

# Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 168  
SEPTEMBER 2022

WRVB Merger  
Bundy Group M&As  
M&A Considerations  
VWCC Program  
Acquisitions  
Salem Civic Center

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WOODS ROGERS VANDEVENTER BLACK

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

101 Main Street, Roanoke, Virginia

August 23, 2022

## TENDER OF SHARES FOR ACQUISITION AGREEMENT

This Tender of Shares for Acquisition Agreement (the "Agreement") is effective (DATE).

**BETWEEN:** **EASTERN RAILROAD** (the "Company"), a company organized and existing under the laws of the (STATE/PROVINCE), with its head office located at:  
101 Main Street, Roanoke, Virginia

**WESTERN FEE** (the "Shareholder"), an individual with his main address located at:  
123 Main Avenue, Sacramento, California

The undersigned, being the registered holder of (NUMBER) shares in the capital stock of the Company (the "Shares") (COMMON STOCK) representing the (PERCENTAGE) of the total number of shares of the Company, do hereby tender to the Company for the acquisition of the Shares as of the date hereof, in consideration for the sum of \$ (AMOUNT) (the "Purchase Price") to the undersigned for the (PERCENTAGE) of the Shares as of the date hereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned has hereunto caused it to be executed in (CITY) (STATE), U.S.A. on the date indicated above.

SHAREHOLDER

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mergers & Acquisitions*

Daniel Summerlin  
Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black

**CHERYL BENNETT**  
SHIRLEY'S BED & BREAKFAST



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# WELCOME TO THE FRONT

The merger of two legacy law firms that span the width of most of the Commonwealth and inside the world of mergers & acquisitions make for interesting stories this month, as summer gives way to fall and the economy tries to break the bonds of high gas prices, historic inflation rates and supply chain issues that continue to bedevil some industries. See the pictorial look back at FloydFest 2022 in the FRONT'n About Spotlight, as that music and outdoor happening gets ready to move down the mountain to the heart of Floyd County.

Also, the history of the Salem Civic Center, which continues to draw crowds for a variety of events is on center stage. Check out the thought-provoking review for Building a Second Brain, and the Game Changer event detailed in Erin Burcham's Innovation column. Plenty of variety and food for thought in the September issue. Happy Reading.



**Tom Field**  
Publisher



**Gene Marrano**  
Editor

“ ”

Reset your standard for your new expectations.

— Page 18



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# "This is huge what we did."

By Gene Marrano



“My name is synonymous  
with storm water. — Page 30



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# SEPTEMBER



Erin Burcham



Bonnie Chavez



Mike Leigh



Gene Marrano



Nicholas Vaassen

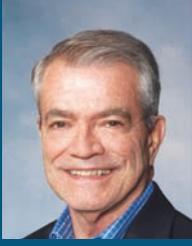
## Advisory Board

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

# 2022 CONTRIBUTORS



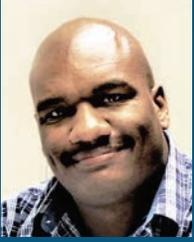
**Jennifer Poff Cooper**



**Dan Dowdy**



**Tom Field**



**Shawn Nowlin**



**Michael Shelton**



**Dan Smith**

“When buying a business, usually employees are at the top of the asset list.”

— Page 15



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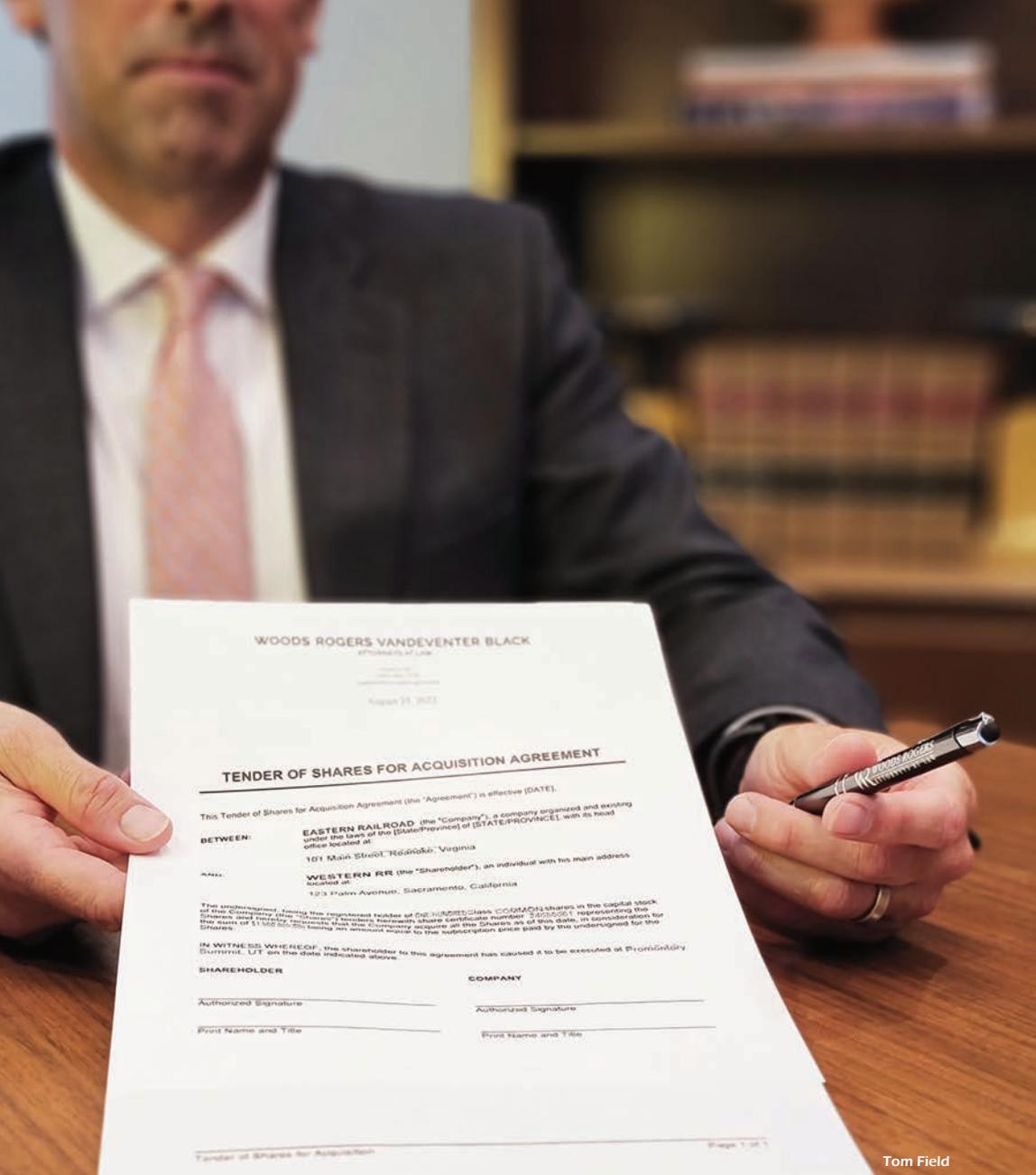


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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 52.

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Tom Field

# "This is huge what we did."

Two Virginia law firms are now one after a merger

By Gene Marrano

Two venerable names in Virginia law practice headquartered hundreds of miles apart and launched well over a hundred years ago are now one entity based in Roanoke.

Woods Rogers was established in Roanoke in 1893. Vandeventer Black is even older, first hanging out its shingle in Norfolk a decade earlier. Now, as the result of a merger announced publicly in April, Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black (WRVB for the sake of brevity) has offices in five “key markets” across the Commonwealth as it stated in making that merger public, creating—says two top officers in an interview—the type of law firm that can attract new talent, a place where attorneys will want to land and perhaps call home for their entire career. “The new Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black will become one of Virginia’s largest law firms with more than 130 attorneys and a total workforce of more than 250 people,” noted that April 2022 announcement. The merger was official as of July 1.

