

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 170

NOVEMBER 2022

Radford University's
Nursing Program

LewisGale:
Alan Fabian

Blue Ridge
Partnership

Rural Nursing

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My Holistic Approach

Meredith Novak
GLOW Healing Arts





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WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Health care is the focus in this issue, from the head of a local hospital and health care system to a coalition looking to point more students and young adults to careers in the field, to a more holistic approach to wellness. With health care and health science a dominant player in the region our writers could have gone in a number of directions – but we think you'll like where we took it.

We also have an interesting guest commentary on the Roanoke Collaborative Project, a diverse group of local stakeholders who believe that civil discourse—despite political and philosophical differences—is a good starting point. We are looking forward to the December issue as well where we identify some of the key business movers and shakers in the area. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Happy reading.



Tom Field
Publisher



Gene Marrano
Editor

“”

Keeping that workforce here... is key. — Page 23

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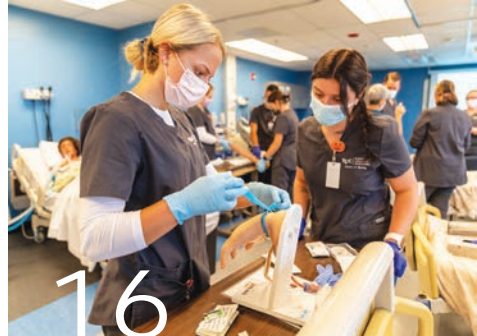
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“Gen Zers... might be more like their grandparents than their parents. — Page 29

COVER STORY PAGE 8

The Power of Holistic Health

By Shawn Nowlin



Thanksgiving Morning



5k Run and Family Walk

In-Person: November 25

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Valley Business FRONT

P.O. Box 1041
Salem, VA 24153
(540) 389-9945
www.vbFRONT.com

Staff

Publisher / Creative Director	Tom Field tfield@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Editor	Gene Marrano news@vbFRONT.com
Advertising	Dan Dowdy (540) 797-7943 ddowdy@vbFRONT.com ads@vbFRONT.com (540) 389-9945
Graphic Design	Nicholas Vaassen nvaassen@berryfield.com
Office Administration	Emily Field info@vbFRONT.com
Production	Berryfield, Inc. PO Box 1041 Salem, VA 24153 (540) 389-9945

Departmental Contacts

Advertising	ads@vbFRONT.com
Subscriptions	info@vbFRONT.com
News / Releases	news@vbFRONT.com
Admin / Ops	info@vbFRONT.com

(540) 389-9945
vbFRONT.com
morefront.blogspot.com

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NOVEMBER



Jennifer Poff Cooper



Dan Dowdy



Holly Marrow



Shawn Nowlin

Advisory Board

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

2022 CONTRIBUTORS



Tom Field



Mike Leigh



Gene Marrano



Michael Shelton



Sandy Smith



Nicholas Vaassen

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Many times,
people... are
afraid to take
the first step.
— Page 13

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Our number
one thing
is to treat
the players
properly.
— Page 37



Neal Cummings
Freedom First Credit Union /
finance – credit unions



Michelle Darby
Goodwill Industries of the Valleys /
community service



Christopher Finley
LewisGale /
healthcare



Micah Fraim
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Michael Waldvogel
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Biographies and
contact information
on each contributor
are provided on Page 54.

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All photos by Tom Field

GLOW Healing Arts is located in the historic Preston Place on Main Street in Salem.

The Power of Holistic Health

By Shawn Nowlin

GLOW Healing Arts staff, customers reflect on their spiritual journeys.

Every single day hundreds of people drive past 1936 West Main Street in Salem with many completely unaware of its significance. Known as Preston Place, the structure, built two centuries ago, is the oldest home in the city. The last resident of the house, Dr. Esther Brown, was the first female doctor in the area. On the property is the colossal Osage Orange tree which is believed to be over 200 years old. Treasured for its momentous significance, Preston Place was dedicated with a historic site marker in December 2021.

While the outside of the building may look like a film set for a Lifetime Original Movie, inside the doors is home to GLOW Healing Arts, an unparalleled holistic wellness center. In addition to massage therapy and other services, body work, Reiki healing and readings are also offered. The most and least expensive selection is an iTOVi scan (a frequency sent to the body which assesses overall health) and custom essential oil blend at \$325 and \$20, respectively

“ ”

The Osage Orange tree (shown on cover) is believed to be over 200 years old.



“We help individuals gain metaphysical equilibrium”—Meredith Novak



GLOW rooms and spaces

YOU'RE INVITED TO—A LOT

If you think GLOW Healing Arts is just a side gig type business or like those pop up tents you see at festivals—well, think again. (Okay, there's no question "hippies" are attracted to it... bohemians... naturalists. But that's beside the point.) GLOW is definitely glowing outward. To a large audience. The "menu" of classes and workshops, events and sessions, merchandise and practices... it's an amazing place to visit. Hippie or not, you might very well want to familiarize yourself with this microcosm of all things alternative, wellness, and holistic. Fold your hands in front of your center and check out this list of enlightenment opportunities:



Meredith Novak

SERVICES

- access bars
- crystal healing
- detox
- energetic bodywork
- intuitive healing
- light language therapy
- pain relief
- psych-K
- raindrop technique
- reflexology
- reiki
- soul realignment
- therapeutic massage
- meditation
- dream interpretation
- card readings

ACTIVITIES

- tour of light and sound
- children's chakra awakening
- seasonal (and holiday) workshops
- tea
- vegan and gluten-free and foodie events
- prana balance
- tarot share group
- reincarnation studies
- religious and spiritual celebrations
- mixed media arts

Did we catch it all? No way. Visit glowhealingarts.com and follow/like social media for ongoing resources.

- Tom Field

For Meredith Novak, opening a holistic wellness center was something she wanted to do for years. Once her dream became a reality, there was no turning back. Emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts is something she takes tremendous pride in because, as Novak explained, "there is just so much that people don't know. We get a lot of questions related to Reiki [for example.] I tell people that it is essentially a technique used to restore one's physical and emotional health by channeling energy through touch," she added. "With assistance from our specialists, we help individuals gain metaphysical equilibrium."



GLOW merchandise is diverse, including crystals, oils, artifacts, healing/wellness items, and likely "the largest onsite retail collection of divination cards in the state," says Meredith and Jesse, as they restock after returning from one of their numerous events.





Among the holistic practitioners employed at GLOW Healing Arts are Novak, Tabitha Cain, energy healer practitioner; Nicole Prillaman, licensed massage therapist; Theresa Huber, occupational, massage and aroma therapist; Evelyn Mann, crystal healer; Emilee Hall, yoga instructor; Angie Dobbins, licensed massage therapist; and Rob Arana, Reiki Practitioner. Collectively, the practitioners, each licensed and certified, have several decades of experience.

Before experiencing a reading, Novak says people need to know a few things, most notably the importance of channeling positive energy and bringing either a phone or tablet.

"The course of life is often difficult to navigate. Many times, people want to seek help, but are afraid to take the first step. We help individuals seek guidance by means of an intuitive psychic reading," Novak said. "Our psychic medium, Nicole, holds your right hand to learn about you, and then shares her information with you electronically or in person."

With all the responsibilities that come with being an adult, people often feel overwhelmed. Being open-minded about holistic practices is something Tracy Stromer wishes she had done years ago. For the mother of four, it's not an exaggeration to say that GLOW Healing Arts changed her perspective on many things.

"Admittedly, I was skeptical at first. I remember my best friend telling me why it's never a good idea to come to a

Angela Marie, a licensed massage therapist, is one of the regular practitioners at GLOW.

“ ”

We help individuals seek guidance...



Jesse Cantelope explains the difference between Tarot and Oracle cards.



definitive conclusion with limited information,” she said. “I had a great experience. I’ve since recommended GLOW Healing Arts to certain friends and family members.”

Novak welcomes feedback from the community. Her message for anyone with trepidations about giving the business a try is simple: “You never know how you will react to our practices and services until you experience it for yourself. The overwhelming percentage of people who have walked through our doors have returned at least once.”

Winter is right around the corner, which for GLOW Healing Arts means more inside one-on-one services. Novak says she can’t emphasize the importance of holistic nutrition enough during this time of the year. An all-inclusive culture, since its grand opening, means people of all backgrounds have utilized the business’s services.

Common misconceptions that people have about holistic practitioners consist of things like punching holes or devil worshipping. “There is some of that, but for the majority of holistic workers, nothing could be further from the truth,” said Cain earlier this year at a city expo. “We have trained ourselves to be conduits to bring energy through our bodies for you to do the healing that you need for yourself.”

Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on most weeks, a session can be scheduled by texting or calling 540-378-4903. More information can be found at glowhealingarts.com.

““

You never know how you will react... until you experience it for yourself.



RUC Nursing

Radford Nursing: Preparing Healthcare Professionals for the Future

By Holly Marrow

The 2019 merger of Radford University School of Nursing and Jefferson College of Health Sciences has launched the two institutions to a new level of healthcare education in the Roanoke and New River Valleys.



Holly Marrow

Wendy Downey, DNP, MS, Ed, RN, CNE

In 1969, then Radford College admitted its first nursing students, ten years before becoming Radford University. Jefferson College of Health Sciences, owned by Carilion Clinic, traces its roots back to 1914. Both institutions have been known for excellence in training nurses and other healthcare professionals throughout the years. In 2019, The Virginia General Assembly granted approval for the two entities to merge, thereby creating the Radford University Carilion campus (RUC) and Radford University School of Nursing Main campus (RUM) as accredited partners in healthcare education.

“We are one school of nursing with two learning locations,” says Wendy Downey, DNP, MS Ed, RN, CNE, Interim Dean. In



Holly Marrow

Sharla Cooper, DNP, NNP-BC, RA

In addition to nursing education, RUM and RUC have expanded curricula to offer a wide range of healthcare degrees including Emergency Services, Public Health, Respiratory and Occupational Therapy, Family Nurse Practitioner, and a myriad of others.

In addition to the merger, RUM became a separate institution from the Waldron College of Health and Human Services in the fall of 2021. Although separate entities, “we consider ourselves cousins” says Downey, “Nursing was just too big to be under Waldron College,” adds Sharla Cooper, DNP, NNP-BC, RA, and adds that RUM is in the process of designation as a college rather than a university.

Radford Nursing was recognized as one of Virginia’s top ten nursing schools for 2022. Although these 10 schools are not ranked in any particular order, Radford nursing faculty are especially proud of their consistently high National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rate - 97.9% this year according to nurse.org and consistently over the 90th percentile. “We have always been well above the national average, which speaks to the quality of education we provide,” says Downey.

