conference in late April, panelist Brett Malone, who oversees the Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg, outlined a vision for downtown Roanoke. Both at the CRC, adjacent to Virginia Tech, and close to the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute in Roanoke federal funding will be used to build “wet lab” shared spaces designed to attract bio-tech startups to the region. “Imagine a whole corridor going down Jefferson [Street in downtown Roanoke] with gleaming buildings. Our vision is building a workforce of 20,000 plus, all around life sciences and its possible.”

The conference brought together more than 200 biotechnology industry leaders and experts from across the state. Delegate Sam Rasoul greeted attendees and said that politicians from both sides of the aisle are committed to the biotech industry growth

in the southwest region. Marc Nelson (City of Roanoke Economic Development director) talked about the industry’s growth in the region in the past 15 years. Also highlighted was VA Bio-Connect, a statewide consortium supported by a GO Virginia grant and led by VirginiaBio, designed to stitch together geographically dispersed life sciences hubs and strengthen the competitiveness of Virginia’s life sciences ecosystem. So far, five of nine GO regions are connected and are accessible via the VA-Bio Connect web portal.

THRiVE 2022 was organized in partnership with Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC), Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program (RAMP) and Valleys Innovation Council (VIC), as well as the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion, Carilion Clinic, and VTC Ventures in Roanoke. FBRI executive director Dr. Michael Friedlander and Carilion Clinic President and CEO Nancy Howell Agee were also among the speakers at THRiVE 2022. “One of the things that drives these ecosystems like San Diego, San Francisco and Boston is the community. We can do this here in Roanoke at a fraction of the cost,” said Brett Malone as he participated on a panel hosted by VERGE/RBTC executive director Erin Burcham.



Carilion partners in brain trauma detection study >

Ten million people visit emergency departments in the United States every year for head trauma, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. However, due to testing limitations, emergency physicians often diagnose "brain injury" incorrectly, resulting in missed follow-up and potentially debilitating symptoms down the road for patients. Now **Carilion Clinic** is taking part in a nationwide study focused on better diagnosing brain injuries in the elderly.

Many associate concussions with sports, but only 3 to 4 percent of head injuries are in athletes who visit emergency departments. In fact, U.S. adults over the age of 75 have had the highest incidence of traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) since 2013. The rates of geriatric mild TBIs (mTBIs) and subsequent mortality have doubled in the past decade.

A \$3.5 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant from the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) has been awarded to Carilion Clinic; Richmond, Virginia-based BRAINBox

Solutions; and the University of Pennsylvania to develop a new way to diagnose brain injuries in the elderly.

Dr. Damon Kuehl is Vice Chair of Research for the Department of Emergency Medicine at Carilion Clinic and for the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine: "the goal of that study is to develop a new diagnostic test for head trauma in older adults. Unfortunately, a CT scan only finds about 8 to 10 percent of brain injuries when we see these patients in the emergency department."

The research occurs in two phases, first to enroll patients and design a new panel of blood markers and cognitive testing methods to identify brain injury in all elderly patients - even those with cognitive impairment such as dementia. Phase two will utilize phase one data to determine the tests' accuracy. When it comes to something as common as concussions, also known as mTBIs, an accurate tool does not currently exist to diagnose the injuries rapidly. "We're trying to really push the science here," says Dr. Kuehl, of a bedside diagnostic test that if it works would start with just a small blood sample to check for those markers. Being able to start therapies earlier to prevent further damage from a brain injury is another goal. "Dementia, Parkinson's, [there are] many different serious consequences from seemingly minor head trauma."



Meeting the Valley's Broadband Needs ... Today, and Into the Future

Jeff Merritt
Roanoke Market Vice President, Cox Communications
and Technology Advisor to Valley Business Front

In today's world, broadband-enabled technology, products and services allow us to achieve tasks that were previously unfathomable. Everything from how we get our news to how we shop has been transformed by technology, and reliable broadband connections are the foundation for benefitting from the new status quo.

At Cox, we want this new gateway of opportunity to be open to all. And in partnership with Roanoke County, we continue to progress toward that ideal. We recently announced the extension of our network to provide broadband service to previously unserved customers on Bent Mountain. These new connections along with many more slated for the near future are among the latest steps in ensuring the region's "fiber future."

Downloads Still Dominate

New construction is one way we demonstrate our commitment to the communities we serve but it's our longstanding history of putting our customers first and our continued investment in our network that sets us apart. We are steadfast in our commitment to providing a great customer experience. That's why recently, we increased download speeds for our most popular tier by nearly 70% (with no accompanying increase in price), and doubled speeds for both ConnectAssist and Connect2Compete customers.

We prioritized these network upgrades because we know that when it comes to the average online experience, downloads still dominate. We're confident in the superiority of our network, which we know exceeds the needs of our typical residential customer.

Future-proofed and Future Focused

For more than 45 years, Cox has continually invested in our network and our people to meet the needs of the Roanoke Valley. And as the internet of things continues to evolve, we will, too. We'll offer consumers more speed and more choice in the near future.

We recently announced a multibillion-dollar infrastructure investment which, over the next several years, will help us build a 10-Gigabit-capable, fiber-based network that will power the next generation of internet users. Expanded fiber-to-the-home connections, combined with breakthrough enhancements to DOCSIS 4.0 technology (our broadband delivery system), will deliver multi-Gig, symmetrical speeds to both residential and business customers.

From online learning to smart devices to the endless future possibilities offered by a broadband connection, we know that access to a high-performing network is key to your quality of life. You can count on Cox to deliver all the bandwidth you need today and to be here in Roanoke as a provider of choice for decades to come.

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E



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A



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Act FAST in response to any of these signs to improve your chances for recovery. If you get help within three hours of the first symptom, the advanced interventional treatments and fast-track Stroke Alert program available at Carilion Clinic can lessen or even eliminate the effects of a stroke.

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



CARILIONCLINIC



TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:
*Lessons about marketing
... from a dog*

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

Approach your business with “little dog attitude”

I have a little dog named Francy. She’s a muttley rat terrier(ish) sort of dog that weighs 14 pounds (we have a cat that’s bigger than her). She spends most of her life curled up on a pillow or a lap ... to the point that I’ve said she’d be perfectly content to be a dog with no legs that had to be carried everywhere. She’s super sweet and friendly to just about anything on earth ... until she sees a big dog.