In a way there has already been some linkage between the two formerly separate firms; Woods Rogers Board of Directors Chair Victor Cardwell (profiled in an earlier Valley Business FRONT article) is currently president of the Virginia Bar Association, taking the handoff from Richard Ottinger for Vandeventer Black, the VBA president before him. (The football analogy is appropriate; Caldwell played in college.)

Dan Summerlin is now President of WRVB, based in Roanoke. “It’s unique [especially] for Virginia. I think both [firms] saw a changing legal environment; and both were independently thinking about what are some ways we need to change with the environment. Then [we] started talking to each other back in 2020, just before the pandemic hit. We instantly saw that we shared some common goals and culture.” Ironically, says Summerlin, while the pandemic at first slowed down any momentum for the merger – it also made the key players realize that communicating virtually made the idea of a combined firm with offices spread across the state 4-5 hours apart something that was manageable.

Deborah (Debbie) Casey is now Vice Chair of the new Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black; she is based at the Vandeventer Black (now WRVB) offices in Norfolk. “This is huge what we did,” says Casey, who had been with Vandeventer Black for 35 years—a firm that had existed for another 100 years before she arrived, to put it in perspective. A merger of this type between two such established firms “really is not that common.” Casey says Vandeventer Black valued that autonomy to practice. “We knew we had a lot of strength.” But the legal market is changing, with “a lot of new practice areas. The law is changing and emerging.” Having that larger footprint as WRVB will help cover some of those new bases, “by providing new bench depth and strength in specialty areas.” What might have been a particular strength for Woods Rogers—or for Vandeventer Black—can now be shared with the merger.

Summerlin says the move provides WRVB a “unique platform ... that would make us stand out.” They started the process slowly as a trial balloon of sorts, making sure there was a “comfort level,” at the leadership level, then amongst the

We instantly saw that we shared some common goals and culture.

— Dan Summerlin

We knew we had a lot of strengths... providing new bench depth in specialty areas.

— Debbie Casey



Tom Field

Dan Summerlin

“  
”  
Even before  
the merger...  
attorneys on  
both sides  
were working  
together.

two firm's partners. So, both entities took their time getting to know each other, a courtship perhaps, feeling out how such a move might work. What they found out, said Summerlin, was that "the way we operated our firms was very similar," knowing almost right away that it seemed like a good match. Ultimately there were a few who needed reassurance; but the overall reaction at Woods Rogers was a positive one. Picking the best of both worlds as the two firms assimilated into one became the modus operandi and the "guiding principle." Both firms also realized that culturally they valued being leaders in their community and will continue to do so.

Even before the merger became complete on July 1 Casey says attorneys on both sides of the deal were working together, sharing expertise and making referrals on cases. "That's what we were hoping for. It's panning out." There aren't many regulatory hurdles to clear when law firms look to merge. Avoiding conflicts of interest among clients is the biggest concern, according to Summerlin. Early on they determined that any issues regarding subject matter or client conflicts were at a minimum.

Clients should also benefit from a deeper bench with more attorneys that practice a wider range of specialties. "A bigger, better platform with high quality service," Summerlin calls it, should attract legal talent as well. Casey says WRVB will be the type and size of firm young attorneys can build their careers around. "We've got five offices to choose from in



Submitted

Deborah Casey

different specialty areas.” That variety and flexibility should be a calling card. “We really want them to come here and stay ... [to build] a career.”

Casey also says the necessity to use virtual technology during the pandemic helped show that WRVB could operate in many circumstances on Zoom or other platforms. Vandeventer Black went virtual within a few days of the pandemic lockdown and realized it could work. VB has a maritime law background and international practice (trade, construction etc.) that was a staple before branching out.

Ironically, Woods Rogers had plenty of experience working with clients when they looked to merge or acquire another company. Dan Summerlin’s advice? “Look at the people and the culture first.” If that works well the logistical issues can be dealt with, if the players involved are on the same wavelength. “The rest of it can work itself out ... if your approach is similar.”

Coming soon, says marketing director Susan Caldwell, is a new logo for the combined firm, and a “getting to know you,” celebration as well for all of the partners and associates involved. The hardest part is over for Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black. “It fit together hand-in-glove as a way to provide top notch full service to our clients,” says Debbie Casey; “ultimately it became the right thing to do, to hopefully solidify us for another 150 years of practice.” 

““”

WRVB will be the type and size of firm young attorneys can build their careers around... five offices to choose from in different specialty areas.



# Just for Fun

## Notable M&As in US business history

### Major Deals

- AOL acquires Time Warner (2000; \$165B)
- Exxon acquires Mobil (1998; \$80B)
- AT&T acquires BellSouth (2006; \$73B)
- Pfizer and Warner-Lambert merge (2000; \$91B)
- Disney and 21st Century Fox merge (2019; \$72B)
- CVS and Aetna merge (2019; \$70B)
- Dow Chemical and DuPont merge (2015; \$130B)
- Anheuser-Busch InBev and SabMiller merge (2016; \$104B)\*
- Heinz and Kraft Foods merge (2015; \$100B)
- Viacom and CBS merge (2019; \$12B)
- Bank of America acquires Merrill Lynch (2008; \$50B)
- Proctor & Gamble acquires Gillette (2005; \$55B)
- Mars acquires Wrigley (2008; \$23B)
- Comcast acquires GE/NBC (2009; \$16B)
- Abbott Laboratories acquires St Jude Medical (2016; \$25B)
- British American Tobacco acquires RJ Reynolds (2017; \$49B)\*
- T-Mobile acquires Sprint (2018; \$26B)
- BB&T acquires SunTrust; now Truist (2019; \$28B)
- Charles Schwab acquires TD Ameritrade (2019; \$22B)
- Microsoft acquires Activision Blizzard (2022; \$69B)
- Elon Musk to acquire Twitter (2022; \$44B – PENDING)

## Historic Deals

- US Steel acquires Carnegie, Federal, and National Steel Companies (1901)
- Pacific Gas acquires multi-regional power companies (1930)
- General Electric acquires RCA (1985)
- General Motors acquires Hughes Aircraft (1985)
- Sony acquires Columbia Pictures (1989)\*
- “RBOCs” / major reorganization of the seven regional Bell Operating Companies (1980s)

## Local Deals

- Norfolk & Western Railway merges with Southern Railway (1980)
- Berkshire Hathaway acquires multiple newspapers across Virginia (2005-2010)
- Shire acquires New River Pharmaceuticals (2007)
- AECOM acquires Hayes, Seay, Mattern & Mattern (2007)
- Faiveley Transport acquires Graham-White (2012)
- Advance Auto Parts acquires General Parts (2013)
- BNC acquires Valley Bank (2014); Pinnacle acquires BNC (2017)
- GE Digital acquires Meridium (2016)
- American National Bank acquires HomeTown Bank (2019)
- Daimler Trucks acquires Torc Robotics (2019)
- First National acquires Bank of Fincastle (2021)

## Unlikely Deals (but you never know)

- Apple—Microsoft (or iAnything + Android)
- FOX—CNN
- Cox—Comcast (and Shentel’s Glo Fiber)
- Etsy—Oriental Trading
- Burger King—McDonalds
- KFC—Chick-Fil-A
- Coke—Pepsi
- Lowe’s—Home Depot  
*in our neck of the woods...*
- HCA/LewisGale—Carilion Clinic
- Berglund—Shelor—Duncan—Southern Team Auto
- Roanoke Times—Cardinal News Roanoke
- Sidewinders—The Park
- Appalachian Mountain Advocates—Mountain Valley Pipeline
- Any two or more Country Clubs (shared memberships, anyone?)
- VT—UVA (actually, they do collaborate at times)

## NOTES:

### US not the home of the biggest deal ever!

Sorry Uncle Sam; that distinction goes to Great Britain and Germany. The largest M&A ever reported is likely the UK-based Vodafone acquisition of German-based Mannesmann at \$183 Billion in 1999.