“With the merger came lots of opportunities and a chance for us to grow,” says Cooper. RUM/RUC now

HEALTHCARE DEGREE PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH RADFORD:

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- Occupational Therapy Assistant

Bachelor’s Degree:

- Biomedical Science
- Emergency Services
- Health Sciences
- Healthcare Administration
- Medical Laboratory Science
- Nursing BSN
- Public Health
- Respiratory Therapy

Master’s Degree:

- Healthcare Administration
- Health Sciences
- Nursing Administration
- Family Nurse Practitioner
- Occupational Therapy
- Physician Assistant

Doctorate:

- Health Sciences
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy

Minors:

- Forensic Science
- Psychology

boasts 57 full-time faculty, 60 adjunct professors, two state-of-the-art Simulation Centers, and a more than doubled student population due to the expansion of degree offerings. “The merger truly created a health care corridor,” says Downey, “two separate locations but one faculty.”

Staff agrees the transition to merge was not without its challenges, but in the last 6-8 months, “we’ve become much more unified,” Downey adds. “We’re already over the hump,” adds Tara Chitwood, DNP, RN, Undergraduate chair for both campuses, explaining that Jefferson adapted Radford’s nursing curriculum so there will be consistency for all students moving forward. Additionally, faculty working together through re-accreditation by the Board of Nursing last year “caused us to take a deep dive into our processes and enabled



Holly Marrow

us to work more closely together” says Chitwood.

Strengths of RUM/RUC’s program include the flexibility offered to students. In addition to the traditional baccalaureate nursing program, an accelerated program is offered for students who already hold a baccalaureate degree in any area. Additionally, direct admission to the nursing program is now offered to first-year students with an interest in nursing who have a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Current enrollment in the upper division (junior and senior) nursing program is at 710 students for both campuses. Downey states this typically includes 5% male students, but that number has been steadily increasing. “We need both genders, and we need a lot more diversity, and that’s something that we’re working toward.”

“Acute care nursing is more challenging than it has ever been,” says Cooper, who adds “in nursing, the only constant is change.” And when COVID-19 hit in March 2020, it posed special challenges for nursing education. “Nursing is face-to-face hands-on,” she says, but “overall it made us stronger.” In large part due to strong relationships with clinical partners LewisGale, Carilion, VA Medical Center, and others - RUM/RUC students were back doing in-person clinicals by August 2020.

One of the RUM/RUC curriculum

highlights is the state-of-the-art Simulation centers, one for each campus. These centers contain a “clinic side” and a “hospital side,” says Chris Keller, DNP, RN, CNE, CHSE, Director of the Simulation Center.

The clinic enables students to assess and interview students in a clinical office setting. There is also a realistic apartment simulating a home or community health setting. The hospital features obstetric, gynecological, pediatric, and infant simulators and adult mannequins able to simulate various medical conditions. The obstetric stimulator, “Victoria,” actually gives birth and is able to experience complications, such as postpartum hemorrhage, to better prepare students for emergent situations.

In addition, “standardized patients” are hired to role-play different diagnoses and conditions so students can perform realistic interviews, develop critical personal skills and appropriate bedside interactions.

The medical equipment on both the clinic and hospital sides works as it would in a true medical setting. This includes blood pressure monitors, wall suction, oxygen, IV pumps, fetal monitor, and Pyxis medication dispensaries. “We simulate, we don’t pretend,” stresses Keller. “This is where students truly develop interpersonal and psychomotor

skills and become comfortable with providing hands-on care.


Downey is quick to praise faculty for helping to make RUM/RUC programs exceptional. "RU is a teaching facility, and the individual attention that students get from faculty is really what sets us apart." She goes on to add, "our primary focus is the students. We are committed to helping them succeed."

Cooper, who also has the title of "Dean's Fellow" and serves as a student services liaison, cites an excellent relationship with clinical partners as a huge strength of the program. "We work with over 50 agencies," including long-term care facilities, health departments, home health, hospice, and hospitals. "There are so many things about our curriculum that make our students stronger," she says. For example, students participate



Newborn simulator

in a week of disaster training, which is unique to the Radford curriculum.

"We're continuing to improve, getting students ready for critical thinking and clinical reasoning" says Christi Callahan, DNP, RN, Associate Dean of all programs. "We are preparing our students for the future of healthcare." 

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BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Have you ever noticed that the bigger a company gets, the more bloated it becomes?

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

Do more with less

It doesn't have to be this way. As more people are added, more projects are initiated, and more metrics are measured, the organization will usually slow down and accomplish less.


As a business grows, there is a tendency to solve problems and challenges by addition. A new system. New staff. More meetings. A bigger building. In a recent Wall Street Journal article by Robert Sutton, the author explains that many leaders are rewarded who add too much. Managers who grow and supervise larger teams and bureaucracies tend to get bigger salaries and fancier titles. Often, leaders think the key to success is to add new "stuff" when the opposite is true.

David Packard, a co-founder of Hewlett-Packard once said, "More businesses die from indigestion than starvation." This is because leaders add too much and subtract too little.

Sutton writes, "when leaders are undisciplined about piling on staff, gizmos, software, meeting, rules, training and management fads, organizations become too complicated, their people get overwhelmed and exhausted, and their resources are spread so thin that all their work suffers." I couldn't agree more. Frequently, when I work with companies, I see too few people being pulled in too many directions and I must coach them on focusing on only the most important tasks or goals.

Recently I worked with a company that was running out of space and the owners asked me to help them with space utilization. They were strongly considering adding a new building or expanding their current one. Thankfully, I was quickly able to diagnose where they had too much "stuff" and put them on a path to reduce their floor space needs and put a building expansion on hold.

Organizations need to reward their leaders who can drive efficiency by eliminating wasteful activities and efforts. Which processes in your company could be simplified or eliminated? Which products and services should you stop providing?

By eliminating excessive "stuff", companies can become more focused, their people will become less overwhelmed, and their leaders will be more successful. 

“As a business grows, there is a tendency to solve problems and challenges by addition.”



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City of Salem Mayor Renée Ferris Turk (right) presents Alan Fabian with a formal proclamation in honor of the medical staff and colleagues having made it through two of the most challenging years in modern healthcare, during a tree dedication ceremony at LewisGale Medical Center on Arbor Day.

New market president for LewisGale hails from just down the road

By Gene Marrano

Alan Fabian says LewisGale is poised for the region's growth – as long as workforce issues are resolved.

Tapped to replace New Zealander Lance Jones as the LewisGale Regional Health System market president and LewisGale Medical Center (Salem) chief executive officer earlier this year, Alan Fabian is certainly no stranger to the region nor to the parent company HCA Healthcare,

which he joined in 1995. First it was several senior leadership roles at Louisiana hospitals, followed by 9 years at LewisGale Hospital Montgomery as the CEO there. Now that facility and LewisGale Hospital Pulaski, LewisGale Hospital Alleghany, and LewisGale Medical Center are all on his plate,

along with outpatient centers like the two Roanoke County standalone ER facilities that have opened in recent years.

A New England native (he attended Western New England University as an undergraduate) Fabian started out on the IT side of the health care business in California before joining HCA in 1995. "I wasn't always interested in health care – I was always interested in information technology. It just led me into the hospital environment." In fact, as an outside consultant, Fabian installed and managed IT systems for HCA before he "morphed," to the patient care side of the business. Fabian still understands the IT lingo, something he says the Information Technology manager at LewisGale appreciates – they can speak the same language. "[Its] something I've done all my life. I actually help him think through right to the problem."

The move to replace Lance Jones (who decided to leave the HCA family to explore other aspects of health care) was a comfortable transition for Alan Fabian, considering he already led one of the hospitals in the LewisGale orbit. He also likes the investments made by HCA in the LewisGale system - \$133 million just since the start of the pandemic, says Fabian. "We are investing for the future." LewisGale has launched a number of technologies including robotic surgical aids that in many cases it claims is a first in the area. "I feel good about where we are ... the capital investment in our facilities, and the leadership at each one of the [LewisGale] hospitals."


Fabian spent 18 years working at hospitals in Louisiana for HCA (New Orleans, Lafayette), earning an MBA from Tulane while in the Big Easy. Shortly after the devastation from Hurricane Ian in southwest Florida, he said it was "something he lived with for 18 years," in Louisiana, that is, preparing for a worst-case hurricane scenario. "You do a tremendous amount of work for something that may never show up." He does call HCA hurricane preparedness "fabulous at assuring you are prepared." Fabian was confident the 40-plus HCA hospitals in Florida would be ready to serve patients post-Hurricane Ian. System-wide there was even pandemic preparation well before COVID showed up. When it finally hit here, "I felt HCA was

behind us and I felt really good about it."

The mammoth size of HCA Healthcare Inc. – more than 180 hospitals and 2000-plus other centers of care, gives it a scale and scope that reaches across the entire country notes Fabian. Technologies and techniques tried first elsewhere can migrate to clusters like the LewisGale Regional Health System. When the cutting edge becomes mainstream, "they provide better patient care."

That includes utilizing the four DaVinci Robots in Salem and one in Montgomery County, and multiple orthopedic robots through the system that provide the best outcomes while minimizing patient discomfort. A \$16 million expansion at LewisGale Montgomery that got underway before Fabian headed north to Salem and the Roanoke Valley will help that facility keep up with growth in the New River Valley; it includes several, "supersized," operating rooms as he puts it. It will allow space for new procedures and for "that new technology coming down the line."

Nursing shortages are nothing new and that was the case pre-pandemic as well, but Fabian says health care systems are now experiencing workforce challenges in what he calls ancillary services – lab technicians, pharmacy techs, in radiology, respiratory therapy. They are and will be "in high demand." That's why Fabian says its incumbent to have a good working culture, a great working environment, "so people are willing to stay with our organization. It's been a challenge across all four hospitals."

LewisGale partners with local colleges that provide nursing and medical technician training, working to make sure their curriculums align with the needs of local health care providers. "If we don't maintain that and assist [them] in some instances – the growth of these nursing schools – we're going to be in trouble, in 5 to 10 years." Keeping that workforce here in the Roanoke and New River Valleys is key. Conversely, Fabian notes that the recruitment of physicians has gone well over the past several years. He remains bullish despite the challenges: "I expect that with the growth in southwest Virginia ... we are going to be prepared for that future - and be in a really good position." 



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:

Whether an annuity is a smart investment for you depends on your personal financial situation.

Finding safe harbors for your money

Last month I talked about I bonds. These are offered by the federal government for investments of up to \$10,000 annually. The current interest rate is 9.62%. Since a lot of people are asking about conservative investment options, I figured I'd cover an often-misunderstood product this month.

Annuities – safe or silly?