Then ... “little dog attitude” kicks in and Francy ain’t gonna take no crap from nobody. I’ve seen this little dog launch herself into the air, land on top of a dog 4x her size, and pin them to the ground in a growling fit of unexplained rage. Why? No clue. I don’t know why this dog spends 98% of her life perfectly content to be in some sort of snuggle position, only to turn into a rabid beast when she sees a big dog.

But what I do know is this ... that’s “tiny dog attitude,” and that’s how every small business owner should operate. Don’t be afraid of the big guys ... attack them! Better yet ... COPY THEM!!!!

Large corporations can spend millions (or billions) of dollars on marketing, advertising, and branding on a level that a small business will never be able to equal. However, what a small business can do is study the big dogs, and then emulate these practices for their own brand.

Did you know Wal-Mart made \$2.1 billion dollars in ad REVENUE last year? That’s right, other brands are paying Wal-Mart to get access to the data they’ve collected, and they’re poised to become a top ten ad agency in the country within five years.

Wal-Mart knows that the key to their continued dominance is to know (first-hand) everything they possibly can about their customer, their wants and needs, and purchasing patterns. And while this data leads to an enhanced shopping experience for their customers, it also gives them an additional cash cow to use with others.

So how do we apply this to our “tiny dog attitude” lesson for the day? It’s simple ... we OWN OUR AUDIENCE. We don’t rely on some social media algorithm to reach our customers. We develop ways to obtain the contact information of our customers in a way that allows us to directly engage with them without having to depend on anybody else. Nobody ... and I repeat ... NOBODY is going to understand your business better than you, so why in the world would we put all of our reliance into somebody else to do it for us? See more about this topic and a full version of this article at www.thejpgagency.com 

In the world of economic development,
we think of hunters and farmers.

The hunter prowls the country trying to bag the big company and bring it back to his lair.

The farmer cultivates the talent that already abounds in her community. She continually tests the soil, adds the needed amendments, selects the most promising plants, and then ensures they have the right resources for an abundant harvest.

RAMP is a farmer for
Southwest Virginia.

Cultivation

From Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and Hollins University to Virginia Tech and Radford, our region – among the most scenic of any in the world – has long produced cutting-edge thinkers and research.

RAMP's role is connecting this existing talent with the required nutrients – expert mentoring, networking opportunities, connections in law, human resources and finance, and high-tech office space.

Not one of the 31 startups that RAMP has accelerated since our founding in 2016 has left the region. Those startups today employ more than 600 people and sell products and services in all 50 states and throughout the world.

On **June 16**
we will celebrate **Demo Day**
for our seventh cohort, focusing on
health and life science startups.
Everyone across our communities
is invited to be part of this event.
And we will soon open applications
for our fall cohort for tech
entrepreneurs seeking to
grow their ventures.

It is farming season, after all,
and we are hopeful for
a great harvest.



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

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

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

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

RAMP
THE REGIONAL ACCELERATOR





First one... Already a classic

The Cocktail Classic was held May 21 at The Preserve at Crooked Run in Botetourt County. The extravagant soiree featured decadent food by Purple Door Gourmet Catering, music by Star City Pianos and DJ Flex, cigars, including hand rolled by Cortez Cigars, and spirits and cocktails from Brady's Distillery. Event management by Big Lick Entertainment and sponsored by Freedom First Credit Union, the four hour affair attracted around 250 people and was sold out early.

"We had this far-fetched idea to have an exceptionally high end cocktail event. Being a new distillery in the area and already getting a pretty good reputation for our spirits, my brother Brian got the idea and then we were 100% stuck on the notion that Roanoke needed this. We worked with Big Lick Entertainment to take our dream and make it a reality. Thanks to amazing sponsor Freedom First, we think the event turned out fantastic and it was an honor to see so many people enjoying our spirits. Next year's event cannot come soon enough."

— Andy Brady, Brady's Distillery

"The Cocktail Classic provided Freedom First the opportunity to show our appreciation to our local businesses, nonprofits, and community at large. It's thanks to all of these players that we've been able to grow so successfully, and we look forward to developing new ways to keep serving the people and businesses of Central and Southwest Virginia. This event wouldn't have been possible without great partners like Brady's Distillery, Big Lick Entertainment, and Center in the Square. Such partnerships remind us why we work hard every day to support our community and the local businesses that keep it vibrant."

— Steve Hildebrand, Freedom First

Photos by Taylor Reschka/Taylorred Photography, courtesy of Big Lick Entertainment.



ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

Like a crime scene, there is always evidence of what happened and why when someone goes out of business; some clues are microscopic.

There were clues

We recently heard the news of two iconic businesses in Roanoke's restaurant sector closing. Quite a few businesses in the service industry exited the market in one way or another (particularly in 2021) after a year struggling through the pandemic. But as we came out of the biological virus and watched nearly-destroyed businesses rebuild, the greater virus (primarily consumer restriction, supply failings, inflation, and most notably of all—labor/staffing shortage) is still inflicting its wrath on businesses that “almost made it.”

The two that really got our attention are The Roanoker Restaurant and Carlos Brazilian International Cuisine. Visitors enjoyed their distinctive footholds and cultural status to our Star City, while locals established long-standing traditions with both—primarily business breakfasts or family/friend casual dining at one, date-night and special celebrations at the other.

As surprising, shocking, and unfortunate we found the news that two of our favorites might be going away, the attentive among us probably saw it coming. Those of us who report on business, the consultants and columnist like the ones who write for us here at FRONT, and most of all—the super loyal customer—felt something was amiss.

There were clues.

In most cases—the tiniest clues.

The greeting: a little less enthusiastic. The entre: just a tad bit bland in comparison to previous experiences. The sauce—more liquid and standing in the plate instead of incorporated like it usually is. The service—still good, but we noticed it took a little longer to get our food. The menu selection and price—those didn't change all that much. The overall vibe and energy—a little off.

Again, the change—was subtle.
Just a little off, dear Roanoker and Carlos.

We could also tell these iconic stalwart ships were sailing just a bit off kilter when we spoke to the pilots—the owners and management. A little less brightness in the eyes of folks who are usually all too eager to serve and please.

The experts and professionals we have writing our FRONTperspectives columns each month would be the first to tell you that the details of operating your business matter. Our two favored and popular restaurants may not be exiting because they failed to pay attention to the smallest details, but these small changes are revealing. Survival maneuvers could have included a myriad of changes to one degree or another: raise prices, limit

continued on Page 43

Get2Know Noke is Johnson's mission

The Experience Conference scheduled for June 13 at Hotel Roanoke is another example of the efforts that may be made over the past few decades to attract new businesses and talent to the valley. The Roanoke Regional Partnership, launched in 1983, claims it has helped bring more than 20,000 jobs and \$2.4 billion worth business investment – new builds, renovations, equipment, etc. during that almost 40-year stretch.