### The 1980s... and Today

The 1980s (particularly the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s) experienced exceptional growth in large cap M&A activity (fueled to a great degree by the “dot-com” explosion). Many economists and business analysts project another spike in our immediate post-COVID US economy, particularly in the media, entertainment, technology, healthcare/pharma, and real estate sectors.

### Is it M or A?

Technically, most mergers are actually acquisitions. Deals are often reported as mergers when they are in the same industry and the two companies are relatively equal in value or servicing market; but that’s not correct in a legal sense. A merger occurs when two separate entities combine to create a new or joint organization, while an acquisition is a takeover of one entity by another. The resulting name or brand (whether it stays the same, combines the two, or is entirely different or new, makes no difference).

### Check that stock symbol

Some major M&A activity happens with such frequency, it’s easy to forget who owns whom. We’ve written off AOL, for example, but that Virginia-based company’s acquisition of Time Warner was one of the biggest deals in business history. That deal is not to be confused with the later deal of AT&T’s purchase of Time Warner. The point is, even our largest corporations can be owned and controlled by pretzel-like configurations of shareholders, alliances, divisions, equity owners, enterprises, groups, and various entities. There are also domestic and international owners of what would appear to be one company.

### A billion here, a billion there

All M&A amounts above are estimated; reports vary widely on the figures. The “historic” deals are even more difficult to ascertain, given the disparities in current market dollar valuations.

*\* not US company but US operations or one entity is US*

- compiled by Tom Field



Submitted

Jim Mullens

# Exit Strategies

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

---

Retirement. Partnership breakup. Divorce. Illness. Any of these – and more – can be reasons that mergers and acquisitions (M&A) happen, said Jim Mullens, Managing Director of the Bundy Group, investment bankers who facilitate M&A.

Mergers and acquisitions grow companies. A merger is the coming together of two companies, whereas an acquisition is where a larger company swallows up a smaller one. Jim Mullens said that acquisitions most touted in the media are hostile takeovers, but he said “99% are friendly, where everybody wants to do the deal.” In fact, he has never participated in a hostile deal. Typically, he said, those are larger transactions in the billions, not millions, of dollars.

Mullens said the majority of deals are successful and get to closing, a cycle that takes typically six to 12 months from engaging the investment bank as an advisor. There is a lot of work to do to “get the house in order,” both operationally and financially, Mullens said. Success depends on many variables, such as a fair price, the transition period, and whether the seller is staying with the company moving forward.

Factors that can derail a deal include sellers changing their minds, too small of a buyer pool, the overall economic situation, and events out of everyone’s control like COVID. Sometimes the offer “doesn’t get the seller to where they want to be financially,” the owner gets sick, or the company loses a large customer during the sales cycle.

M&A have been at an “all time high the past two years,” said Mullens, “the best ever.” Buyers have been paying a premium, and opportunistic sellers have sold earlier

than planned. In today’s tight labor market, buyers retain most if not all employees. “When buying a business, usually employees are at the top of the asset list,” said Mullens.

Four specific sectors Mullens mentioned as having a lot of M&A activity are business services, health care, technology, and manufacturing. All types of business can be involved in M&A, though. “Anything that is a viable business earning cash” is game, he said.

An investment bank like the Bundy Group plays an important role in an M&A. It represents sellers when they go to market to sell the business, finds buyers, and helps walk clients through the involved and complicated process. The investment bank brings multiple buyers to the table at the same time. Once a winner is chosen, the buyer has 60-90 days for due diligence such as in-depth looking at company records, and even talking to customers and employees.

Mullens said it is important to keep the owner focused on running the business so that the company is at its best at sale time, while the investment bank takes care of details of the deal.

The Bundy Group started in Roanoke 33 years ago and has expanded to have offices in Charlotte and New York. Most investment bankers have backgrounds in finance and often have MBAs, said Mullens. Investment banks earn their money

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## A BRIEF CASE STUDY

Ten years ago, John Corliss reached out to the Bundy Group with a targeted list of acquisition wants. He was living in Indianapolis and wanted to return to the Roanoke area. Corliss kept in touch with Jim Mullens, Managing Partner, about opportunities in the specialty electric business. Between then and 2018, Corliss looked at over 100 non-disclosure agreements and had 20 conversations with companies for sale, but when Mullens brought Roanoke Sprinkler to him things clicked. Corliss had a friend in the sprinkler business in Indianapolis, so he was familiar with it, and Mullens specialized in the fire protection industry.



John Corliss

“Jim represented the business 100% accurately,” said Corliss. Corliss closed the deal to purchase Roanoke Sprinkler in June of 2018. In December of 2021, a potential buyer contacted Corliss. Due to family circumstances, he was open to selling Roanoke Sprinkler, and the business value was greater than Corliss anticipated. But, as Corliss said, “it is always harder to sell something than to buy something,” so he realized he needed help from someone who understood acquisitions in more detail.

Corliss reached back out to Mullens after interviewing five or six other people. On the buying side, he had found Mullens “fair and competent.”

“I needed Jim as the sales side representative to put together the strategic plan to go to market,” Corliss said. This, plus Mullens’ relationships in the industry, generated multiple buyers and offers, and Corliss ultimately sold Roanoke Sprinkler to Summit Fire and Security. Corliss was pleased with Summit’s strong offer and its path to grow the business Corliss had worked to build. “It was a good fit,” said Corliss. “There was synergy.”

Likening the transaction to a buying or selling a house using a Realtor, Corliss said, “it is easier to have someone else negotiate for you because that person is not emotionally involved,” and s/he knows the “ins and outs” of the business.”

—Jennifer Poff Cooper

through “success fees” (a.k.a. commissions) at closing, and sometimes through monthly retainers or equity in the new company.

While each investment banker specializes in an area of expertise, one of the biggest challenges is being a “jack of all trades,” said Mullens. “You have to learn a particular business inside and out before taking it to market,” he said. “You have to understand the nuances to be able to relate them to 30, 50, 100 buyers.”

Said Mullens, “Every deal is a standout to me because so much work goes into it.” Still, he recounts a couple of notable success stories. He represented Roanoke Sprinkler as a buyer (see sidebar), then when the company was looking to sell it came back to him for that deal. Last year, the Bundy Group combined three

companies into one and sold it to one buyer. “By combining them, we got a large premium price,” he said.

The M&A scene in the Roanoke region is “active,” said Mullens, but there is not a critical mass of businesses selling so there are “not a bunch of deals here every year.” One of the most common scenarios Mullens encounters is a business owner aged 55-70 who is looking to exit the business to retire or move on to new things.

Mullens sees the future of M&A strong through the end of this year. Inflation, a potential recession, and a resurgence of COVID are certainly variables that could “change the M&A landscape,” he said. Still, he feels it will continue to be a strong M&A environment. “People will always be selling their businesses,” said Mullens. “It is never going to go away.” 



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- Due diligence requests and responses
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## Define standards to improve processes

I've spent the past 15 years helping organizations and their leaders improve their processes. The types of challenges they face, and the problems they are trying to fix are infinite. However, I've learned over the years that most problems can be reduced or eliminated by focusing on one simple concept – using standards.

A continuous improvement colleague of mine, Mark Rosenthal, wrote a blog post called *Troubleshooting by Defining Standards*, which succinctly explained what I had learned through the years. In his article, he describes how organizations can ask themselves a series of questions to help troubleshoot and improve a process. This methodology can be used for almost any process issue in an organization.

When evaluating and trying to improve a process, ask yourself these questions. You must answer "YES" before moving to the next question.