Rising interest rates are tough on borrowers, but tend to improve savings' returns. There are relatively safe places to park cash if you don't need it for 3-5 years. These include the Multi-Year Guaranteed Annuity (MYGA), currently paying 3.8%.

Annuities have some similarities to CDs, but differ in their taxed deferred status on 1099 interest. Unlike CDs, which are backed by the FDIC, annuities are protected by the Bureau of Insurance. Insurance companies are generally more secure than banks. The Federal reserve sets the limit on how much a bank is required to keep on hand; insurance companies tend to keep more to cover liabilities and risk. The top three insurance companies usually have a better credit rating than the United States of America.

CPAs and others who tend to throw mud on annuities do so because some people invest already tax deferred dollars into annuities inside IRAs. IRAs are already tax deferred. To them, it doesn't make sense to safe harbor money in an already tax advantaged account.

What are Annuities?

Insurance companies are the only ones who can create annuities. Different firms offer varying terms and payouts. Shop rates just like you would with banks. You are checking to see if you bank rates are competitive, right?



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Lump sum variable is a mutual fund type of product. You determine a fixed money amount to invest for a period of 7-10 years. Fixed index annuities track things like the S&P 500, Bloomberg or proprietary indexes available to the insurance company. These generally have riders on them offering guaranteed income for the rest of your life.

Immediate annuities involve a lump sum deposit for a guaranteed paycheck the rest of your life, much like a pension. The company often pays your premium back if you die within a fixed period. There are also multi-year guarantees that act like CDs with a guaranteed interest rate for a predetermined period. The longer your money is locked in, the higher the interest rate.

Besides the tax deferred status of annuities, you can also take 10% out every year without penalties. Whether an annuity is a smart investment for you depends on your personal financial situation. Those who are risk averse or currently in a high tax bracket might find them a good alternative. 

Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at Michael@360WealthConsulting.com



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The Blue Ridge Partnership seeks to grow the health care ecosystem

By Gene Marrano

“We’ve got some really good jobs here ... a growing health sciences economy,” contends Cynthia Lawrence.

The Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Science Careers got off the ground in 2018, but the first big get together was held just last month at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute (FBRI) at Virginia Tech Carilion, delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health Science Career Advisory Conference was geared towards counselors, advisors and job coaches to highlight career paths and critical jobs in the region, information they could pass along to those in school systems, and local two- and four-year colleges. Those seeking a career in the health care or health science field were also welcome.

Stakeholders in the Blue Ridge Partnership (BRP) include Roanoke Valley public school

systems, community colleges and four-year institutions including Roanoke College, Virginia Tech, Radford University Carilion, Hollins University and the Roanoke Higher Education Center. The FBRI and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and employers that include Carilion Clinic, LewisGale Regional Health System, Centra Health, senior living communities (Richfield, Friendship) and home health care companies are also in the mix. All are typically looking for skilled employees on a regular basis.

Cynthia Lawrence is the Director of Workforce Development at Carilion Clinic: “we needed to come together and form a collaborative approach to health sciences education



Submitted

Cynthia Lawrence



Submitted

Jason Suhr - Roanoke County Public Schools

and workforce development.” Early work involved finding the courses and career paths needed that exist in the GoVirginia Region 2 sphere says Lawrence. (stretching from the New River and Roanoke Valleys to Lynchburg.) A GoVirginia grant has helped the initiative in its nascent state. It’s about “raising the rigor and aligning health sciences education so that we are meeting employer needs ... guiding [students and young adults] into health care careers. How can we help them?”


Lawrence says with the groundwork finally in place the Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Science Careers wants to start seeing “the needle moving,” this academic year, with increased enrollment, more transfers and more degrees in related fields. “We want to see more people entering the [health care] job force, better prepared and ready to hit the ground running.” Much of the BRP focus is also on making sure the region is working to keep talent here, that they are just not being educated locally before taking off for other venues.

“We’ve got some really good jobs here; we have a growing health sciences economy,” contends Lawrence. The Virginia Cooperative Extension is working with the BRP on a K-5 health sciences curriculum, exposing the youngest students to career path opportunities early on. “We want to turn on that light bulb as soon as possible.”

One of those BRP stakeholders are Roanoke County Public Schools, where Jason Suhr is

the Career and Technical Education (CTE) director. He sees it as a way to ensure that school systems, counseling departments and other staff members, “become familiar with all the opportunities in the health sciences, [which] are abundant and good paying.” The Blue Ridge Partnership as Suhr sees it is to make sure “we’re all singing the same song and are aware of the opportunities.”

Suhr views the BRP as a “robust” initiative that “will really help all the school systems,” and students more fully grasp the viable career pathways in the health sciences field. It will also alert parents as to what’s out there – and what they might ask their children about. Roanoke County is planning to build an updated CTE vocational center and is in talks with local industry players says Suhr about what curriculum they may want to offer once it is up and running. He notes that Roanoke County already offers high school students EMT, nursing and radiologic technologist programs.

“It’s not just nurses,” says Cynthia Lawrence, “we need everything - therapists, researchers, PA’s, NA’s, all levels of allied health [career paths]. These are the people that keep the ecosystem running; this collaborative approach is a new and unique way to go about workforce development. We can’t do this in a silo – we all have to come together with the resources that each of us have to make this happen. We’re all trying to accomplish the same thing.” (see more at virginiahealthcareers.org) 

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Sandy Smith

Executive Summary:
Our youngest working generation likely views employment and employers much differently than previous generations.

Sandy Smith is a management consultant and executive coach who had conducted seminars for Carilion Clinic and presented the first keynote address at the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. Reach him at sandysmith.univ@gmail.com

Generation Z in the workforce

There are primarily four distinct generations in the American workplace. These generations were raised in different eras, with attitudes and values shaped by different defining moments. Being aware of the characteristics of each generation is critical to having a cohesive, productive workforce. What works with one generation, may not be effective at all with another. The following is a brief synopsis of each generation's particular traits.

Baby Boomers: Accounting for 25% of the workforce, this generation was born between 1946 and 1964 (76-58 years old). They are hardworking and very willing to take risks to reach their goals. They are skilled mentors and coaches, which allows them to teach younger generations. However, for a variety of reasons, 10,000 boomers are retiring each day.

Generation X: This is a very independent generation born between 1965 and 1980 (57-42 years old) that takes pride in producing business results. They value a more relaxed and flexible workplace and strive for work-life balance. Gen Xers constitute 33% of the workplace.

Generation Y or Millennial Generation: Born between 1981 and 1996 (41-26 years old), this is the first generation to grow up in the age of significant, almost constant technological advancement. Today they constitute 27% of the workforce and are expected to make up 75% of the workforce by 2025. They are results-oriented and may help older generations integrate new technology in the workplace. They expect their work to be meaningful and to be able to balance work and other aspects of their lives to achieve happiness.

Generation Z or Digital Natives: This generation was born between 1997 and 2012 (25-10 years old). In 2021 they accounted for 11.6% of the workforce but by 2025 are expected to constitute 27%. They are even more tech savvy than millennials and value something different than their predecessors; namely job security. Growing up, the older Gen Zers watched their millennial siblings drown in student loan debt and struggle to find work during the recession. Now they are just beginning to enter the workplace as interns or in entry level positions.

Generation Z workers are shaping up to be the most diverse group ever to enter the workforce. In fact, 48% will be non-Caucasian. The world-wide web became Gen Z's playground and they have little or no memory of the world as it existed before smart phones.

Today's business and Human Resource leaders need to start thinking how to attract and retain these incredibly talented young employees. A recent survey showed that "87% of US CEOs already say that finding and keeping talented employees is their number one issue." Another sobering thought about

all this is that this group might just include your children. Or grandchildren.

Generation Z Insights

During the last couple of years, I have had the opportunity to work with high energy Gen Zers in my seminars and workshops. I usually come away from these meetings a bit drained. It's like spending a couple hours with a room full of "gifted kids."

When I asked them what they want from their employer:

- 80% expected the use of their company's digital tools.
- 72% expected to work in an innovative culture.
- 62% wanted to achieve the reputation as a digital leader.

Certainly, day-to-day current events continue to shape this generation, but what are insights at this point?

They generally possess a high IQ and a broad vocabulary and they grasp complex concepts easily and may be impatient with those who don't. They are high energy and get bored very easily. At times they are easily frustrated because they perceive their own work to be less than perfect.

They know their employment is much in demand and they are well connected. Gen Zers have little interest in titles or working their way up the corporate ladder.

They expect access to senior leaders and prefer to work independently rather than in groups.


North Carolina State University produced a motto that characterizes Generation Zers: "work to live, not live to work." They want a workplace that is community-minded, not just a place to earn a paycheck.

Employment and Retention Strategies

The most successful organizations hiring generation Z employees have a three step process in place to identify, assess and develop the next generation of leaders and managers. And they have a set of core values that clarify who they are, why they exist, and who they hire. These factors may be important to Gen Y job applicants.

When interviewing Gen Zers and interacting with them later:

- Be transparent and empathetic
- Clarify their primary role and responsibilities
- Offer them flexibility, perhaps including work schedules
- Provide them with feedback on a daily basis and ask them for their feedback
- Recognize and celebrate their successes
- Provide opportunities for advancement

One very interesting observation about Gen Zers that may be worth some thought is that they might be more like their grandparents than their parents. 



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Be Ready for Small Business Saturday

Small Business Saturday is November 26th. It's a day to Shop Small and celebrate the small businesses that make our local communities special. Here are a few tips to make sure your business is ready.

Prepare your staff and location

Bulk up your staffing schedule for the day with seasonal employees and veteran team members. Brief staff members on what to expect, how to handle common requests and problems, and any special offers. Emphasize the importance of great customer service even on what may be a hectic day. And, make sure to stock up on your biggest sellers and any sale items.



Offer special deals

Small Business Saturday shoppers are already in the mood to splurge in support of local businesses. This is the perfect time to introduce offerings they may not know about—especially if those offerings are discounted! Design a Small Business Saturday-specific promotion to capitalize on your increased traffic (and attract more).

Spread the word!

Small Business Saturday provides a compelling opportunity for local businesses to boost holiday sales, but in order to do this, customers need to know about the event. Consider these to help you spread the word:

- Posting the event on your website
- Promoting it through social media channels
- Placing the event on your local calendar of events and listings
- Handing out printed materials
- Talking about it (word of mouth is so valuable)



Thank your customers

Take the opportunity to thank your customers with a small gift, coupon, or other recognition of their support. You'll be busy, but do make an effort to connect with your loyal customers in a meaningful way on this day that's all about community.

Be forward-thinking

When the event is leveraged correctly by small businesses, they'll continue to see the benefits throughout the year by gaining repeat customers. Look at Small Business Saturday as a springboard for boosting business year-round.