The Experience Conference, focused on networking, professional development and collaboration, is not new but returns this year in person after being virtual last year due to, well, you know, that pandemic. For the first time the Regional Partnership's recently hired Director of Talent Acquisition, Taylor Johnson, is overseeing the event. Johnson, a Vinton area native who returned home after ten years in northern Virginia, is her own case study on the type of young professionals – and maybe the more seasoned professionals – the Partnership and local governments have been trying to lure to the Roanoke and New River Valley for years.

"I really wanted to be able to afford a house and I can do that here," says Johnson, whose sister Morgan Romeo oversees the Virginia Career Works office on Thirlane Avenue in Roanoke. Johnson says its not a hard sell once people are exposed to the region. "We have great livability, wonderful outdoors (amenities), great food and beverage [options] that are actually pretty amazing." On the employment end of the equation, "we have so many businesses that are represented here in the region that weren't [here] 10, 15, 20 years ago. In a variety of industries ... tech, life sciences, health care - you can find a job here in Roanoke and have the livability you can't find elsewhere."

Again, the rise in remote working during the peak of the pandemic works in the Roanoke region's favor; Johnson also says major metro areas are losing population as many seek a slower pace of life and a lower cost of living – and work for employers willing to let them work virtually. Or its their own business and they can work where they choose of course. "We're getting remote workers that want to come here because they can make their northern Virginia salary in Roanoke and be able to have grass ... and a piece of land. We are in a really great situation." It's a message that Taylor Johnson will keep preaching, at the Experience Conference this month – and elsewhere as part of her Talent Acquisition role. 



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:

The drive to attract talented professionals and more employers to the region soldiers on.

“We have great livability.”



GUEST COMMENTARY

By Brad Henske

Executive Summary:

Business Continuity is one of the simplest concepts that most people have never heard of. When they hear the term, they overcomplicate it in their minds.

Hope for the best. Plan for the worst.

For a business to continue operating, that is providing its goods or services to its customers, it needs to have performed some contingency planning against disruptive events. In other words, hope for the best - but plan for the worst.

So, folks like me ask:

- What can happen?
- What can we do to mitigate the impacts to our company if a disruption occurs?
- How do we plan in advance to deal with such an event, to lessen the impact when it does happen?

Trust me, something always happens.

In the business continuity industry, we focus less on the specific threats, such as natural disasters (hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes), industrial accidents (fires, explosions, chemical spills), and acts of violence or terrorism. Instead, we want to know what risks these hazards pose to our business operations, if we experience any of them.

We employ a defined process called Business Continuity Planning:

- Identify threats and evaluate risks
- Conduct a Business Impact Analysis (BIA)
- Consider ways to mitigate risks and reduce impacts
- Develop continuity plans comprised of recovery strategies
- Exercise the plans (either tabletop or live)
- Train staff on awareness and how to maintain their plans
- Continually revise and improve plans

Several organizations exist which offer training and certification to business continuity professionals. International standards are published which provide guidance to businesses and governmental agencies in developing a Business Continuity Program. The primary example is ISO 22301 which is used to audit BC programs and ensure they are using recognized processes. For financial organizations such as banks or any fiduciary, the FFIEC publishes a Business Continuity Management handbook that governs the process. For Information Security Management (think technology and cybersecurity threats), businesses can rely on ISO 27001 to set the standard.

Don't let the term "business continuity" scare you. The process does not have to be complicated. It will work for a company of any size and can be scaled to fit anyone.

Companies and organizations that had business continuity plans in place prior to the pandemic fared well. For one thing, their plans helped them consider and prepare for the impact of high absenteeism. To guide small businesses, The BCI developed a webinar you can register for that will walk you through how to employ business continuity practices to benefit your organization. Hope for the best and plan for the worst. But don't stop planning! 

Field / On Tap

from Page 40

menu, expand take-out/pick-up options, cut hours, stagger shifts, modify payroll, reconfigure services, restructure occupancy, open peripheral channels like catering, expand private bookings, add entertainment or activity, deploy a rewards program, campaign and elevate marketing. All of these ideas—or any one of them—would change these two restaurants. It's acceptable to admit the owners, operators, and customers may not be willing to change in that way.

In fact, both of them confessed they couldn't find anyone to buy or take over the business and operate it according to their preferences.

We have to watch our businesses. This very business journal, for example, has a consistency about it that could be concerning. You don't want to slip up on the details that have been serving you well; but your performance and survivability still depend on adaptation to your market—even when it's hostile.

Don't let your sauce just sit there, runny in the plate. 

“ ”

The owners, operators, and customers may not be willing to change.

THE ULTIMATE EAGLES TRIBUTE ON THE BORDER MAY 20	THE DUNDIES JUNE 3	MENDE FENCES JUNE 17	FIVE DOLLAR SHAKE JULY 1	FUZZY LOGIC JULY 15
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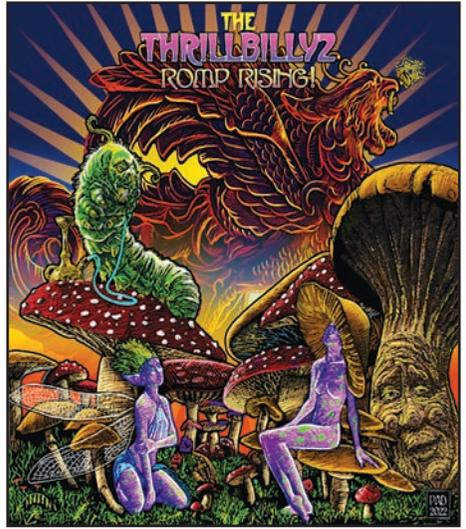


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FRONTReviews >

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



The Thrillbillyz: Romp Rising

The Thrillbillyz, with Kerry Hurley's husky vocals leading the charge, is a Roanoke Valley icon of a band, consistently considered one of the best in the region. Hurley's other band, Fat Daddy, was recently named one of Roanoke's Top 10 and he is as versatile as the new Thrillbillyz album "Romp Rising" suggests: blues, country, rock, funk—all of which are part of the romp here. The band's musicians include Mike Maycock and Bradley Carr on guitars, Jim Rice on bass, Brett Reynolds on drums and Timbo Sims on keyboards. They are joined on individual songs by people like the estimable Tom Ohmsen, David Ferguson, Billy Foster, Elmo Coles and Jerry Wood on this Flat Five Studios recording. The CD is worth the effort if all you hear are "Star City Blues" and "Franklin County Moonshine," but the album is a blast beginning to end.