- 1) Is there a clear standard for the outcome?** Can everyone clearly describe a "good" vs. a "bad" outcome? If not, then it's likely the quality of your product or service will be inconsistent. If the answer is "NO," then establish a standard for what a "good" outcome looks like that everyone understands.
- 2) Is there a clear standard for the method that will achieve the standard results?** Without a standard method, you can't be certain your process will produce a good result and there will be greater variation in how employees execute the process. If the answer is "NO," establish a clear sequence of steps to be performed.
- 3) Are the standard conditions required for success present?** Do the employees have the required tools, fixtures, materials, machines, environmental conditions, etc. to successfully execute the standard method? Too often I see employees do "workarounds" to try and be successful when the organization has not provided the conditions they need. If the answer is "NO," establish and provide the necessary conditions for success.
- 4) Is there variation in execution?** If the answer to the previous three questions is "YES" and there are still problems, then there could be a training issue, or some other unforeseen factor that is impacting successful execution. Study the process to understand the root cause of the variation and correct it.

If you get to this point, your process is most likely working. But what if you want or need to get better? Simply reset your standard for your new expectations and start again at the top. Process improvement does not have to be overly complex. Follow these steps to clarify your challenges and focus your efforts for the results you need. 

# BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

**Executive Summary:**  
*Organizations are complex – but process improvement does not have to be overly so.*

Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

## Ever heard of I bonds?

"I bonds" are backed by the U.S. federal government. While they're not FDIC insured, they're just about as safe. When you consider the FDIC board is comprised of presidential appointees, even money you have insured by that entity probably isn't going to be very safe if our government crashes and burns.

### Avoiding net losses on investments

Right now, I bonds are paying 9.62%. This rate is guaranteed for six months after purchase, up through October of this year. Then the rate changes again. That's not a bad return considering most CDs are now paying less than 2%. It gives you a slight edge on inflation too, which was 8.6% in May. If you're not making at least the rate of inflation with your investments, you're logging a net loss over time.

### How I bonds work

There are limitations on this investment. You can only purchase \$10,000 a year worth of I bonds. You can cash out as soon as one year after purchase, but money needs to stay in the account for five years to be removed penalty free. This tool is a lot more forgiving than most other options for early withdrawals. The cost is three months interest. So, if you keep your I bonds for two years, you'll only get interest for 21 of those months. Penalties don't touch your principle.

You'll owe federal income tax on your returns, but not state or local taxes. That is, unless you invest the money for the specific use of funding higher education. There are rules for this (see: [www.treasurydirect.gov/indiv/planning/plan\\_education.htm](http://www.treasurydirect.gov/indiv/planning/plan_education.htm)).

Interest is compounded, and recalculated, semi-annually. You lock into the current rate for six months when you purchase the bonds. There's a guaranteed fixed payout percentage, with the balance based on inflation and CPI (Consumer Price Index). All money in the account, including interest and principle, comes to you when you cash out the bond. You can earn interest on this investment for up to 30 years.

The Treasury Direct site even has an interest rate calculator so you can see how your money might grow.

People are scared about the volatility in the market right now. I get that. It's a bigger concern for Baby Boomers than Generation Z. If you're looking at moving money to CDs or other low performing safer investments, know you may be protecting principal, but you're losing money. It makes sense to try to find investments that are at least keeping pace with the inflation rate. I bonds can do that. 



## FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

### Executive Summary:

*There's a little-known savings vehicle called the I bond. These were actually introduced in 1998. Recent historic lows in interest rates have brought them back into favor.*

*Michael Shelton is a financial retirement counselor. Reach him at [Michael@360WealthConsulting.com](mailto:Michael@360WealthConsulting.com)*



Neal Cummings

A promotional graphic for the Daleville Summer Concert Series. On the left is a red and black sunburst logo with the text "DALEVILLE 7/3 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES". Below it, the text reads "FINISHING OUR SEASON STRONG DON'T MISS THESE AMAZING BANDS!". In the center is a photo of the band "The Bogeys" performing on stage, with the text "The Bogeys" and "SEPTEMBER 3" above them. On the right is a photo of the band "Mended Fences" with the text "MENDED FENCES" and "OCTOBER 8" above them. At the bottom, the text "Daleville Town Center - Catch the SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER" is written in a large, pink, stylized font.

# \$1B of Local Economic Intel

Valley Business FRONT introduces patron advisory board member, Neal Cummings, representing the financial / credit union industry sector.

A Liberty University alum with over 25 years of banking experience, Neal Cummings can truly be considered a “Roanoke Valley native.” As Market Executive of the Roanoke Market at Freedom First, he is able to rely on both his industry expertise and thorough knowledge of the Roanoke market to help businesses make informed decisions about growth and scale.

“I understand the local economy and the challenges that local business owners face when starting and expanding their businesses,” Cummings said. “And since the lending decisions are made here in Roanoke by our local in-house underwriting team, we can be flexible with our borrowers while still working within regulatory parameters.”

He has extensive experience in commercial and retail banking, commercial real estate lending, and small business development, which gives him a unique perspective on product development and service offerings that will best meet the needs of the local businesses that Freedom First serves.

Cummings was brought onto the Freedom First team in 2014 to help build up Freedom First’s Commercial Division, which is now comprised of eight Commercial Loan Officers and over twenty back office support staff dedicated to keeping the lending process running smoothly.

“Freedom First’s growth, especially in the area of Commercial Lending, has grown exponentially since I joined on about eight years ago,” said Cummings. “When I started, we were at \$330 Million in asset size, and now we’re about to reach \$1 Billion. And it’s great to see because the benefits from all this growth are going to stay right here in the community that I grew up in.”

Cummings serves as Executive Board Treasurer for the Rescue Mission, was an advisor for the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Roanoke Valley program, and coaches JV Boys Basketball at Roanoke Valley Christian School. He and his wife Laura live in Roanoke with their two children. 

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Goodwill Team Member, Kyle, works in our Radford production facility.





# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Tom Field

**Executive Summary:**  
*We seem to have more business coaches than ever before; what's your take?*

## That coach

I'm waiting at the counter of one of my favorite local coffee spots for my always-perfect latte (RND in Roanoke's Wasena community), and I'm looking over the collection of business cards nicely arranged on the counter top.

*Note to retailers and local merchants: your collections of local magazines and local business cards and event flyers ARE consumed and appreciated by your patrons. Keep up the practice! In fact, we get calls at the FRONT office asking where to pick up a copy, and we mention your shops all the time.*

So, back to these business cards. Amongst the real estate agents, insurance agents, yoga and wellness practitioners, and house painters, there's another profession I see with increasing frequency.

Business (and personal) coaches. And related consultants.

I would love to know whom, amongst our readers and patrons, utilize business coaches. For yourself or your employees or teams. I'm also intrigued whether that relationship formed by a coach approaching you or if one was referred to you or if you sought one out. Then, if it was indeed your proactive quest (versus reactive), how did you make your determination on which coach to call?

For me, I admit I would be reluctant to engage a coach in the 20's age bracket. I'd be hesitant to respond to a coach with no experience with entrepreneurs. I'd be unlikely to consider a coach who hasn't worked with or is familiar with other professionals I know. I'd be disinclined to meet with a coach whose philosophies are completely opposed to mine.



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But do you know what? I would throw ALL of those parameters out the window if I crossed paths with a potential coach who was one or all of those characteristics—but possessing a clientele with undeniable uber success.

That's right. Introduce me to that 22 year-old-corporate-executive-trainer-persimmon-herbal-tea-sipping-death-metal-tattoo-sporting-militant-atheist-slum-dweller-from-Camden-New-Jersey. If her clients are ones who have scored bigly... I'm all ears.

We looked at coaches a good while back in the FRONT (prior to the big explosion of them). Maybe it's time to revisit that profession? As we consider that, what's your take? Let me know at [tfield@vbfront.com](mailto:tfield@vbfront.com). 

*Do you use a business coach?*

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[tfield@vbFRONT.com](mailto:tfield@vbFRONT.com)



*We profiled coaches way back in October 2009*

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This is an attorney advertisement. | Responsible Attorney, Peter M. Pearl



# RUC's loss is VWCC's gain as two-year healthcare programs migrate from one campus to another

By Gene Marrano

---

**Several Associates degree programs that can lead to good paying jobs are on the move.**

Radford University Carilion, formerly Jefferson College of Health Sciences in downtown Roanoke, will shed its remaining two-year degree programs over the next three years, and Virginia Western Community College will pick up the torch on those degrees. It starts this semester with VWCC's new Physical Therapists (PTA) program, which welcomed its first cohort of students late last month. After completing any prerequisite courses students typically complete the PTA program in two years. They gain clinical experience in the second year and earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in Physical Therapist

Assistant. RUC graduated its final cohort in its PTA program in the Spring of 2022.