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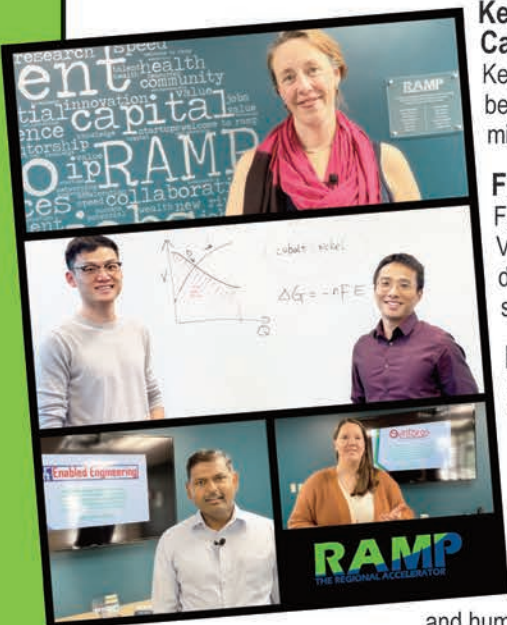
RAMP welcomes 5 startups into Fall 2022 Cohort

Proof that the Roanoke-Blacksburg region is a hub of innovation? Check out the variety of technology and biotech startup companies that are part of RAMP's Fall 2022 Cohort!

We have entrepreneurs developing transformative technologies to enhance everything from car batteries and therapeutic treatments to the nutrients in our soil.

RAMP – your Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program – is honored to host these startup founders in our 12-week intensive program that aims to provide them with business savvy to match their scientific prowess.

We invite you to experience their innovation at our **DEMO DAY** on **December 8**. DEMO DAY will lead into "Tech the Halls," the holiday event for our partner, the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council. Please mark your calendars!



Kenkashi Microbes | Cassie Wilson & Jason Anderson

Kenkashi Microbes delivers a full range of microbial benefits, from compost boosts to direct microbial and micronutrient application for plant health and resiliency.

Fermi Energy, Inc. | Feng Lin & Zhengrui Xu

Founded by a team of battery scientists and engineers at Virginia Tech, Fermi Energy is developing fundamentally disruptive cathode technologies to help create the U.S. supply chain of battery manufacturing.

Enabled Engineering | Kumar Kandasamy

Enabled Engineering develops innovative manufacturing technologies for extreme applications, such as fabricating materials in nuclear reactors and enhanced electrical and thermal conductivity materials.

Qentoros | Michael Miller & Jessica Gilbertie

Qentoros is developing a biologic therapeutic to treat infectious and/or inflammatory conditions in animals

and humans. The biologic is based on blood products and has demonstrated efficacy in treating a number of veterinary patient conditions that did not improve with normal antibiotic treatment.

Dot Solutions, LLC | Sal Ferlise & Emily Sweet

Dot Solutions LLC, aka Dot Drives, is an internet-based donor engagement software application that was specifically designed for a startup to mid-sized nonprofit.

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—AND—
RBTC's TECH THE HALLS
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2022

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

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- Free access to Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center's COgro
- Membership in 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.

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Public art as culture >

Neighbors, volunteers and greenway users attended a public celebration for three new murals located in Roanoke's southeast portion of the **Roanoke River Greenway** in late October. Local artist **Jon Murrill** created the large public works with help from **Patrick Henry High School** students - where Murrill is an art teacher: "I think it's great for my students, they have the opportunity to participate and get out of their comfort zone and enjoy a little bit of art out in the wide world - and the environment we have here in Roanoke - whether it's in

the city or on the greenway." Local residents from the "I Heart SE" community group also pitched in to paint the public murals under the 13th St and 9th SE bridges.

"I find that murals add that extra edge of culture to our area, a great way for us to not only show love aesthetically but to give back to our community a bit," says Murrill (murrillart.com). A Roanoke Arts Commission grant funded Murrill's greenway projects; he also does private works for local businesses, including one coming up for Well Hung Vineyard in downtown Roanoke.



GoFest draws outdoor enthusiasts, new businesses >

The **Roanoke Outside Festival – GoFest** – drew tens of thousands to downtown Roanoke over 3 days last month to see outdoor gear suppliers, BMX bike stunt riders, lumberjack shows, live music - and the first **Wombat Camper**, a Roanoke startup which manufactures small, overland-style camper trailers, which unveiled its first production model at the Roanoke Go Outside Festival. A prototype was displayed at a previous GoFest. **Julie Meilak** is the company's co-owner with husband Brad; they are

working with Roanoke companies **Lift Arc Studios** and **TxTur** to build the \$75,000 Wombat.

Julie Meilak said they hoped to draw interest from some of the 30,000 plus people that were expected to attend GoFest in downtown Roanoke for the high-end Wombat, which has a queen-size bed, a "wet" bathroom, a shower and an indoor-outdoor kitchen space. "It's going to appeal to anybody who wants to get out there and travel and get out into the back country as well. We have a steel frame chassis with lots of clearance and independent suspension. It's made to go off the road," says Meilak. That rugged design was inspired by the Meilak's time living in Australia - when they vacationed in the Outback.



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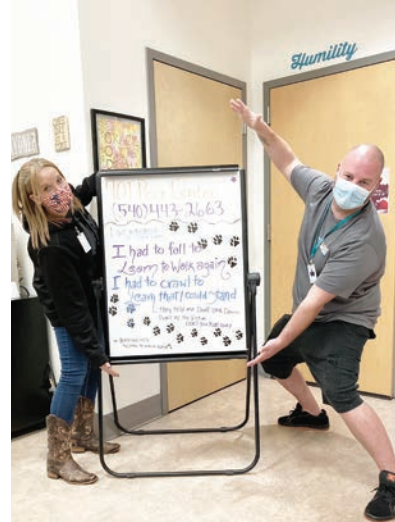
New River Valley Community Services runs a program on Main Street in Radford called 401 Peer Center. (Yes, it's at 401 W. Main Street.) The mission—is a very open and inclusive and diverse one, whether you go with the short version: "A safe place where others are encouraged to come" or the official version: "a peer-to-peer program that encourages individuals to use the facility and its resources for learning, computer use, socializing with peers, attending groups/classes, playing games, participating in social events and relaxing."

An easy way to keep up with the current offering is to follow the organization on Facebook @401PeerCenter.

With ongoing activities and gatherings, 401 Peer Center is rebounding to a more robust schedule as staffing returns from the pandemic interruption. "Engaging and transformational," said one reviewer after attending a recent event that presented an educator and motivational speaker.

401 Peer Center brings people together to not only address ways to improve our community and encourage wellness, but to help individuals achieve their developmental goals.

In many ways, 401 Peer Center serves as a showcase, flagship, outreach, and practical application of the New River Valley Community Services organization. The group manages and collaborates with a lot of resources to accomplish these goals. 



GOOD WORK

Executive Summary:
The 401 Peer Center of New River Valley Community Services cultivates a following of goal-oriented individuals.

“401 Peer Center helps individuals achieve their developmental goals.”



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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Public service
depends on support
in myriad ways.*

In and out of trenches

Support is support. Right?

On the day I'm attending one of our local nonprofit events, I hear the news that MacKenzie Scott donated \$800,000 to our own Girl Scouts of America Skyline. She's the ex-wife of Amazon's Jeff Bezos, of course—and she's been on a run of writing checks to all kinds of nonprofit and community organizations, much to the appreciation of those stakeholders. (Then, on this latest philanthropic run, Scott also sends the Danville Regional Foundation \$13 million dollars; a gift that joins other donations she's made to NPOs serving our communities.)

Even as I'm shouting "Yes!" to myself as I'm driving home from this nonprofit event, I can't help but think about what just transpired. My event, was the result of a culmination of hundreds upon hundreds of man/(woman)hours, working long and hard and diligently to keep the organization solvent (sometimes, just barely). Every year, these NPOs tear apart budgets and scramble for fundraising and grants to support the community out of pure desire and a servant's heart. Every year, these NPOs seek out and depend fully on volunteers to help them operate. For many of these operations, it's a major undertaking that demands boots in the trenches and fulfillment in just about every way—except monetary.

But with the stroke of a pen, someone provide resources that would never have happened, or would have taken years or decades to achieve.

Wow. Just wow. Right?

In a way, this phenomenon is akin to the old apples and oranges comparison. You can't hardly fathom the two in the same light. One will say \$800,000 is more valuable than a lesser amount, no matter how you slice it. Another will say you can't dismiss the work that was performed by so many, and that has more merit.

Of course, both support mechanisms are valuable.

What transpired does cause me to go a bit introspective, though. I can only dig so deep in my pocket; so the majority of my support to our own NPOs comes from volunteering, serving, donating time, promoting the missions, and volunteering. We have such fabulous organizations serving our community, it's a pleasure to be involved, whether it's at the shallow or deepest levels.

Here at the FRONT, we were tickled to hit a \$500,000 milestone in promotional contributions to a variety of NPOs this year. It's not even comparable to one \$800,000 check to one organization, but we certainly celebrated doing our part. And we'll keep on volunteering!

continued on Page 39

New man at the top for the RailYard Dawgs

Newly embarked on their 7th season (5 ½ if you listen to team President Mickey Gray when factoring in the games lost to COVID) the Roanoke RailYard Dawgs came into the 2022-2023 campaign with almost 1000 season ticket holders – a record says Gray.

They also have a new chairman: 11-year NHL veteran Jamie McGinn, also the team's principal owner, who assumed the chairman's role for Breakaway Sports and Entertainment from his father Bob McGinn. The Toronto area native was no stranger to Roanoke and always seem to have a smile on his face. Jamie McGinn, who scored close to 200 goals in the National Hockey League while playing for a handful of teams says it was always his intention once it was time to hang up the skates to get more involved on the front office side of the business.

McGinn also says an NHL owner lockout while he was playing led him to believe that players often get the short end of the equation. "I kind of learned about the ins and outs of the game, and the business side more," says McGinn. "I wasn't exactly happy or thrilled with the way players were being treated. Our number one thing [in Roanoke] is that we want to treat the players properly and bring a good product to the ice."

Jamie McGinn (age 34), who has two brothers still playing hockey (Brock with the Pittsburgh Penguins, Ty in Munich, Germany) says he has "learned a lot," from the elder McGinn over the past few years. "Any questions I have he's there to help," says Jamie; "he got us to this point along with Mickey Gray, and we're going to keep it moving forward."

McGinn misses the team camaraderie from his playing days but isn't sure his body is up to it anymore, saying it was indeed time to move on. He figures to spend more time in Roanoke and in fact served as Dan Bremner's assistant coach at times last season. McGinn also offered support for Bremner when the RailYard Dawgs hit a 9-game mid-season losing streak – only to storm back and make it all the way to the Southern Professional Hockey League championship series from a lower playoff seed. Such is hockey in the postseason.