—Dan Smith

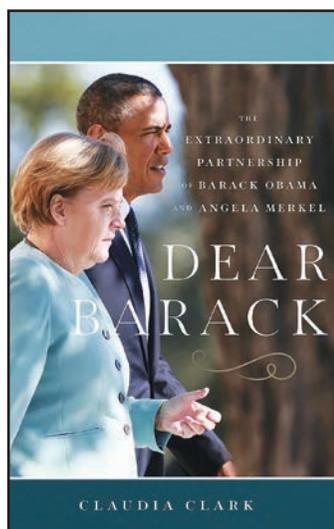
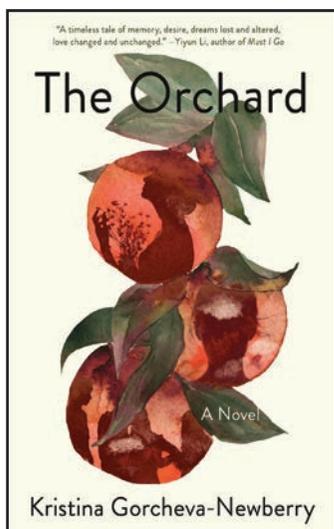
A glimpse into the Russian mindset

A Wytheville resident who emigrated from Russia after the fall of the Iron Curtain and "perestroika" took hold has written her first novel. It's a coming of age story that also offers a glimpse into the Russian mindset.

The Orchard (Ballantine Books, 2022) by Kristina Gorcheva-Newberry is based in part on her own life experiences. She left Russia for college in the States almost 30 years ago as the Soviet Union morphed into a country that offered more hope and freedom perhaps than the past – but a degree of uncertainty as well. Gorcheva-Newberry, who also spends time in Brooklyn (her mother lives there) and in her native Russia, has written a no holds barred, sometimes raw account about coming of age, about dreamy summer days at "Anyá's" vacation family dacha in the country, about teenage boys and about the shortcomings of life in Soviet Russia.

It's written with a real creative flourish - Gorcheva-Newberry earned a Master's of Fine Arts with a focus on creative writing about a decade ago from Hollins University – and it offers a glimpse perhaps into how the average Russian deals with the foibles of its own government. Timely you might say. *The Orchard* was inspired in part by Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, where as in Gorcheva-Newberry's first novel (she's about done with a followup) a beloved family fruit orchard is threatened by societal and class change in Russia. For those that want a glimpse into another world that sadly is in the spotlight now because of the Ukraine invasion, *The Orchard* is a worthwhile read.

—Gene Marrano



Mexican food ... from a gas station?

Well, how about a restaurant in the same building as a gas station/convenience store, but definitely a separate operation. La Casa Del Burrito Taco Shop on 2nd Street in Vinton isn't new, open perhaps five years or so, but the food there is consistently good – not overpriced, authentic and just really well made. More burrito and taco choices and plenty of combo options. A kids menu also. Takeout or eat there in a low-key family atmosphere. Give this hidden jewel (among the more glitzy Mexican food establishments) in the valley a try sometime.

—Gene Marrano

Two world leaders

Claudia Clark's new book, *Dear Barack: The Extraordinary Partnership of Barack Obama and Angela Merkel* (Disruption Books; 2021), is a thoroughly researched exploration of the parallel trajectories that led to Obama and Merkel meeting on the world stage, and the trials—both personal and political—that they confronted in office. At times, in the leaders' own words, the book details such events as Merkel's historic acceptance of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Russia's annexation of Crimea,

and the 2013 NSA spying scandal, demonstrating the highs and lows of this extraordinary alliance.

Taking office at the height of the 2008 global recession, Obama was keenly aware of the fractured relationship between the U.S. and Europe, Clark explains in the book. And for her part, Merkel was suspicious of the charismatic newcomer who had captivated her country.

Faced with the challenges of globalization, the two often clashed over policy, but—as the first Black president and first female chancellor—they shared a belief that democracy could uplift the world. United by this conviction, they would forge a complicated but inspiring partnership.

A story of camaraderie at a global scale, *Dear Barack* is a "fit-all" in terms of politics and shows that it is possible for political adversaries to establish bonds of respect—and even friendship—in the service of the free world.

—Sydney Wells

The reviewers: **Dan Smith** is a former editor of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is the editor of FRONT; **Sydney Wells** is a publicist with ASCOT in Friendswood, TX.



Sunflower festival grant >

The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has awarded more than \$2.7 million for 259 local and regional tourism marketing programs across the state to help increase visitation and revenue for Virginia's localities through tourism. Beaver Dam Farm Sunflowers, LLC in Buchanan received a \$20,000 grant for its September 2022 Sunflower Festival and Vendor Show. For the September 2022 festival new advertising dollars will be spent to pull in traffic from targeted areas outside of the local reach. Targeted ads and social media will reach Charlottesville, Richmond, Winchester, Fairfax and surrounding areas. "Botetourt County has long been known for its agriculture and now is also becoming a tourist destination. Beaver Dam Farm Sunflowers is a true example of agri-tourism at its best," says Botetourt County Board of Supervisors Chair Dr. Richard Bailey.



SML Business Expo at full strength >

About 700 Smith Mountain Lake residents and visitors engaged with local business professionals representing 85 companies at the 18th Annual SML Business Expo last month at EastLake Community Church. Erin Stanley, Member Relations and Events Director for the SML Regional Chamber, which organizes the event, said it felt great to have the Expo back to full capacity and under more familiar conditions. "The Expo is always a popular event at Smith Mountain Lake, and we are so pleased that people felt comfortable coming out and engaging with a wide range of SML area businesses." The Expo allowed exhibitors in diverse industries to share information on products and services, provide materials and network with other business professionals. Vendors also highlighted job openings and spoke to prospective applicants. "We definitely saw a lot of conversations happening between business owners and attendees," Stanley said. "Strengthening the economic environment of our community is at the core of the Chamber's mission."