That transition has been in the works for about three years when Dr. Jordan Tucker – a physical therapist herself who used to teach at Jefferson College - was hired as the Program Administrator. Tucker has been working since then to develop curriculum, plan the laboratory space and procure the equipment/resources required. "I learned a lot from that wonderful group over there and bring a lot of that background and knowledge over to Virginia Western. A good challenge and exciting to build a

new program [at VWCC].” Full accreditation may take several years according to Virginia Western, which vows that the initial cohort of students accepted this fall will graduate from an accredited program. Tucker notes that there has been a PTA program in the Roanoke Valley for more than three decades. It’s a five-semester program.

Demand for PTA’s is strong in the Roanoke Valley says VWCC, where jobs can be found in long-term care facilities, acute care and rehabilitation hospitals, home health care and outpatient clinics. Starting pay? On average locally \$33 per hour. Physical therapy “is an important component of patient’s health and recovery,” and can be found in many workplaces locally says Tucker. She says studies show physical therapy can help people avoid surgery, also expanding to help people overcome dizzy spells and with pain management. With the advent of COVID-19 and the “long Covid” symptoms

many report, Tucker says physical therapists and PTA’s can help with those issues as well during the recovery process. “We’re just really excited to get going,” adds Dr. Tucker.

Martha “Marty” Sullivan is Dean of Health Professions at Virginia Western; she says the school’s often stated goal of getting graduates (or those taking certificate programs) ready for the workforce fits nicely with the programs coming over from RUC: “they are ready to be employed.” In fact, VWCC says more than 70 percent of graduates from the PTA program will look for jobs. “There are options for them to continue their education [like a four-year college program] – but most of them want to go right to work.” Second year clinicals means working with physical therapists or licensed PTA’s in various modalities, like joint replacement, cardiac rehab, rehabbing stroke patients, etc.

Also new this semester at Virginia Western

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# EDUCATION PROFILE



Courtesy photo

Jordan Tucker

is Surgical Technology, but in this case eleven RUC students who were halfway through the two-year program there will transfer to VWCC to finish degrees in 2023. Radford University Carilion has discontinued its Surgical Technology program, where graduating students will offer support in various roles while in operating rooms. Virginia Western will have to lease lab space at RUC in the former Carilion Community Hospital space, in decommissioned operating rooms, to ensure no disruption for students in that program. "That is [another] program in demand," says Sullivan. 15 additional new students will also form a new cohort this semester. "The content is [basically] the same," as the RUC program it is acquiring.

Transitioning these programs from RUC to VWCC makes them more affordable; scholarship opportunities through the Virginia Western Educational Foundation and new G3 state funding for healthcare



Submitted

Marty Sullivan

career tracks will help make that happen. Get skilled, Get a job, Get ahead (G3) was created to help get more students upskilled and into the workforce sooner. "G3 steps in after any financial aid is exhausted," says Sullivan, helping to make the VWCC programs "much less costly," than RUC.

Last but not least in fall 2025 Virginia Western will launch an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program with a first-time cohort of 20 to 24 students. RUC will continue its OTA track until then. In the meantime, VWCC will hire a program director, create a lab space, purchase equipment and develop the curriculum. "We have had a very collaborative relationship through all of this, just to make sure this process is seamless – especially for the students," says Marty Sullivan, as Radford University Carilion shifts its two-year programs – and the students impacted in some cases – over to Virginia Western Community College. 



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Aaron Sturniolo, Director of IT, RRMM Architects

## Cloud services enabled virtual solutions well before remote work

As RRMM Architects, a full-service architecture firm, grew over the years, so did the need to remain connected between multiple offices, but they found that file sharing and the ability to collaborate were limited.

Workstreams were siloed and turn-around for client deliverables was slow. Their projects required creation, printing, mailing, marking up, return mail, editing, etc., and that tedious back-and-forth cycle continued until the project was complete. And with massive amounts of data in project files, at its height, RRMM Architects had 48 servers to manage on site.

"Our on-premises servers had high latency and storage issues were hindering our ability to best serve our clients," explained Aaron Sturniolo, Director of IT, RRMM Architects. "Our ability to advance our business was hampered, and we needed a better solution for our technology needs."

Turns out, the solution was in the cloud. By leveraging Cox Business Cloud Solutions, RRMM Architects was able to remove the distance barrier by seamlessly connecting their multiple locations as well as their team to their projects.

An unexpected benefit to the cloud came with the onset of the pandemic. Because RRMM Architects was already utilizing the service, they were able to transition to remote work from home with ease.

Flexible work conditions are an expectation in today's workforce and cloud solutions ensured employees could maintain productivity and connectivity regardless of where they made their office for the day.

"What started out as a necessity at the outset of the pandemic to maintain workflow when everyone went home, soon became a competitive advantage offering flexibility to our current employees and potential employees as well," shared Sturniolo.

But cloud solutions are not just about remote work productivity, it's also about peace of mind. Sturniolo appreciates the automatic backups to the cloud, safeguards against cyber-attacks, and enterprise-level security provided by cloud services that ensures those risks are mitigated.

"My work week went from troubleshooting and break-fixing issues on our network to now being able to focus on what matters most -- our company growth, thanks to the security provided by Cox Business Cloud Solutions. And more importantly, I can rest easy knowing Cox Business has it covered," added Sturniolo.



## SMALL BUSINESS TOOL KIT

By **Bonnie Chavez**

**Executive Summary:**  
*What my MBA taught me and what I actually do, is very different.*

*Bonnie Chavez is the CEO of Building Beloved Communities, a local consulting firm specializing in community-centered business solutions. Her driving force is to help all organizations overcome business barriers with a lens focusing on smart solutions that benefit the community. Bonnie is a proud lesbian, Latina woman who values her family, roots, heritage, and culture.*

## Business ownership, unemployment taxes ... and wine

Before we begin, it's important to hire a CPA and bookkeeper as your growth allows. Building a business is like building a house, you can boot strap it for a little while, eventually you will hire professionals.

Most entrepreneurs do something really well, and do it so well, people pay them to do it. Not every business owner is good at "doing the books" but are ultimately responsible for "the books." So, if you were swindled by a rogue bookkeeper, the IRS is coming for you.

Let's avoid that and discuss steps for success:

- Educate yourself. What are you legally required to pay? The Roanoke Regional SBDC, a CPA, a bookkeeper, are great resources.
- Know what entity you are paying, when you pay them, how to pay them. For example: my federal, monthly, payroll tax is due the 15th, for the previous month, via the EFTPS online system.
  - Pro Tip - use a spreadsheet as a system to track those websites, logins, and security questions
- Create a monthly, quarterly, and yearly process to verify your financial obligations have been met and paid on time. I've heard harrowing stories from entrepreneurs who were devastated to discover they incurred hundreds of avoidable late fees, had a \$10,000 unexpected tax bill, or worse - \$18,000 owed in unemployment tax payments that a shady bookkeeper stole!
- Shop around for the best fit. I loved my first CPA, still do, but I changed to a larger CPA firm (still local) with a small business expert, for me, and a nonprofit expert to refer my clients.
- Donate to charity. Put this in an annual budget, then break it down into a monthly charitable donation. Your donation could make a life changing difference to some one in our community. There is power in giving and there is power in giving collectively. Reach out to me personally, I can help design a giving program, no matter what your budget, at no cost to you.
- Speaking of budgets, make one. This seems obvious on the surface, but I challenge you to dive deeper. Set aside a day in Q4 (that's next month for those paying attention!) and really understand your numbers, inspect your budget, and set financial goals for your business.
- Fund your future self. One day you will retire, close or sell your business, be ready for that day. If you don't already have a financial planner, get one. Start saving. If you save, regularly re-evaluate if your accounts are performing the way you want. If you are already doing that, increase the amount!