"Hopefully, we do a magical run like last year and go deep in the playoffs." If that happens again expect plenty of larger crowds and noisy fans at the Berglund Center – as was the case at the end of last season. Go Dawgs. 🏒



Jamie McGinn



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
The new Chairman is also a chip off the McGinn block.

GUEST COMMENTARY

By Dana C. Ackley, Ph. D.
on behalf of Roanoke Collaboration Project

Executive Summary:
The Roanoke Collaboration Project is a new initiative with an emphasis on respectful dialogue and idea-sharing for progress.



Imagine a collaborative community

Actually, we don't have to just imagine one. We can see the fruits of human collaboration all around us, here in the Roanoke Valley and across the country. Locally, collaboration between Carilion Clinic and Virginia Tech brought us the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC. The Roanoke region now draws world class scientists and medical faculty that do cutting edge research and attract talented students to one of the most selective medical schools in our nation. On a broader scale, the collaboration of tens of thousands of people created something we all carry and rely on, our smart phones.

This sort of collaboration distinguishes humans from other species. Other species collaborate well but only in their own group. Bees, for example, don't organize hundreds of hives to accomplish broad goals for the good of beedom. Wolves in a pack collaborate beautifully with each other but aren't too keen on wolves in other packs. The complex problems humans face today don't get solved by packs. They get solved by diverse people and organizations sharing their experience and talent for the greater good.

The Roanoke Collaboration Project (RCP) is a group of civic volunteers with the mission of preserving and enhancing collaboration in our community. Our deep concern about the drumbeat of toxic divisiveness that seems to be everywhere these days led us take action. The human collaborative spirit must be protected. It is vulnerable to fear and hate. There are people who seek to divide us into separate packs, a sure path to community destruction. Losing our capacity for collaboration would be a disaster for commerce and for our citizens.


The good news is that research demonstrates that 86% of Americans want collaboration and reject extreme voices. But the 86% just are not very visible. They don't get much press.

RCP seeks to change that. Our goal is to give voice to the vast majority of people who are brave enough to listen to and learn from people who think and look different from them. We just need to get organized.

RCP is an all-volunteer, grass roots organization with no legal structure. It is 100% non-partisan. Members of our steering committee were recruited to include people across the political, religious, gender, and racial continuums. On June 26, 2022, we published a commentary in the Roanoke Times, which responded with an editorial of its own on July 3, 2022. As a result, over 300 people have signed our Collaboration Pledge, which simply asks people to engage in respectful dialogue when seeking to solve the highly complex, challenging problems we face today. We know that when people listen, they learn and come up with ideas that otherwise would have been missed. (Think world class research and cell phones.)

On October 3, forty-five people shared their time and talents to explore how RCP can take further steps to enhance the Valley's ability to create collaboration. The meeting used a process that encouraged everyone to have their say in respectful, passionate, and constructive ways. We learned a lot from their voices and are committed to advancing this initiative.


Our Call to Action: We invite you to add your voice for collaboration. We'd love to have you share your unique experience and talent with our group. The first step is to sign the Collaboration Pledge, which you can do here: www.communitycollaboration.us. That will give you access to our website where we have resources people can use to build trust and collaboration. Our site will share stories and examples of what real people in our community are doing to contribute to this essential movement.

You don't have to wait for us. You can act on your own, starting right now. Take actions that bring different people and groups together for constructive dialogue and collaborative problem solving. Visit people, restaurants and stores in different neighborhoods. If you want, please let us know what you are doing and we'll share your stories. The bottom line? If we want to improve our community we should expect and demand better from our leaders, from our press, and from ourselves. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 36

I am absolutely grateful for philanthropic gifts and support that comes from outside of the trenches. We can be such a generous people, nation, region, community. However you can support our nonprofit and community service organizations, your gift and resource is a beautiful thing.

Let's all keep the faith. Believe you me, the NPOs thank you. 



The complex problems humans face... get solved by diverse people and organizations sharing their experience and talent for the greater good.



We should expect and demand better...

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.



Happy dance in Salem

Looking for a new local restaurant to try out? Aly Baba is guaranteed to be a new go-to.

It is conveniently located in Salem by the Kiwanis baseball park. When you walk in, you're immediately greeted by the friendly owner who is super passionate about his dishes.

While we're sure this will be the case for anything you order off the menu, we found the kofta plate, Greek gyro pita, and falafel to be among the best we've ever eaten. The array of spices and flavor had us happy-dancing in our seats.

Definitely check this place out as they offer both Mediterranean and Italian meals – so there will surely be something for everyone in your party!

—Mike & Kelsey Monahan

That's not how I remember it

On the same night I was finishing my reading of *A Calling for Charlie Barnes* (Little Brown; 2021) by Joshua Ferris, I ran across a history blurb about Meriwether Lewis (of explorers Lewis and Clark) and his suicide... or was it murder? The historical account is uncertain... or is it, really? These days, a most popular activity it seems, is to question all our historical figures. The context of the day when they lived often doesn't matter; if they don't pass our moral or character test today, we need to tear down the statue or rename the building or take their work off the library shelf, stage,

or museum wall. This book, essentially a memoir about a person's father, reminds me of that: the power of interpretation.

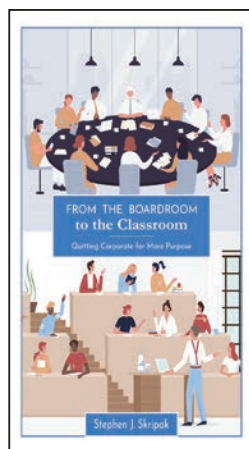
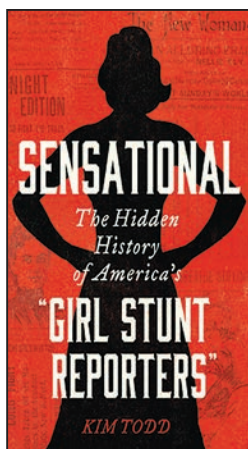
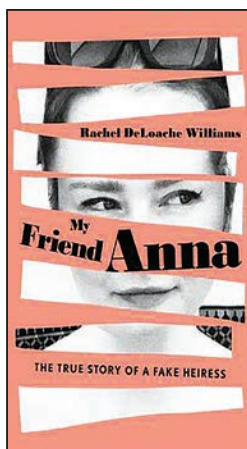
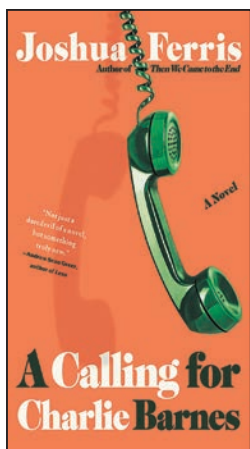
I can't imagine Ferris outlining this book. Although it's not stream-of-consciousness, it does seem like scrambled notes were assembled and allowed to hit wherever they fell. And that's a rather brilliant anti-structuring that complements the mode. I loved it... how "mad" he made family members who were not thrilled with his account of their relationships with his father. Particularly stinging, was the sister and brother who said "Dad?" when our narrator spoke the word. "Chuck," he would say, correcting himself... because he and they knew he was "just" a foster child.

Joshua Ferris is a favorite contemporary author of mine; I read all his work. This one, is different—and yet it still has that remarkability of placing you in the character's mind, outwardly and inwardly, in such realistic, common prose. And like other Ferris novels, there are surprising chapters stuck throughout the storyline, where internal dialogue serves as a poetic refrain.

—Tom Field

Can you be so gullible?

I really enjoyed *My Friend Anna: The True Story of a Fake Heiress* (Gallery; 2019) by Rachel DelLoache Williams; and it wasn't even on my radar until my friend told me to read it. This is about the Anna Delvey case (yes the same show on Netflix), and is told from the perspective of her friend. I was shocked about a lot of this story, because I hadn't seen the



show on Netflix yet. I couldn't believe how gullible someone could be, in order to pay thousands of dollars before realizing you are being conned. It's a crazy story, and an enjoyable read (and listen).

—Jacqueline Wheeler

Truly sensational

In the 1880's and 1890's women who yearned to break into the boys club that was newspaper journalism often went to great lengths and sometimes put themselves in danger to break that ceiling – going undercover as “girl stunt reporters,” having themselves committed to squalid mental hospitals or taking piece meal factory work to show how women laborers were underpaid and often harassed. For a while revered and widely read, later reviled as purveyors of “yellow journalism,” ink-stained heroines like Nelly Bly, Elizabeth Jordan and Nell Nelson left their marks (often under aliases), later morphing into more traditional roles as reporters and muckrakers (as Teddy Roosevelt called those who dug deep) as time went on.

In *Sensational: The Hidden History of America's "Girl Stunt Reporters,"* (Harper Collins, 2021) author Kim Todd, an award winning scribe herself, lays it all out in vivid detail, also detailing the New York newspaper wars between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer – where these “girl stunt reporters,” and their successors were often the soldiers sent out to battle. A good read for those who may want to know more about the halcyon days of the print newspaper as it

slowly dwindles away in these modern times.

—Gene Marrano

Local prof publishes book

Stephen Skripak was an accomplished business executive with Fortune 500 companies. Yet born out of his own experiences as a student, he had a burning desire to reach young people in and beyond the classroom. His new book, *From the Boardroom to the Classroom: Quitting Corporate for More Purpose*, takes you through the journey of someone who transitioned from a long career as an executive with major companies to one as a popular and sought-after college professor and administrator. Using life and work experiences that began on the sometimes mean streets of New Jersey, wound through 11 corporate moves, and ended up at Virginia Tech, *From the Boardroom to the Classroom* is a lively, entertaining, and informative read. Mainly through personal stories, the author guides readers through the many ups and downs of both the business and academic worlds, and the challenges and opportunities they present. Anyone contemplating a significant career switch should read this book first and learn from what Skripak experienced.

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

The reviewers: **Mike & Kelsey Monahan** reside in Salem; **Tom Field** is a creative director and publishes FRONT; **Jacqueline Wheeler** is a vlog/macro-influencer reviewer from Roanoke; **Gene Marrano** is editor of FRONT; **Jennifer Poff Cooper** is a senior correspondent with FRONT.



Big plans for old Valleydale site in Salem >

The **City of Salem** has announced a major economic development project with **Valleydale Catalyst, LLC** and its principals **Ed Walker** and **Joe Thompson**. The proposed \$50 million venture at the former Valleydale Meat Packing and Processing plant will eventually bring more than 300 upscale apartment units (Valleydale Lofts) and a variety of resort style amenities to the property. "We've worked through dozens of possibilities over the past five years, originally hoping to use state and federal historic tax credits," says Walker. "Some were commercial and industrial prospects, but modern manufacturers and processors have very different needs and requirements these days. I knew it would be my most challenging project to date."