Frontline heroes >

Richfield Living celebrated National Nurses Week and National Skilled Nursing Care Week in early May, with gift giveaways, special meals, and treats recognizing healthcare heroes. Everyone from longtime staff to new C-N-A's, were given apple pies, lunch coolers, as well as other treats and swag, including umbrellas to keep out of the rain while they care for residents at the Salem Campus.



Submitted



Submitted

LewisGale heart attack patients award >

LewisGale Medical Center (Salem) has received the American College of Cardiology's NCDR Chest Pain – MI Registry Silver Performance Achievement Award for 2022. LewisGale Medical Center is one of only 85 hospitals nationwide to receive the honor. The award "recognizes LewisGale Medical Center's commitment and success in implementing a higher standard of care for heart attack patients," according to a news

release. It also signifies that LewisGale is treating these patients to standard levels of care outlined by the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association clinical guidelines and recommendations.

Pet therapy >

LewisGale Hospital Pulaski announced the addition of pet therapy, also called animal-assisted therapy, offering a well-trained therapy dog who provides comfort and affection as patients recover. The hospital's first animal to help boost healing and enhance patient care is a 2.5-year-old Labradoodle named Teddy, who received a significant amount of training to become a Therapy Animal through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD).

Heather Umberger, director of emergency services, says, "he is also designated a Canine Good Citizen through the American Kennel Club and was required to have a badge from Human Resources showing that he has been approved to be at the hospital, just like any employee or volunteer with our facility." Research has shown that pet therapy can improve emotional well-being in patients coping with a variety of conditions, and may even improve mobility, motor skills, and independence of those with disabilities.



Submitted

Marina hits six-figure milestone >

Bridgewater Marina at Smith Mountain Lake has topped the \$100,000 mark in donations to Make-A-Wish Greater Virginia. "What started as a modest fundraiser five years ago has become a true success story thanks to the Smith Mountain Lake community," said Ryan Waters, Bridgewater Marina partner. "The absolute best part is the number of children in Virginia with critical illnesses who have been touched by their amazing support. The Marina celebrated with a community event at the beginning of this month. The marina started "Feed the Fish for Make-A-Wish" in 2017. The program's objective was to turn a decades-long Smith Mountain Lake tradition – kids feeding popcorn to the massive carp that gather around the docks at Bridgewater Plaza – into a way to contribute to a charity that serves children. Bridgewater Marina's donation equates to approximately 10 wishes for children in Virginia facing critical illnesses. Wish examples include meeting celebrities, working a dream job and visiting a desired destination such as Chicago or New York.



Liberty Trust Hotel cuts ribbon >

In continuation of a story we told you about last month, the Liberty Trust boutique hotel in downtown Roanoke on South Jefferson Street cut the ribbon last month shortly after a soft opening. Selected as one of the most "Highly Anticipated Hotels" by Forbes to open in 2022, the Liberty Trust Hotel has emerged in a walkable area of downtown Roanoke. "This historic boutique hotel is a great addition to our portfolio of hotels in Virginia's Blue Ridge," states Landon Howard, President of Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, who was at the ribbon cutting event. "Adding 54 upscale guest rooms will complement the nearby restaurants, attractions and accessibility to Amtrak."



Friendship staff milestones >

Friendship, the senior living and rehabilitation provider based in Roanoke, has recognized staff celebrating milestones of 10 years or more of service with the organization. Friendship recently honored 30 employees with a total of 495 years of service with a special breakfast. "The past two years have been historically challenging, but you have shown your perseverance and strength by overcoming these challenges and living out the Friendship values of Accountability, Compassion, Positivity, Respectfulness and Teamwork," said President and CEO, Joe Hoff. Pictured: Front Row Left to Right: Mary Bushnell, Tammy Millner, Joyce Taylor, Naketa Caldwell, Vera McGriff, Audrey Coleman. Back Row Left to Right: Phabeanna Lawson, Edwina Cannaday, Allison Whiting, Janice Walker, Melissa Dillard, Gloria Jean Franklin, Sharandah Irving, Deborah Johnson, Stephanie Duncan, Loise Waweru.

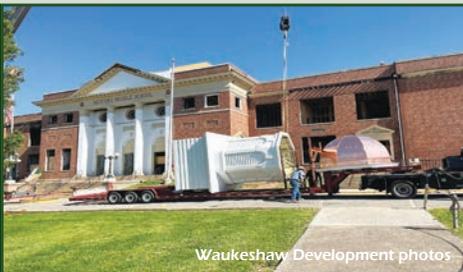




RSO's Wiley cited for 25 years >

May 7 was David Stewart Wiley Day in Roanoke as proclaimed on stage at the Berglund Performing Arts Theatre by Roanoke Mayor Sherman Lea Sr. That was the season finale as well for the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra series of classical musical concerts, when renowned cellist Zuill Bailey was also on hand to perform as well. Governor Glenn Youngkin and local Delegate Chris Head also offered kudos to Wiley via videos, and the Head also informed Wiley (the music director and often flamboyant conductor for the RSO) that he had been recognized by the General Assembly during its 2022 session, in a true show of bipartisanship as the Republican delegate joked.

"I absolutely knew from the first time I came here that that this was a special place," noted Wiley, "it's a remarkable area as far as its beauty ... they welcomed [wife] Leah and me in remarkable ways. I've never lost that sense of joy and gratitude." Wiley is proud of the outreach and program expansion that has taken place during his tenure with the RSO, including school-based programs and expansion of the Pops series. He has also taught a business leadership program.



Bedford Middle School's cupola project >

After arson imperiled the apartments Waukeshaw Development planned to build at the old Bedford Middle School, company president Dave McCormack and his team determined that the historic building's "bones" were still intact and moved forward. One action item: rebuilding the iconic cupola that sat atop the building, the dome-like structure that had to be recreated as it had been before to qualify for historic tax credits. "It was completely destroyed in the fire, and we had it rebuilt. A lot of the plans were on file with the state ... and we were able to reproduce it."

It wasn't only historically proper to do that, "symbolically it's a really big deal," notes McCormack, whose company was also responsible for turning another old school into the Billy Byrd apartments in Vinton. "Putting that back up is a bit of a metaphor for overcoming the really crazy obstacles we've had over the last couple of years. That particular building is incredibly important to the community." The roof and former school auditorium were "gone" after the fire but there was enough left "to make it work." 60 units are planned with leasing targeted for the Spring of 2023. The Town of Bedford and the county "have so much potential," notes McCormack, and town leaders see the Bedford Middle School makeover as a catalyst he says, "that will hopefully inspire others to invest [in Bedford]."