My retirement is filled with wine brunches and traveling plans with my lovely partner Kim. I'm saving with gusto because I really like wine - cheers to a bright financial future! 🍷



# Challenge your biases for success

My job is to change the way people think – to be a catalyst for that to happen. To hold space for it be rewarded.

RAMP's job is to change the way entrepreneurs think, to be that space where finding out you were wrong is the right way to start.

This may come across at first blush as egotistical. It is not. It is factual.

Ask any seasoned entrepreneur the question below and you will have enough data to know that they began their journeys thinking one thing and have come – through experience – to believe another thing. Here's the question: If you could give your younger self advice, what would you say?

How does this relate to a tech and biotech accelerator? It is our job to speed a startup's access to the data and collective wisdom that focuses the company's aim and derisks its business model. It takes many people to make this happen and RAMP remains grateful for the mentors, funders and sponsors, staff and investors who choose to be a part of this work.

The faster a company finds its first, best customers, the faster it makes money. The faster it makes money, the more attractive it is to investors. Money enables a business to hire employees, buy raw materials and access the faster lanes to market. Money buys time to dive deeper into assumptions and biases. This is one reason RAMP cohort members receive \$20,000 of non-dilutive funding. It buys time to explore these kinds of questions:

- Who are your customers?
- What problem are you solving for them?
- What solutions are they using now?
- Are they seeking a new solution? If so, why?

Uncovering more precisely the answers to these questions is what happens at RAMP. Our cohort members come in with a mental model of who their customers are and what they need or want. Our team says: "Prove it. Gather the data. Bring it back and we will help you analyze what you are hearing and seeing." Go out and talk to your potential customers and find out what their workflow is today. How would your solution integrate? What assumptions and biases do you have now? Test those against reality.

My job, RAMP's job, is to challenge biases. To test the unspoken and declared assertions with the rigor of a dedicated scientist. We help founders discover which hypotheses are false.

By changing what founders think, through evidence-based methodologies, we have seen companies skip over potholes and pitfalls they otherwise could have wasted precious time and money navigating.

I encourage you to go to the original source for information as you navigate this world. Take the time to learn as much as you can firsthand, test your biases and assumptions and change the way you think.

Lisa Garcia | Director

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

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- 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.

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

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Submitted

Nadean Carson: "You have to look at the long-term costs."

# The Stormwater Nerd

By Dan Smith

**Nadean Carson had no intention of starting a business, but Oya Construction is a year old now and it's an award-winner.**

Initially, Nadean Carson's goal was to go up, up away into the wild blue yonder as an Air Force pilot. She wound up going down, down and away into the wild brown mud.

The 44-year-old founder of Oya Construction in Roanoke had a bachelor's in civil engineering and a master's degree in environmental management. "Originally I had aspirations of becoming a pilot," she says. "But during college, I ended up falling in love with civil engineering, and couldn't imagine working this hard to get an engineering degree and never really using it. So, I went into the Air Force as a civil engineer. My job is literally tying my education and experience together."

An Air Force officer with responsibility for ground water? Yep. She "managed storm water in the desert," as an Iraq War combat veteran, overseeing the reconstruction of

Iraqi military bases. "I saw what we caused, then had to rebuild."

The Bristol native settled in Roanoke when she left the Air Force and "this is my home now. It's the first place I've ever called 'home.'"

A year ago, frustrated with an engineering group that didn't listen to her suggestions ("I'd say, 'this is wrong' and they'd do nothing"), she broke off and started her own company. Oya is an African goddess of wind, lightning and violent storms, and a brave warrior. Being a brave warrior has kept her busy in a competitive business. But Carson is an outgoing, smart, experienced woman who "knows everybody in Roanoke," so getting started wasn't as difficult as it might have been. "My name is synonymous with storm water [in the Roanoke Valley] and people know I know what I'm talking about."

Stormwater runoff can be a major problem for localities and Carson's job is to minimize that. Here is a specialty that not all construction companies invest in.

"For some companies," she says, "it is more important to get your current job done and get to the next one than it is to do it right, which takes more time and can be more expensive. Throw up some hay to slow runoff instead of putting up proper silt fencing, for example. It is about erosion, sediment control, heavy metals, angry neighbors, fines, the DEQ [Department of Environmental Quality] or the locality shutting down your site."

Her clients, typically, are "grading contractors who don't want to have to worry about the job being done right, developers who give a damn and want it done correctly," she says. "You can throw straw down [on a wet site] and you've met the requirement, but it blows away. You have to look at the long-term costs."

Her jobs are not permanent solutions. But they hold back the sometimes-toxic water, the silt, the rocks that can pollute streams and rivers, or build up sediment, making river or stream flooding more likely. Grass eventually grows on the sites, serving the long-term purpose.

"I love our rivers," she says. "I want the fish to have clean water, eco-tourism and a lot of that has to do with how we treat storm water."



Recently, Carson won the highly competitive Gauntlet, sponsored by the Advancement Foundation, which supports new and promising businesses with gift certificates and investment. It was an odd win for a woman "who never wanted to start a business." Now, her Oya is a year old. "I used to have a team," she says, "but now I'm all by myself." But her contacts are so good that a team—an unofficial team—is developing and she is seeing growth.

Clients "know when I say, 'There's a better way, but it will be more expensive in the short-term,'" that she knows her stuff. Many accept the expense, knowing it's an investment.

Ultimately, her job is to control the mud. "If I'm a super-hero," she says, "mud is my villain. I'm such a nerd about storm water." 

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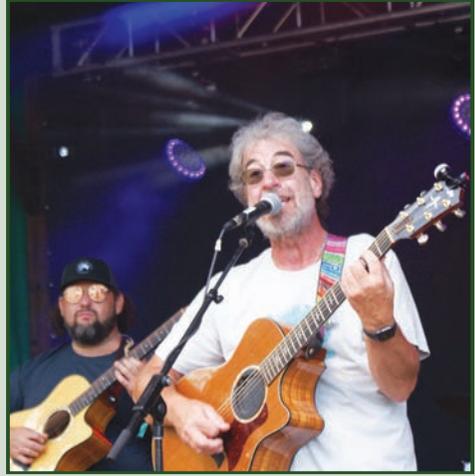
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## FloydFest 2022 >

FloydFest 2022 “Heartbeat” at the end of July attracted between 8-10,000 attendees per day and typically draws around 14,000 or so annually, many of whom camp and stay for the entire weekend. There was a bit of nostalgia tied to the event this year – after two decades on a leased 80-acre site near the Floyd-Patrick County line, Across the Way Productions will relocate FloydFest to its own 200 acre-plus property in Floyd County near the town of Check. Meanwhile FloydFest 2022 featured headliners like Melissa Etheridge, Trampled by Turtles, Old Crow Medicine Show, Lake Street Dive, Marcus King, Ann Wilson of Heart, et al. 49 Winchester, 2021’s On the Rise “People’s Choice” winner as best newcomer, also stood out and earned a Dreaming Creek Main Stage set as part of a prize package.

Amethyst Kiah, a singer-songwriter-guitarist,

enjoyed her sets. “This was my first time as an official artist,” said Kiah, who had sat in with other performers in the past. Kiah is no stranger to Floyd and Southwest Virginia, having played gigs she says in the region for the past ten years. “It’s a great vibe, the weather’s great, everybody’s amazing,” said Kiah (like the car) of her first official FloydFest gig. Meanwhile The Broadcast was a returnee to FloydFest, but this time billed as Caitlyn Krisko and The Broadcast, with the group’s lead singer of the booming voice becoming more of a star on stage. “This is our fourth year back, which is really exciting. We’ve definitely moved up year after year,” said Krisko. “It was really amazing to be on the main stage.” The Broadcast mixed originals with classic rockers they grew up listening to, by Led Zeppelin and other legacy bands. “I’m a very witchy woman ... repeatedly at every FloydFest I notice a lot of synchronicity happening. This is a really special spot, one of my favorite festivals in the country.”