The original 23,000 square foot facility was built in 1936 and in 1948 two additions were added to the structure taking its footprint to more than 120,000 square feet. It employed thousands of workers for decades until Valleydale closed the plant in 2006. Walker and Thompson plan to build between 300 and 330 units spread out in three buildings with amenities that will include a pool and terrace area, club rooms, a gym, dog run, car and pet washing areas, large greenspaces, garage, covered and surface parking, extensive landscaping, and many other features.



Ridge View Bank breaks ground again >

Ridge View Bank has broken ground for its second full-service SMART Center office in Hardy. The 3,900 square-foot Ridge View Bank office will be located in front of Westlake Towne Center and is expected to open in 2023. The SMART Center concept is focused on customer interaction and advanced technology and is one of several Ridge View Bank has planned for the immediate future. The Ridge View branch in Salem is already under construction and they have announced plans to build its headquarters on Franklin Road in Roanoke.

"We are excited to expand into the Smith Mountain Lake and Franklin County community," said **Carrie McConnell**, President of Ridge View Bank. "Our experienced group will continue to provide an array of financial solutions with the added benefit of customer-centered technology that our SMART Center offers. This location will also house commercial banking and private client solutions teams."



Gene Marrano

RCP's first major meetup >

It's called the **Roanoke Collaboration Project**, a few years in the making. Described as a group of local civic minded volunteers who believe that civil dialogue collaboration across diverse stakeholders is key. **Jay Foster** with **Flexmetrics** was one of the speakers (along with former **Roanoke City Manager Chris Morrill**) at the first major get together for the RCP last month. Invited guests broke into small discussion groups to form answers to questions posed to them. Foster, who is on the RCP steering committee, says the idea is to overcome differences and tackle issues in the region via civil discourse: "get them out of their silos, listen to other people come up with innovative, collaborative solutions to complicated problems." (See a related Guest Commentary column on page 38.)

The Power of Donations

"Instead of having a minimum wage job where I couldn't afford to support my kids, Goodwill was able to get me the job I needed."

Elizabeth K.



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Virginia Western



Virginia Western

VWCC will partner with EnVision Center >

Virginia Western Community College will offer career advising, financial aid assistance and job training starting this fall at the newly renovated **Roanoke EnVision Center**. The College joins other community resource providers moving into the Roanoke EnVision Center, which is operated by the Roanoke Redevelopment & Housing Authority (RRHA) with support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Roanoke EnVision Center has a new standalone location at 2607 Salem Turnpike N.W., across from the RRHA's office and adjacent to Landsdowne Park, the city of Roanoke's largest public housing development. The building is the former location of the Melrose Branch Library; the city sold the property to RRHA after the library branch was relocated to a nearby space in 2019.

"There are a lot of underserved areas in our region and the northwest section is one of them," said College President **Dr. Robert H. Sandel**. "A lot of those folks need us, but they don't take advantage of what we have. Virginia Western and Colonial Avenue is a good distance away from them. So, we're trying to go to [northwest]. We recognize that accessibility can make all the difference in a student pursuing an education."

Munters move is complete >

The **Botetourt Center at Greenfield** formally welcomed another major manufacturer to its business park recently with a ribbon cutting for **Munters**, a worldwide company that produces air treatment and cooling systems. Munters relocated this facility from Buena Vista into a new 365,000 square foot building. **Amy White** with the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors was one of the speakers: "over the past few decades we have had quite a bit of business development. We've really expanded our industry. We are expanding ... our footprint in such a beautiful way, to protect the environment and to protect the lifestyle that is so valuable and meaningful to Botetourt County."



White is also the dean of "STEM" at Virginia Western Community College and made a public offer to Munters officials on hand - some came from the home office in Sweden for the Daleville plant opening (**Klas Forrstrom** the Munters CEO included) - to supply any employee training needed. More than 160 jobs are expected to result. The new Daleville facility will focus on cooling systems used in data centers that support digital platforms.





Courtesy photo

Milestone for Volvo Trucks North America >

Volvo Trucks North America hosted Penske Truck Leasing executives at the Volvo Trucks Customer Center in Dublin recently to commemorate the delivery of the 25,000th truck in a partnership that has spanned two decades. On hand were board members of the Volvo Group Board of Directors, including President and Chief Executive Officer **Martin Lundstedt**, and the President of Volvo Trucks North America, **Peter Voorhoeve**. Accepting delivery of the trucks were Penske executives **Art Valley**, President of Penske Truck Leasing and **Paul Rosa**, Senior Vice President of Procurement and Fleet Planning at Penske.

"We are extremely proud of the relationship that we have with Penske," said Voorhoeve. "Over the past two decades, we've been able to deliver 25,000 trucks to them for their operations here in North America." Truck No. 25,000 is a VNL300, featuring the D13TC engine which was delivered on September 29. (L-R: Peter Voorhoeve, president, Volvo Trucks North America; Paul Rosa, senior vice president of procurement and fleet planning, Penske Truck Leasing; Art Valley, president, Penske Truck Leasing; Martin Lundstedt, president and chief executive officer, Volvo Group; and Carl-Henric Svanberg, chairman of the board.)



Courtesy of Citizens

Citizens meeting chock full >

The annual meeting of **Citizens Telephone Cooperative** was held in Floyd on Oct. 15, accompanied by a lot of announcements. The business is introducing a new TV platform and SFN TV Now. The ACAM Fiber-to-Home project reported only 27% of its construction remains, which means Floyd County will be 100% covered in 2023. CEO and General Manager **Greg Sapp** announced his retirement and that the company "will be in good hands" with the new GM, **Donna Hylton Smith**. Who said she is "excited to continue to serve the community where I was raised and now have my own family."



Submitted

New dermatology business >

RidgeView Dermatology, a medical practice owned and operated by Forefront Dermatology, has opened its newest Virginia clinic in Bedford on American Way. The practice offers both routine and complex care relating to medical, surgical, and cosmetic dermatology for pediatric and adult patients. The office is led by nurse practitioner **Kate Craighead**, and overseen by board-certified dermatologists, **Jason D. Givan** and **Samantha E. Hill**. Said Dr. Givan, who is also a Fellowship-Trained Mohs Surgeon. "As a native of the Roanoke Valley, Kate is well aware of the challenges people here face in being able to receive timely access to dermatology care." Bedford is the 5th location for a RidgeView Dermatology practice and the 17th location for Forefront Dermatology in Virginia.



Submitted

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Buzz at West End >

October 19 was an evening of two celebrations at Roanoke’s Grandin Theatre. First was the release and screening of the **Buzz** television series episode on the West End Center for Youth—a nonprofit community school built from a revitalized neighborhood project. **Karen Pillis**, the one-year new director described how West End “supports the whole child” while one lady said her grandson loved the place so much, “I used to have to bring him here on Saturday, to prove the gates were locked [because it wasn’t open over the weekend].”

But the evening also marked the 25th episode from Buzz. Creator of Buzz4Good, LLC **Michael Hemphill**, who launched the business in 2020, cited so many collaborators of the project, including sponsors (such as **Louise Lester Foundation** and **Freedom First Credit Union** with this production), the **AAF Roanoke** ad club (and it’s longstanding “Createathon” model in public service), director of photography and editing **Dan Mirolli** and associate/daughter **Madeline**, and the **5 Points Creative** ad agency that produced marketing collateral for many of the nonprofits featured in the series (including West End).

Concurrently with the two celebrations, the screening hit at the same time **The Grandin Theatre** celebrates its 30th anniversary.

Above: West End’s Karen Pillis, Michael Hemphill of Buzz, 5 Points Creative’s Bruce Bryan at the “Silver Episode” (photo submitted); other clips from Tom Field.



James Carroll Photography



Special stars shining >

"Night Under the Stars with Chris"—a fundraising gala for **Chris's Coffee & Custard** in Roanoke, was held Sept. 24 at Hidden Valley Country Club. The shop (an increasing popular attraction) includes a mission to create gainful and meaningful employment for individuals with special needs. The majority of employees are young adults with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities; and the business is designed to enhance their lives while promoting independence. It's named after **Chris Woodrum**, who has Down Syndrome; the shop was built from an idea his mother (**Beth**) had to create opportunities for her son and others in the community.

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

WELLNESS FRONT



McCarley

A chemistry professor from Louisiana State University will join Virginia Tech as executive director of its Fralin Life Sciences Institute. **Robin L. McCarley** will start December 1. McCarley is currently a Professor of Chemistry at LSU. At the Fralin institute, he will oversee investments, including recruitment and startup support for new institute-affiliated faculty members, retention and recognition of established faculty, investments in research centers, seed funds for new research, equipment purchases, core services, undergraduate and graduate student

recruitment and support and outreach support.

FINANCIAL FRONT



Preston

Beacon Wealth Consultants, a wealth management company in Roanoke, announces that **Jake Preston**, CFP® has accepted the role of Director of Advisory Services. Preston interned with Beacon Wealth for two years while studying financial planning at Liberty University. He officially joined the company as a financial planner in May 2020 and quickly rose to Lead Financial Planner. As Director of Advisory Services, Preston is responsible for overseeing all aspects of financial planning for the company.



Morris

Farm Credit of the Virginias (FCV), a lending cooperative that serves Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland, announced **Logan Morris** joined the association full-time as a Lending & Credit Trainee at the Bedford branch. Morris was raised in Cumberland, VA, where his family managed a small beef cattle operation. Morris attended Virginia Tech and graduated with an associate's degree from the Agricultural Technology Program. Following graduation, he returned to Virginia Tech to complete his bachelor's degree in Agribusiness, which led him to his career at Farm Credit. While in school, Morris worked for Virginia Tech Crop Production.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Odham

Grayson Odham has been promoted to Digital Marketing Analyst by 5Points Creative in Roanoke. Odham's new responsibilities will focus on creating and maintaining programmatic digital marketing for the agency's clients. Programmatic advertising is an automated process, using sophisticated ecosystem algorithms, for purchasing and selling online video and display advertisements – a platform that gives advertisers the ability to place these advertisements across multiple channels with little human interaction.