Courtesy Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce

New kind of hotel in Salem >

It is described as a hotel that was designed based completely on customer feedback and what travelers said they wanted in a hotel. Avid Hotel, part of the IHG chain, has opened its doors just off exit 137 on I-81 at Wildwood Road in Salem. Kirtash Patel is the owner. State Senator David Suetterlein and Salem officials took part in a ribbon cutting in late April.



Ian Price

A tree grows in Salem >

The last Friday in April is celebrated every year as Arbor Day and on that occasion this year LewisGale Medical Center in Salem planted trees along Braeburn Drive. Salem Mayor Renee Turk saluted the staff at LewisGale with a proclamation for their dedication to patients during the pandemic: “they had to commit, they sacrificed, and they have done so much,” said Turk. Amy Woods is the Chief Nursing Officer: “it celebrates our doctors and nurses having made it through two of the most challenging years ever,” said Woods before the trees were symbolically planted, “our medical staff has truly remained health

care heroes in this pandemic ... going above and beyond every single day.” Arbor Day is a national holiday created 150 years ago to recognize the importance of trees.

Art and music jam at Dr Pepper Park >

Works of art – created in part from recycled materials stored in warehouses near Dr Pepper Park at the Bridges – will begin making appearance at the music venue. “Insta-Jammin Rock Art” is coming to Dr Pepper Park says President Waynette Anderson. Recycled vinyl records and CD’s are among the materials that will be used by local artists to create three works for



Gene Marrano

this season at the Park; Anderson hopes to see the program expand in coming years. “We wanted to just have a lot of different options, different art that may resonate with our guests. It’s a great opportunity for them to say ‘hey, that is so awesome, I’ve got to have my picture taken with it.’ They’re going to shine a very bright light on the arts community.”



Jeff Hoffman

17th annual women's luncheon >

Call it a real "Power Lunch" – more than 250 of the region's top female business leaders, professionals and philanthropists turned out for the 17th Annual Women's Luncheon at the Taubman Museum of Art last month. Regine Archer – matriarch of the Blue Ridge Beverage Company – received the Ann Fralin Award, which annually recognizes a local woman for commitment to the arts, education and quality of life. Roanoke City Public Schools superintendent Verletta White was presented the Sheila S. Strauss Art Venture Award for outstanding leadership in arts education: "It think it's so important for our children to have access to the arts," said White, who has been in Roanoke for two years now, "it makes for a well-rounded individual. It also played a vital role in my life; I was in dance as a kid, I was in the choir – those things kept me connected to school." Taubman Museum executive director Cindy Petersen presented those awards.



Gene Marrano



Interprofessionalism in action >

Classroom learning is a must for future health care professionals but sometimes there's nothing like hands-on training – especially an interprofessional simulation where students work with others across several disciplines. That happened in late April at the Carilion Clinic Center for Simulation in Roanoke, where Misty Flinchum is the director. Students from the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Radford University Carilion dealt with emergency room scenarios, with volunteers acting as patients, describing their symptoms. "To be able to experience the things they're going to experience when they are out in the world, working in that environment [with other health care professionals], often times we teach individuals how to work within their programs," says Flinchum, "but bringing them together, which is what their real-life experiences are going to look like, is extremely beneficial."



Kremed >

The long time Krispy Kreme donut shop on Roanoke's Melrose Avenue NW has been fully razed. The business suffered a fire in 2013 after operating for more than half a century. O'Reilly Automotive auto parts store purchased the property in 2018 (Advance Auto Parts has a store across the street); and is now about to construct a new store. A sign out front at the site advertises job openings.



Salem getting Ridge View SMART >

Ridge View Bank celebrated a groundbreaking for its first full-service SMART Center office in Salem (at the intersection of West Main and Chestnut Streets). The 2,600 square-foot facility that is expected to open in the fall features advanced technology and focuses on customer interaction. Local businesses Balzer & Associates (architects) and G&H Contracting (construction) are building the property. Salem Mayor Renee Turk shared the fact that Ridge View president Carrie McConnell is a "local" and Roanoke College graduate. The new bank is opening several offices in the area; McConnell said they already have ten employees as of this groundbreaking date.



Submitted

Senior living design conference >

The 37th Annual By Design Conference, hosted by Roanoke-based SFCS Architects took place on May 16th at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. The "Infinite Possibilities: Finding Longevity" event featured discussions around the future of senior living, the demand for higher quality care, affordable and safe housing options, and post-global pandemic strategies. Melissa Pritchard of SFCS said "to bring architects, engineers, interior designers, and thought leaders into the same room and discuss the future of senior living truly is a wonderful experience." SFCS welcomed keynote speaker Heath Slawner with The Simon Sinek Team, who spoke about trust and purpose being the root of professional success. The conference presented 16 speakers who addressed areas from construction to staffing to branding to ideologies in future services and housing.



Tom Field

Walker for walkers, finally >

For over two decades, the Roanoke River Greenway project remained incomplete as a mile-long stretch at Bridge Street and along the riverside property line of (ironically named) Walker Foundry couldn't proceed with construction due to a refusal for right-of-way. After the five-plus year dispute, construction is now underway that will link Salem to the path that extends all the way to the water treatment plant in southeast Roanoke (eleven miles from Bridge Street). Roanoke City never exercised an eminent domain provision, but did reach an agreement with the now-closed foundry and the abandoned railroad track.

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



Pemberton



West

Bank of Botetourt announces that **Diana Pemberton** has joined the Bank as Assistant Vice President – Branch Manager for the Salem Office off South College Avenue. **Chelsea West** has been promoted to Merchant Services Officer. She has worked in the financial industry for six years, most recently serving as a branch manager. **Lora Jones** has been promoted to Senior Vice President and



Jones

Chief Financial Officer. Jones joined the bank in 2010 and was named Controller in 2014.



Ramsey

National Bank announces the promotion of **Lara E. Ramsey** to Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Ramsey has been with the bank since 1996, most recently serving as Senior Vice President of Administration. **David K. Skeens** has been named Senior Vice President and Senior Operations, Risk and Technology



Skeens

Officer. Skeens joined National Bank in 1990 and has served as the bank's Auditor, Senior Vice President of Operations and Risk Management, and most recently as Chief Financial Officer



Boyd



Stallard

the Campbell Avenue office, along with financial specialist **Helen Stallard**, who joined Pinnacle's office in Salem. Barranto comes to Pinnacle from First Bank & Trust Company. Boyd was most recently at Wells Fargo, and Stallard joins Pinnacle from InFirst/FedStar Federal Credit Union.