# SPOTLIGHT FRONT 'N ABOUT



Krisko said she believes FloydFest “can bring even more to the table,” with the move to Check just off US 221 in July 2023.

Isaac Hadden spent much of his childhood in the New River Valley and the electric guitar whiz has performed numerous times in the Roanoke area. “I’m definitely excited to see what’s up [after the relocation in 2023].” Hadden actually knows the man who sold the new property to ATW Productions, calling him “an old family friend. I’m excited for the future of FloydFest.” Hadden has sort of grown up playing at the festival (he’s in college now), calling it “a pretty sweet gig. First of all, it’s an honor. I pretty much was raised here.”

FloydFest co-creator and Across the Way Chief Creative Kris Hodges was glad to be back on the drums playing with the percussion-heavy Chupacabras. “It’s always a family reunion when we get on stage,” said Hodges after a set on the Hill Holler stage. Hodges

was working to keep any feelings of nostalgia for what has been home for the past two decades-plus “at bay,” until FloydFest 22 was over. “Change can be both daunting and incredibly exciting. We’re excited for the future. We’re going to take everything we’ve learned from this beautiful site ... and hone it in on a much more expansive site that will allow us to breathe little bit more.”

There has been some pushback from Floyd residents near the new property in Check – concerns about traffic for example – and protests at a Board of Supervisors meeting and via road signs. “We have 22 years of positive, historical experience and credentials here. I understand in rural environments people get [concerned]. We dealt with that here in this location,” Hodges noted. “What we are good at is being good neighbors. We will ensure that by carrying the FloydFest name, we will bring the same exemplary history there that we have here over 22 years.”



## INNOVATION

By Erin Burcham

**Executive Summary:**

*The greatest minds, innovations, and thought leaders in the regional technology ecosystem are coming together in mid-September for Game Changer Week.*

Erin Burcham is  
Executive Director for the  
Roanoke – Blacksburg  
Technology Council  
erin.burcham@rbtc.tech

## What is Game Changer Week?

The conference – Sept. 13-15 in Roanoke and Blacksburg – is a celebration of our innovative ecosystem and is designed as a place where big ideas and technology can collide.

Game Changer Week will include everything from panel discussions specific technologies to workshops for college students to happy hours to engaging talks.

Highlights include:

- Biotechnology deep dive with sessions on the fast-growing life sciences sector and it's future in this region
- Talk with Jason Feifer, editor of Entrepreneur Magazine, and author of "Build for Tomorrow" and host of a podcast of the same name
- Interactive discussion with Melissa Doman about mental health in the workplace
- Entrepreneurial sessions to help you grow your business with case studies from founders and companies that have already done it
- Talk about inclusive economic growth with NASA and entrepreneurs that are collaborating to commercialize ideas and innovation
- Block party with live music, food, and games at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center

Game Changer Week is a collaborative effort that's helping propel this region forward. The event is being organized by the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center and includes collaboration and events that are connected to companies and movers and shakers across the region.

This year the event is in multiple locations throughout the region. We encourage you to register, download the app, and plan to move back and forth between Roanoke and Blacksburg for different experiences. Even better, share the event with your team, and encourage their participation as well.

Game Changer Week is free to attend and open to professionals at any level and students. Join us for networking events, engage with thought leaders in action, and leave with real-world connections and new knowledge to be inspired.

Learn more and register today: [www.vtcrc.com/about/marketing/gamechanger](http://www.vtcrc.com/about/marketing/gamechanger) 

## Helping individuals with brain injuries

“While people receive good care in the hospital following a brain injury—such as a car accident, fall, tumor, or stroke—once they return home they often find they are lost and don’t know how to begin the long journey to recovery. That’s where Brain Injury Services of SWVA steps in...” says Alexander Barge, MS, the director of development and marketing for the organization.

“Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia is the only provider of free case management services in Southwest Virginia, along with parts of Central and Southside Virginia, for survivors of brain injury,” Alex continues. “[It provides] support in reaching recovery goals, such as becoming more independent, reintegrating into school or work, socializing, and recreating.”

BISSWVA serves all of Southwest Virginia including: Alleghany, Bedford City, Bedford County, Bland, Botetourt, Bristol, Buchanan, Campbell, Carroll, Charlotte, Covington, Craig, Danville, Dickenson, Floyd, Franklin County, Galax, Giles, Grayson, Halifax, Henry, Lee, Lynchburg, Martinsville, Montgomery, Norton, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Radford, Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Russell, Salem, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington County, Wise, and Wythe.

You can find out more at [bisswva.org](http://bisswva.org).

There’s also an “Evening on the Farm with Burgers, Bluegrass, & Brain Injury Awareness” at Sinkland Farms (Christiansburg) on September 15. See this and other announcements on Facebook/[bisswva.org](https://www.facebook.com/bisswva.org) or call Alex at 540-344-1200. 



## GOOD WORK

**Executive Summary:**  
Brain Injury Services of SWVA is a CARF Accredited Organization in Community Based Case Management Services for Adults, Children and Adolescents.

### Evening on the Farm

*Burgers, Bluegrass, Brain Injury Awareness*

*SEPTEMBER 15 – Sinkland Farms*



[www.cfwesternva.org](http://www.cfwesternva.org)

Enabling people who love their community to easily give back.

540.985.0204



## ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

### Executive Summary:

*We do things well;  
maybe some not so  
well—pay attention  
to both.*

## A common problem

I slap the light bulb packet on the counter at Advance Auto... and sigh.

"Is that all?" the clerk asks.

"Yep. My ongoing purchase of brake light bulbs for my BMW. I don't know why they keep going out. It's especially frustrating when I'm on a trip. I was about to go over Fancy Gap Mountain in the rain at dusk recently, and the alert flashed. Pretty much the worst place for that to happen."

"What model BMW," he asks.

I tell him; and he immediately replies.

"Yes. That's a common problem with that car."

I've since discovered (and I long-suspected) it's more about the contacts than the actual bulb. (On the alert just prior to Fancy Gap, for example, I pulled over at an auto supply store to change out the bulb, when the existing one started working again as I went to remove it.)

I provide all of this intro as an analogy for business. (You knew that was coming.)

What is a common problem in your business sector?  
How about your specific business?

Regarding our own local businesses, I know a few common problems. I know you do, too. We all probably immediately think of restaurants and the service sector. And most of the common problems aren't related to product quality. That's because when the product is bad, we move on to other businesses and don't return. They're dismissed and forgotten. Most of the common problems in the service sector are—not surprisingly—customer service-related.

If we pay attention to our customers on those repeated, common problems, we could improve or fix most of them. One way to do that is to eliminate the product or service altogether. Maybe it's one in our lineup we shouldn't even be providing. Why harm your business that way when you can simply admit that you don't do that particular thing very well? But on the products and services you must provide, if there is a common problem, you better attend to it quickly and thoroughly.

Word gets around. And that word increases in power in direct proportion as the local market or community gets smaller. For our business community, one common problem could be fatal.

Consistently review what you do in an ordinary fashion and work on improving that so you can include it and celebrate the things you do in an extraordinary fashion. But with equal fervor, know your common problems and be vigilant in eliminating them.

Pay attention to those brake light warnings. 

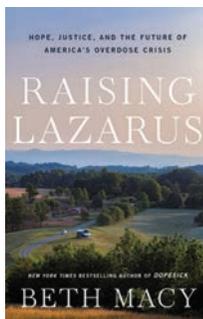
## Beth Macy's Dopesick follow up offers some glimmers of hope

I've read and enjoyed all of fellow Roanoker Beth Macy's non-fiction books, including the one that drew the most attention – and ultimately became an award-winning Hulu miniseries about the Big Pharma-fueled opioid crisis that had much of its roots right here in southwest Virginia, *Dopesick*. Now her fourth book, "*Raising Lazarus - Hope, Justice and the Future of America's Overdose Crisis*," has been released and as of this writing the former Roanoke Times journalist was in the middle of a book tour that included national interviews. Towards the end of *Raising Lazarus* Macy writes that *Dopesick*, released in 2018, left her depressed. She figured she was done reporting on such a heart-wrenching topic at the time.