- Relationship Banking
- Business Lending
- Merchant Services
- Treasury Management

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Deacon

The Advancement Foundation based in Vinton has appointed **Kathy Deacon** as Vice President of Business and Resource Development for the organization. Most recently, Deacon served as Executive Director for Uptown Partnership, a Main Street affiliate, in Martinsville. Before that, she served as Executive Director for Staunton Creative Community Fund (now Shenandoah Community Capital Fund). The VP of Business and Resource Development will promote access to business commercialization services available through TAFs most recent launch of Vir-

ginia Innovation Collective in Buena Vista, a 40,000 square foot industrial building reimagined for business acceleration that offers value-added product development, increased access to affordable manufacturing space, and commercialization services.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

Eric Holbrook has been named associate director of marketing and communications for the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI). Holbrook comes with an extensive background



Holbrook

in media, marketing, and creative services. Holbrook now leads marketing and communications for VTTI, one of Virginia Tech's seven research institutes. Coming from Boise, Idaho, Holbrook brings 18 years of television experience in creative services including most recently as director of creative services for Idaho News 6, an ABC affiliate. In addition to

television, he carries multiple years of marketing experience and leadership.



Weaver

Julie Weaver has been appointed as division director of human resources for the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design. Weaver joins the college with more than 20 years of human resources (HR) experience. Most recently, she served

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.



Bank of Botetourt



as HR manager since October 2019 for Virginia Tech's Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer enterprise.



Osborne

Beth Osborne has been named assistant dean for administration for the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. Osborne served as interim assistant dean for administration upon the retirement of Kay Hunnings and previously served as director of administration and finance for the college. Since 2011, Osborne has directed the finance and administration functions

of the college, including the Business Service Center, which supports the college's 12 centralized departments and centers and seven decentralized academic departments. Her experience includes managing administrative operations, budget and financial planning, human resources management, contract review, and scholarships.



Gutter

Mike Gutter has been named the director of Virginia Cooperative Extension and an associate dean of the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Gutter, currently a professor,

specialist, and associate dean of Extension at the University of Florida, began his new role on November 1. At the University of Florida, he focused on addressing economic disparities and creating interventions for those facing challenging economic situations.

SPORTS FRONT

The Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs announced Monday that **Joshua Pentico** has been named as the team's equipment manager ahead of the 2022-2023 season. Pentico is in his first season with the Rail Yard Dawgs, and fourth season in the hockey industry. A native of Des Moines, Iowa, Pentico spent two seasons as the assistant equipment

manager for the Iowa Wild of the AHL before becoming the head equipment manager for the Lone Star Brahmas of the NAHL last season.



Roberts

The Roanoke Rail Yard Dawgs have named **Ian Roberts** as the team's assistant coach ahead of the 2022-2023 season. Roberts is in his second season with the Rail Yard Dawgs, and his first as assistant coach. During the 2021-22 season, he worked as the team's goaltending coach. The Michigan native grew up playing travel hockey in the Detroit area until moving on to



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play collegiately at the University of Michigan-Flint (ACHA) where he earned his Bachelor of Business Administration. In addition to his playing days, Roberts has spent over a decade coaching goaltenders at all levels, ranging from youth to professional, and has been involved in the local hockey community since relocating to Roanoke in 2020.

NON-PROFIT FRONT

HopeTree Family Services has appointed **Lisa Lambrecht** as Chief Financial



Lambrecht

Officer. She will oversee HopeTree's statewide financial operations, business office, and information technology. Lambrecht brings a wealth of knowledge in finance and accounting to the team, including 20 years of senior leadership experience leading projects for different types of corporate clients of varying sizes during

her tenure. Said Jon Morris, President and CEO of HopeTree: "her skills, education and experience are impeccable. But her leadership and commitment to our core values truly makes her perfect for HopeTree."

MUNICIPAL FRONT

Roanoke County has appointed **Megan Baker** as Director of Economic Development. Baker comes to Roanoke County from Peachtree City, Georgia where she served as President of the



Baker

Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA). Baker follows Jill Loope, who announced her retirement in July; Loope moves on to become the interim Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Tourism until her retirement next summer.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

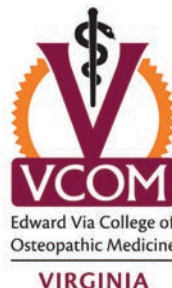
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Poff Cooper

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

Neal Cummings

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

Michelle Darby

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

Dan Dowdy

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

Tom Field

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

Christopher Finley

is the Director of Marketing and Public Relations for LewisGale Regional Health System. He leads the marketing and communications functions for 44 HCA Virginia Health System-owned patient care facilities, including four hospitals, two freestanding ERs, two regional cancer centers, and affiliations with both employed and independent physicians. Since 2004, he has also served as an adjunct professor for the School of Communication at Radford University where he earned his master's in corporate communications. [christopher.finley@hcahealthcare.com]

Micah Fraim

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

Kevin Holt

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

Mike Leigh

is president of OpX Solutions, LLC, a performance improvement company that helps organizations pursue operational excellence. A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutionsLLC.com]

Gene Marrano

is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy.

He also now hosts and co-produces "Business Matters" on Blue Ridge PBS. [gmarrano@cox.net]

Holly Marrow

is a freelance journalist, RN, and 1997 Graduate of the Radford University School of Nursing. She lives in Christiansburg. Website: hemrnwrites.wixsite.com/hem-communications. [hem.m.writes@gmail.com]

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]

Michael Shelton

is a Registered Financial Consultant, tax specialist, and owner of 360 Wealth Consultants. His firm specializes in providing retirement planning and wealth preservation strategies

for business owners and astute individuals. What really has the locals excited, though, is his groundbreaking, proprietary software, designed to streamline accounting and wealth planning for business owners of medical practices, real estate properties, and construction industry businesses. [Michael@360WealthConsulting.com]

Alicia Smith

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

Sandy Smith

is a management consultant and executive coach who had conducted seminars for Carilion Clinic and presented the first keynote address at the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [sandysmithuniv@gmail.com]

Nicholas Vaassen

is a graphic designer with 20 years experience, specializing in publications. His design projects include FRONT, lifestyle, real estate, municipal, classified sales and cultural organization magazines in Roanoke and southwestern Virginia markets. [nvaassen@berryfield.com]

Michael Waldvogel

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

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Friedlander appointed

Michael Friedlander, Virginia Tech's vice president for health sciences and technology and executive director of the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, has been appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin to serve on the commonwealth's Rare Disease Council. The General Assembly formed the Council in March 2021 to better understand the scope of rare diseases in the commonwealth and their impact on Virginians. Its experts report back to the governor and legislators. The council was created to identify challenges including delays in obtaining a diagnosis or the receipt of a misdiagnosis, shortages of medical specialists who can provide treatment, and lack of access to therapies and medication used to treat rare diseases.

Franklin County gets props for its bookkeeping prowess

Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to Franklin County for its annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. The report has been judged to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its

financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting.

Connecting newer residents to City services

The City of Roanoke already has a "leadership college" program designed to further connect engaged residents to local government services – perhaps applying for a business license. Now "My City Academy" will run on four consecutive Saturdays through late November, for 7 hours each session, geared towards recent immigrants and refugees. Katie Hedrick is the city's Community Inclusion Coordinator: "we have handpicked city departments that we feel are most relevant to this population. A lot of times they are acting as leaders, but they're lacking that training on setting healthy boundaries or equipping other people. They can start learning how to do it on their own." Local non-profits like Blue Ridge Literacy and Commonwealth Catholic Charities, and Roanoke City Schools are also involved with My City Academy, where Hedrick says they expect to find some leadership already among the immigrant and refugee "students." The goal is for participants to be able to interact more effectively with city departments

on behalf of others; perhaps ready to serve on a board or commission as well.

RoCo new business

North American Specialty Laminations will invest \$2 million to establish a mid-Atlantic operation in southwest Roanoke County. The company's new 57,000 square foot production facility - in an existing structure - will be located on Benois Road just off Starkey Road, behind the Steel Services building. Jill Loope, the (now former) Director of Economic Development for Roanoke County, says they helped NASL identify their new home and also leveraged state funding to be used for workforce training. The project is expected to create 44 new jobs. "We're very excited to have another manufacturer here in the community. Small to medium size manufacturers are the backbone of our economy. We're grateful to continue adding to that base."

Blue Cow expands again

A Roanoke-based ice cream company that recently opened its fourth Virginia location is now preparing to open up number five. Blue Cow Ice Cream got its start five years ago near the Walnut Avenue bridge in Roanoke, offering what it calls "artisan" ice creams. Since then, they have opened locations in Virginia Beach, Fredericksburg,

and last month, in Richmond. Owner Jason Kiser says it won't be long before they cut the ribbon on another: "construction is already underway in West Short Pump. It's a really great location." That could be by Thanksgiving. The ice cream for all the locations is produced in Roanoke - Kiser says 1800 gallons in a single week.

Acquisition complete with ribbon cutting

Local senior living and healthcare specialists Friendship have recently acquired a new campus: Friendship Salem Terrace. A ribbon cutting was held late last month. After more than a decade managing the facility under the name Salem Terrace at Harrogate, the organization now owns the property. Joe Hoff, President and CEO of Friendship says the newly acquired facility will offer more services to a wider swath of the population: "we've managed Salem Terrace with the Waldron family for about ten years now, it just worked for us to be able to move into the Salem area to provide services to more residents." Hoff says they plan to update the facility in the near future to enhance the experiences for memory care residents.

New overlay could spur development

The redesign of Exit 150 on Interstate 81 in Botetourt County several

years ago also led to optimism that it would lead to more development in the area. Now county officials have taken further steps towards making that happen. The Botetourt County Board of Supervisors have approved the Gateway Crossing Zoning overlay. Nicole Pendleton is the Director of Community development in Botetourt County: "it provides additional opportunities for by right uses that we have identified through community input and other means that would be a good fit. You have to have a balance of workforce housing, of jobs and a balance of retail. All of those things

connect to each other." Pendleton says the new zoning district - there were some residents who objected to it - updates the old "suburban-based" development standards. Repurposing existing properties - as well as spurring new construction, even lodging, walking trails and entertainment options are all goals of the new gateway Crossing Overlay District in Botetourt County.

419 plan cited

Another honor for Roanoke County, this time from the International Economic

Have an announcement about your business?

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A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Development Council - a Silver Award for the "Reimagine 419" plan that is transforming Tanglewood Mall and the area around it. Jill Loope is the (now former) Director of Economic Development for Roanoke County: "we've received about 6 awards over the past two years from multiple organizations, both

state and national, that have said the work that we're doing both in the 419 Corridor as well as the Town of Vinton with our redevelopment projects [exhibits] excellence in community and economic development." Roanoke County says the Reimagine 419 plan has led to 15 new business



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announcements since last year, representing 700-plus jobs created and more than \$70 million in capital investment.

Waste not ...