Barranto

Three experienced financial services professionals have joined Pinnacle Financial Partners' Campbell Avenue and Salem offices. Financial advisor assistant **Mikki Barranto** and financial specialist **Amber Boyd** have joined

Farm Credit of the Virginias has announced that **Melanie Craig** accepted the role of Chief Human Resources Officer. Craig has been with the Association

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Craig

since 2006 when she began as a part-time loan assistant in the Bedford office. In 2020 Craig accepted the role of Director of Human Resources which she most recently held. Roanoke-based Farm Credit of the Virginias provides over \$2 billion dollars in financing to more than 12,000 farmers, agribusinesses and rural homeowners throughout Virginia, West Virginia and western Maryland, as a cooperative capitalized largely through investments made by farmers, ranchers and the rural homeowners and businesses that borrow from them.

LEGAL FRONT

Spilman Thomas & Battle (Spilman) has

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.



Richardson

announced that **Brian H. Richardson** has joined the law firm as an associate. Richardson's primary areas of practice are commercial disputes, workouts, and related litigation, with an emphasis in corporate restructuring, bankruptcy, creditors' rights, and health care finance matters. Richardson previously worked as Judicial Clerk to The Honorable Rebecca B.

Connelly, Chief Judge for the United States Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Virginia.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

North Cross School announced that **William T. Greer, III** will join its Senior Staff as the new Assistant Head of School for Advancement, replacing David Lake, who will be retiring this month. Greer is a development professional with over 20 years of development and major gifts expertise in the educational arena. Over his career, Greer has served in a variety of positions at

Christopher Newport University, Roanoke College, and Washington and Lee University.

WELLNESS FRONT



Carson

LewisGale Hospital Montgomery has hired **Lisa Carson** as chief nursing officer for the 146-bed medical and surgical facility. Carson brings nearly 30 years



CONTRIBUTORS

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Brad Henske has more than 20 years' experience in business continuity management and serves as the Director of Business Continuity for Carilion Clinic, a regional not-for-profit hospital system. Carilion is comprised of seven hospitals, including a Level I trauma center and a Level III trauma center, and over 200 ambulatory facilities with a staff of 13,500 healthcare professionals. Brad has published several articles on BC/DR topics and is a recognized conference speaker. He holds the certifications MBCI and CBCP, and is workshop certified in ICS, CIPR, Active Shooter Event, and Pandemic Planning.

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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]

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

Mary Ann L. Miller is vice president of business banking and community relations at Bank of Botetourt. A graduate of Bridgewater College, she has been in the banking industry for more than fifteen years and currently serves on the board and executive committee as past-president with the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce, a board

member with the Daleville Institute, and is vice chair of the board of with the Botetourt Family YMCA. A native of Botetourt County, she resides in Daleville with her husband and two children.

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

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

of nursing experience with HCA Healthcare. Most recently, she served as assistant chief nursing officer for Henrico Doctors' Hospital, a 340-bed community hospital located in Richmond. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) at American Sentinel University.



Bocanegra

Friendship Retirement Community announces the hiring of **Benita Bocanegra**, Nurse Practitioner, to the Friendship Physician Clinic. Bocanegra completed her education at Walden University and is board certified for Adult-Gerontology Acute Care through the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. Her background includes stints in primary care,

psychiatric medicine, and as a wellness coordinator assisting patients with chronic medical conditions.

MUNICIPAL FRONT



Sefcik

Madeline Sefcik is now Assistant to the Roanoke County Administrator. Sefcik will assist County Administration with constituent concerns, strategic planning, policy issues, and operational initiatives. Most recently, Sefcik served as Clerk to the Franklin County Board of Supervisors & Manager of Public Affairs since 2018. Prior to that, Sefcik served nearly two years as Deputy Clerk to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors & County

Attorney Paralegal.

NON-PROFIT FRONT



Loving

Roanoke Area Ministries (RAM House), an interfaith non-profit that advocates for those threatened by homelessness and hunger, has named **Bruce Loving** as its new development director. Loving is a native Virginian with over two decades of experience in the non-profit sector. He has served in executive, development, marketing, management, and public relations positions. Loving is the former director of public relations for Washington National Opera, director of communications for Virginia Opera, and membership manager

for Greenpeace USA. Loving is a graduate of Mary Washington College and the University of Virginia School of Law.

TRANSPORTATION FRONT

The Roanoke Regional Airport Commission has announced the selection of **Kyle Kotchou** as Director of Planning & Engineering. Kotchou started last month; he is an architect with over 30 years of public project experience before joining the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport (ROA). Kotchou served as a Deputy Airport Director at both John Wayne Airport (SNA) in California and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) in Arizona. Prior to becoming deputy director at PHX, Kyle had served as a Special Projects Manager for the City of Phoenix.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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The Voiceover Wizard settles in SW VA

Chris Nichter brings his 30+ years of voice acting experience to SW Virginia as he settles in Max Meadows. He has voiced literally thousands of Radio, TV and Web commercials for local, regional, national and international clients. Nichter has also narrated seven films for National Geographic Wild TV Network. His resume also includes many characters for video games, as well as hundreds of other documentary narrations, corporate videos, e-learning and training narrations, web videos, video sales letters, company phone systems and just about anything for which one could use a voice. Nichter's client list includes CBS2-Chicago, Charles Schwab, Subway, GE, John Deere, Konica-Minolta, Georgia-Pacific, Ocean Spray, Bud Zero, Blackberry, HP/Intel, Siemens, ASDA, Fisher Price, and Virginia Energy Source.

Roanoke County wins 3 NACo Awards

The National Association of Counties (NACo) has awarded Roanoke County won three 2022 Achievement Awards. Roanoke County won for

the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Web application; the Reimagine 419 Plan; and the Roanoke County Rural Broadband Initiative.

Record numbers for The Gauntlet

The Vinton-based 2022 GAUNTLET Business Program and Competition from The Advancement Foundation attracted a record 153 entrepreneurs. Following 10 weeks of business training, customer discovery and collaborating with mentors/industry experts from across the state, 80 entrepreneurs representing 66 businesses moved forward to compete for their piece of over \$300,000 in cash and in-kind prizes. Those awards were handed out in late May.

Rockbridge vineyard honored

Shepherd Rouse, owner of Rockbridge Vineyard and Brewery in Raphine, has been named Grower of the Year by the Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA). The award was announced last month by Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr at the VVA's 2022 Technical Meeting in Charlottesville.

Today Rouse's 17 acres are planted with seven different grape varieties complemented with fruit from other growers in neighboring counties. Rockbridge Vineyard and Brewery wines are made from vinifera grapes like Chardonnay and Riesling, hybrids such as Chambourcin and Vidal, and native American grapes such as Concord. Rockbridge produces about 6,000 cases of wine a year.

More tourism matching funds

More than \$2.7 million in matching grant and reimbursable sponsorship funds will be awarded to 259 local and regional tourism programs as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation's (VTC) Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) and Regional Marketing Program (RMP). These funding programs are designed to leverage local marketing dollars with matching state funds to increase visitation and traveler spending. In this funding cycle, local partners will commit more than \$12.4 million to match the VTC funding, providing more than \$15 million in new marketing activity. Among the recipients are Across the Way Productions/ FloydFest (\$5000),

Bedford Tourism (19.5K), the City of Galax (10k), the City of Salem (45K for several programs including the Salem Fair), Floyd County (15K), Pulaski County (25K for several outdoors initiatives), Rocky Mount (10K) and Roanoke City Parks and Recreation (20k) for the Go Outside Festival.

Big time legal merger

Woods Rogers and Vandeventer Black, have entered into a formal agreement to merge, creating a regional firm to be known as Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black. The new Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black will become one of Virginia's largest law firms with more than 130 attorneys and a total workforce of more than 250 people. "Mutual respect, cooperation, community leadership and an unwavering dedication to client service are deeply rooted traits our firms have in common," said Daniel Summerlin, president of Woods Rogers, which was founded in Roanoke in 1893. Vandeventer Black was established in Norfolk in 1883. Summerlin will remain in the role of president, Woods Rogers Board of Directors Chair Victor Cardwell continues as

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chair, Vandeventer Black Executive Board Member Deborah Casey becomes vice-chair, and Woods Rogers Chief Financial Officer Autumn Visser will serve as the new firm's CFO. Vandeventer Black Executive Director Paul Julius will become executive director of the new firm.

Roanoke company partnering on new venture

KlariVis, an enterprise dashboard and analytics solution provider for the financial services industry, has announced a new partnership with MX Technologies, Inc., which helps financial institutions and fintech companies transform transaction

data to better understand consumer profiles, measure performance gaps, and identify new areas of investment.

The founder and CEO of Roanoke-based KlariVis, Kim Snyder, says the new partnership with MX, "will expedite our ability to create transformative opportunities for financial institutions across the country. Once integrated, KlariVis clients will be able to easily act on additional revenue and cross-sell opportunities that live in their transactional data."

Two longtime Roanoke eateries call it quits

After 81 years and following attempts "to sell the business to

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 Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

someone who would keep the Roanoke food and customer service the way the Warren family and we have strived to maintain," owner Butch Craft posted an announcement in mid-May that the Roanoker restaurant, a favorite meeting place for many local residents, would close its doors by the beginning of this

month at the latest. Craft said the decision "was not based on my retirement alone ... [but] we can no longer struggle with all of the issues of running a business." Speaking of retirement, the owners of Carlos Brazilian International Cuisine, which opened 31 years ago downtown on Market Street and moved to a hilltop location



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- 6/11 - Cinderella's Tom Keifer Band L.A. Guns, and Faster Pussycat | 6/17 - Outlaws
- 6/18 - Andy Grammer | 6/24 - Absolute Queen | 6/25 - Kip Moore | 7/1 - Dylan Scott
- 7/8 - Kidd G & Chase Matthew | 7/16 - Quiet Riot | 7/20 - Blackberry Smoke | 7/22 - Rumours LA | 7/23 - Aaron Lewis & the Stataliners | 8/12 - Face 2 Face | 8/13 - JJ Grey & Mofro | 8/17 - Indigo Girls | 8/27 - The Roanoke Wing Fest
- 9/2 - Bee Gees Gold | 9/10 - Chris Janson | 9/23 - US & Floyd | 10/6 - Jamey Johnson | 10/7 - Shoot 2 Thrill
- 10/14 - KISS America

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in southwest Roanoke County 20 years ago, also decided to shut down that business at the end of May. As reported here in a previous edition, the building, which includes views of the Roanoke Valley, had been up for sale for the past several months.

New shoe store

Skechers USA will open a store at Tanglewood in Southwest Roanoke County. Skechers will

occupy a portion of the former Stein Mart space and will be co-located with Burlington. Interior redevelopment is currently underway, and the store opening is planned for early fall. Skechers USA features lifestyle and athletic brands for men, women and children. It is now the third largest athletic footwear brand in the United States.

Blue Cow expansion

Blue Cow Ice Cream Company, which has

a popular location just off Walnut Avenue in Roanoke adjacent to the Roanoke River Greenway, has just celebrated its fifth-year anniversary. A second Blue Cow opened in Virginia Beach in 2019, followed by a downtown Fredericksburg store in July 2021. Now Richmond is on the radar. We are hoping for [sometime in June] says owner Jason Kaiser. "We thought there was a real need for craft ice cream in our area," notes Kaiser about the original Blue Cow location,

which took over and renovated the spot in Roanoke that had been home to another ice cream shop, HITS. All of the Blue Cow Ice Cream Co. products are produced at another facility in Roanoke. "Almost from day one when we opened the doors ... customers were engaged with the brand," notes Kaiser of an always changing and somewhat exotic ice cream menu.

*Compiled by
Gene Marrano*

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“ ”
It's not just digging in the dirt.

— Page 18



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Graduating seniors have five to seven full-time job offers. — Page 18

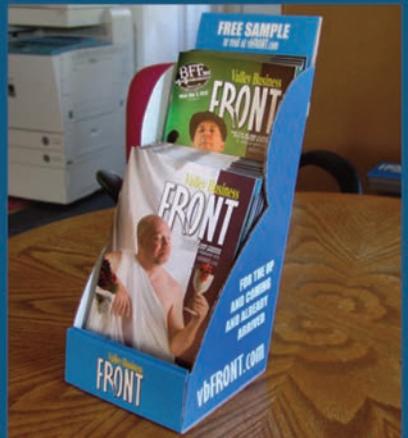
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