Botetourt County leaders say Metalsa is now the second company in the Roanoke Valley to have a “Zero Waste” pledge. That means all the extra scrap metal and trash is recycled into something else, or its converted into energy. The company has completed 95% of its zero-waste goal, but the goal is to reach 100% by the end of 2030. Metalsa has partnered with GFL Environmental and Wisdom Environmental, Covanta Environmental Solutions, and Environmental Options to reduce the waste going to landfill from its automotive component manufacturing facility (specializing in chassis and body structure components for light and commercial vehicle sectors.) “We worked hard to become a company with better environmental impact and are more ready to generate value and prosperity for our employees, communities, and society,” says Jorge Garza, Metalsa CEO.

Second Amtrak train a winner

State passenger rail officials say the second daily Amtrak round-trip train to Roanoke is proving to be an early and big success—with expectations that the numbers will keep

growing. The August numbers for the service between Roanoke and Washington D.C. are up almost 44 percent from the same month in pre-pandemic 2019, and the additional train that began operating in July is credited as a main reason.

Karina Romero is a spokesperson for the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority: “we were wondering if the passengers would just move to the new trains or if it would attract new [riders]. We’ve actually attracted new passengers.” The percentage increase over the last three years tops any other state-supported Amtrak service to Richmond, Newport News or Norfolk. Romero says it is especially notable given the long absence of passenger rail service here until it returned five years ago. The second train arrives in Roanoke in the early afternoon and heads back to Washington several hours later.

Coalition works to improve food distribution

A Fall Harvest Festival held in Southeast Roanoke City last month that was focused on being healthy was organized by a new organization called the Roanoke Foodshed Network. Rachel Burks is with Carilion Clinic: “a really exciting new group of organizations that’s working together to improve our regional food system, from supporting farmers and distribution of local

regional food, making sure that everyone has access to healthy foods.” Foodshed members include Carilion Clinic and the Local Environmental Agriculture Project - LEAP - which operates several local farmer’s markets.

Big contract for goggles

Roanoke based, Elbit Systems of America (formerly ITT Night Vision and Harris), has been awarded a US Army production order worth about 107 million dollars for Enhanced Night Vision Goggle - Binocular systems, spare parts, logistics support, and test equipment. According to company officials, the systems provide soldiers enhanced situational awareness in the dark, but also when there’s fog, dust, or smoke on the battlefield. Systems included in this order will be made in Roanoke, with a plan to deliver on the contract all of 2023 and continue into 2024.

Mountain Lake Lodge additions

The award-winning Mountain Lake Lodge – located in a 2,600-acre nature preserve and bird sanctuary in the Blue Ridge Mountains – has debuted several new additions including Kellerman’s Gift Shop, the nation’s first brick and mortar store for official Dirty Dancing® merchandise, and Salt Pond Living, featuring the designs and crafts of local and regional artisans. Now there is

the Salt Pond Pub, a unique open air, walk-up pub and a gathering place for hikers, mountain bikers and locals. Mountain Lake Lodge is where the iconic Dirty Dancing (known as “Kellerman’s Mountain House” in the movie) was filmed 35 years ago.

Brownfield bucks for Bedford

Approximately \$847,000 in Site Remediation Grants from the Virginia Brownfields Restoration and Economic Redevelopment Assistance Fund (VBAF) will be awarded to four localities, which include the Town of Bedford, Patrick County, the Town of Saltville, and Smyth County. The VBAF provides either grants or loans to local governments to restore and redevelop brownfield sites and address environmental problems or obstacles to their reuse in an effort to effectively attract new economic development prospects. Bedford will receive \$316,374 of that total to redevelop the former Winoa USA steel abrasives plant.

Pinnacle reaches new heights locally

Pinnacle Financial Partners grew local deposits to \$973.0 million in western Virginia, as of June 30, 2022, up from \$803.9 million one year prior for a growth rate of 21.03 percent. According to data from the FDIC, the firm saw significant growth in each of the two MSAs that make up

the market: Roanoke, \$950.3 million in deposits. \$158.7 million increase, 20.05 percent growth rate. No. 3 bank by deposits. Lynchburg, \$22.7 million in deposits, \$10.3 million increase, 83.56 percent growth rate, No. 15 bank by deposits "Pinnacle is a perfect match for the Roanoke Valley and Lynchburg because we offer a level of service you normally see at small town community banks yet have the resources to meet almost any need," said David Allen, Pinnacle's regional chairman in western Virginia.

Big boost for local scouts

Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline

Council (GSVSC) has announced a \$800,000 donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, part of an \$84.5 million donation awarded to Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and 29 local councils selected by Scott. Locally, this gift will provide opportunities to reach more girls through high impact programs and to invest in local volunteers and staff through greater training opportunities.

This gift to Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline will provide leadership opportunities for girls through the advancement of the organization's mission. It includes an expanded focus on career readiness and mental wellness. Part

of this work is expanding girls' access to STEM exploration, building upon areas of interest such as hands-on coding, aeronautics, and sustainability.

Tourism dollars bounce back in the Commonwealth

Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has announced that travelers to Virginia spent \$69 million a day in 2021, up from \$48 million in 2020. Virginia's tourism revenues also reached \$25.2 billion in 2021, marking an 87% recovery to pre-pandemic spending in 2019. This spending supported 185,000 jobs, \$7.1 billion in salaries and wages, and \$1.8 billion in state

and local taxes. 80 of Virginia's 133 localities fully recovered to 2019 levels of spending and many grew even further. Specifically, Coastal Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, and the Blue Ridge Highlands regions contributed most significantly to the overall recovery in the Commonwealth. "Tourism has seen an incredible comeback thanks to the hardworking leaders in the travel and tourism industry across Virginia," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation.

*Compiled by
Gene Marrano*

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“With the stroke of a pen, someone provided more resources that would never have happened. — Page 36

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ENTRÉ

Health Care Throughout the Commonwealth

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Rural healthcare and how it differs from their city cousins.

“There were logical connections,” said Beth O’Connor, M. Ed., of her roles as Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA) and board member of the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority (VHWDA). Those connections: O’Connor grew up in a rural community and received her master’s degree in health education.

The VRHA is a nonprofit organization working for the 2.5 million people who call rural Virginia their home. Its mission is to improve the health of rural Virginians through education, advocacy, and fostering cooperative partnerships. The organization serves “rural areas from the Eastern Shore to Lee County,” said O’Connor.

In the 17 years O’Connor has been Executive Director, the organization has changed dramatically in its capacity. Once, O’Connor was just half-time; now, there are eight full-time staff.



Beth O'Connor

There are more expansive programs as well. Substance abuse disorders have disproportionately hit rural areas, so some VRHA current projects work on prevention, recovery, and treatment. Problems include the well-documented opioid crisis, as well as an increase in use of stimulants – a resurgence in methamphetamine means programs like peer recovery and harm reduction are being implemented. A next step, O’Connor said, is addressing stable housing needs for those in long-term recovery.

Aware that support and resources for LGBTQIA+ persons are harder to access in rural communities, VRHA launched the Pride of Rural Virginia initiative last year. The program seeks to improve health care equity for LGBTQIA+ persons by bringing together local health care providers to discuss the needs of this community. The grant-funded initiative addresses LGBTQIA+ health and healthcare priorities in rural areas across Virginia. Community chats have been happening across the commonwealth (vrha.org/pride).

Such federal grants for specific programs are one source of funding for the VRHA. Others include the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (part of the Department of Health and Human Services), the National Rural Healthcare Association, membership dues, and fees from conferences and events.

The VRHA also works “hand in hand,” said O’Connor, with the Virginia State Office of Rural Health (VA-SORH), which was established in 1991 to create, fund and support quality and sustainable rural healthcare infrastructure.

At the end of former Gov. Ralph Northam’s term, he appointed O’Connor to the

VHWA, which works to develop a pipeline of workforce development, beginning in elementary school and going through graduate school. The authority runs Area Health Education Centers that focus on needs in those particular communities. Programs include providing summer enrichment programs, setting up job shadowing or mentoring, and pointing students toward scholarships in the health care field. Future goals are to continue to grow the health care workforce, especially identifying funding for continuing to expand the health care career pipeline.


Also on O'Connor's plate is serving as President of the National Rural Healthcare Association (NRHA). Through this position she has seen the same basic problems, such as lack of providers, food insecurity, and lack of broadband, in rural areas nationally. Still, differences are apparent regionally. In southwest Virginia, the Appalachian Mountains can, in some seasons, be a barrier to residents accessing health care; in places like Wyoming and Montana, that barrier is often the distance between major cities with health care facilities. "There are the same problems, they just play out differently," said O'Connor.

Why do rural areas have health care problems? According to O'Connor, rural areas have "things that decrease opportunities to live healthy lives." This includes basic infrastructure. For example, most rural areas have no sidewalks to encourage safe walking or running, and there are fewer exercise facilities. On the health care side, there are fewer services available, and it is particularly difficult to find specialists. Jobs may be harder to come by and may pay less than in more urban areas. Food insecurity is another issue; healthy food is harder to find in rural areas.

"Less expensive food is often unhealthy but easier to find in rural communities," said O'Connor, mentioning convenience stores with shelf-stable food as being frequently more accessible than grocery stores with fresh produce.

Attracting a health care workforce to rural parts of the state is a challenge. O'Connor said it is difficult to lure providers to rural communities because the lower salaries do not allow them to pay down their medical school debt quickly. There is an additional complication if the provider has a career professional partner who also demands a high-paying job. There is also the issue of health care providers from other areas "not understanding the benefits and culture of a rural community," said O'Connor.

To counteract these challenges, there are incentives from the National Health Service Corps, which helps with loan repayment for working in underserved areas. The VA-SORH also provides some financial motivation. "There are options out there," said O'Connor, adding that the VRHA tries to make sure students and medical schools are aware of these enticements.

The VRHA hopes to grow in the future, to get more involved in the workforce pipeline, to grow the Pride of Rural Virginia program (pending funding), and to promote diversity and inclusion to "make sure rural communities are supported on every level," said O'Connor. 

Beth O'Connor encourages those wishing to learn more about rural health care to check out the VRHA's podcast, Rural Health Voice, accessible at vrha.org or wherever you download podcasts.



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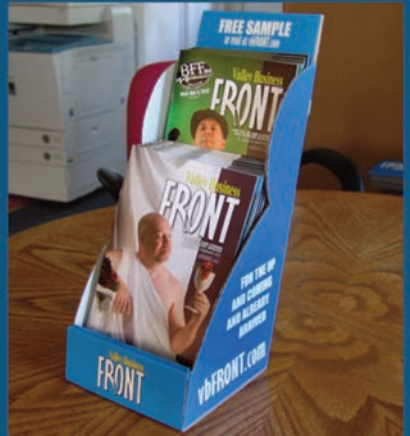
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