Then she started hearing from people on the front line, the "stone rollers" doing the dirty work to help people who in many cases by no fault of their own became addicted at first when they were overprescribed by physicians – who were being pushed to do so by companies like Purdue Pharma. When the makers of Oxycontin finally and belatedly got around to making their opioid pills harder to abuse, illegal heroin stepped into the void and the downward spiral continued for many.

"It is an economic issue [as well]," notes Beth Macy – companies in North Carolina factory plants for example that can't hire enough workers because so many fail the drug test. Others not able to hold on to jobs because they are indeed dopesick. With money from the highly contentious Sackler family/Purdue Pharma litigation settlement set to finally start filtering out to localities to fight Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and Substance Abuse Disorder (SUD) we can only hope it is used wisely. Macy notes in *Raising Lazarus* however that many of those doing the best work are former users themselves, getting clean needles or the medication "bupe" out to users to help wean them away from opioids, while law enforcement agencies and local government in some cases still see OUD and SUD as criminal – not the brain altering disease its now recognized to be. "We need to start putting guard rails on our public safety in this nation," says Macy, "I'm frustrated at the end, but I'm really full of hope about these amazing innovators who are out there on the ground – seeing to the least of us."

*Raising Lazarus* is a meaty book with input from the seemingly hundreds of people Beth Macy interviewed for it, and it also offer slivers of hope that we are finally "getting it." If you want to read more *Empire of Pain* about the Sackler family – referred to in Macy's new book – and *The Hard Sell* about the ensuing Fentanyl crisis and another Big Pharma company that pushed an even more deadly narcotic are recommended. 



## THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

**Executive Summary:**  
*Raising Lazarus* is a meaty book with input from the seemingly hundreds of people Beth Macy interviewed for it.



Ben Law

## GUEST COMMENTARY

Contributed by  
Ben Law and  
Jon Puvak, Gentry  
Locke Attorneys



Jon Puvak

## Key considerations for your M&A Transaction

When considering a transaction to buy or sell a business, there are a number of issues to think about. The following considerations can help you maximize value, limit risk, and make your transaction run smoother:

**1. Define your objective.** Whether you are buying or selling, you first need to determine what the objectives of your transaction are going to be. Do you want a controlling interest? Is this an opportunity to bring in minority investors and expand the business? Do you want to stay involved with the business after the transaction, or is it time to ride off into the sunset? Defining the objective of your transaction will help you determine how to get started.

**2. Build the right team around you.** Based on your objectives, and the size and complexity of your transaction, you will need different advisors to help guide you through the process.

**Investment Banker.** Investment bankers can help buyers locate new acquisitions or help sellers determine the value of a business and to cast a broad net for potential buyers. Investment bankers can also stay involved throughout the process to help you negotiate the deal and work through various requests from the other party.

**Lawyer.** Finding the right legal counsel is necessary regardless of the size of your transaction. Experienced legal counsel will guide you through the transaction with advice concerning the structure, risks or obligations, as well as, prepare, negotiate, and revise the documents that will be required to close your transaction. Your legal counsel should work closely with any other advisors working on your behalf, and the other counterparty's lawyers and advisors to facilitate a transaction that achieves your objectives.

**Accountant and Financial Advisor.** You will want to make sure that your CPA or other accounting or financial advisors who have historically helped you are involved in the transaction. If necessary, you may need the advice of specialists with experience in transactions. These advisors, working with your lawyers, can provide advice on the financial and tax implications that may not be obvious when you first think about the structure of the transaction.

**3. Find the right counterparty.** Unless your objective is to sell the business and walk away, there is a good chance you will be working with the other party in the transaction for some period of time after the transaction is done. Particularly when selling your business to a private equity group, the buyer will probably want key management to stay involved in the business, at least for a period of time, and for the seller to invest or rollover money into the business after closing. Although the purchase price is an

important factor, you should think about who you, and possibly your employees, are going to be in business with after the transaction closes.

**4. Prepare a Term Sheet.** A term sheet can be a relatively simple, non-binding description of the deal terms. When done correctly and upfront, term sheets can set mutual expectations and help avoid disagreements that may derail a transaction.

**5. Ask about insurance.** Existing insurance policies and specialized transaction related insurance products are available to buyers and sellers to help mitigate risks. Many significant transactions now include representations and warranties insurance to shift potential liabilities of the seller to the insurance company. Ask your advisors about all available types of insurance.

**6. Decide who will be “under the tent” for the transaction.** Getting to closing can often take several months. During that time, you should be careful as to what you reveal about the transaction. Buyers are interested in the business for its potential, but without current disruption. If too many people find out about the deal while it’s still in the negotiation phase, that could create disruption within the business, which could negatively impact your negotiating position.

**7. Will others receive compensation?** Buyers and sellers may want to reward certain employees who either (or both) provide support throughout the transaction (in addition to performing their normal day-to-day job) or who have dedicated their time and efforts to the business in a way that has made selling the business a possibility. If planned carefully, there are ways to structure these payments in a tax efficient manner.

**8. Stay Involved!** Any lengthy transaction will involve some sort of “deal fatigue” on the part of the principals of the buyer and seller. It is extremely important, however, to stay engaged with the team that you have created and be responsive regarding the decisions and information they will need from you. 



A term sheet can be a relatively simple, non-binding description of the deal... [It] can set mutual expectations and help avoid disagreements.

**Ben Law** is an associate at Gentry Locke where he advises a variety of clients, including business organizations and business owners, on matters concerning commercial transactions and corporate governance.

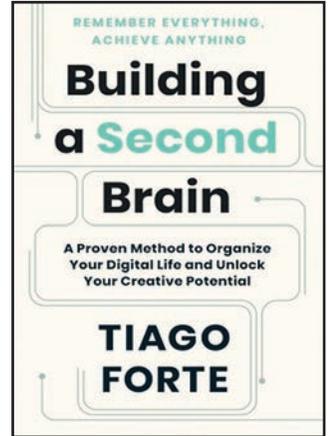
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## FRONTReviews >

Readers and patrons of the business journal are invited to submit reviews (along with an optional photo) to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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.



### *Building a second brain*

*Building a Second Brain: A Proven Method to Organize Your Digital Life and Unlock Your Creative Potential* by Tiago Forte (Atria Books) is a guide on how to create a personal system for knowledge management, also known as the Second Brain. This book is a must read if you're looking for a way to leverage technology so you can work smarter and with a creative edge.

This system transforms days once filled with racing thoughts, putting out fires, and general difficulty focusing, into days weaponized by a digital second brain that not only captures your creative thoughts and important information, but also allows you to efficiently leverage them in the outside world.

The book goes into technical, yet tangible detail on ways to capture, organize, distill, and express our most creative thoughts and the useful information we encounter daily. For example, Forte uses a system for organizing information he calls PARA: Projects, Areas, Resources, and Archives. There are 4 retrieval methods suggested for resurfacing and reusing past work from the Second Brain. They are search, browsing, tags, and serendipity.

On serendipity, the book states, "There are moments when it feels like the stars align and a connection between ideas jumps out at you like a bolt of lightning from a blue sky. These are the moments creatives live for. There is no way to plan them, but that

doesn't mean we can't create the ideal conditions for them to arise."

Forte advises that we "always be wary of accumulating so much information that we spend all our time managing it, instead of putting it to use in the outside world." Reading this book motivates me to improve my own digital systems, to keep building the habit of dropping valuable information into the right places to make it easy to retrieve later, and to level up - bring on the digital transformation!

—Shannon N. Dominguez

### *She's just quirky, right?*

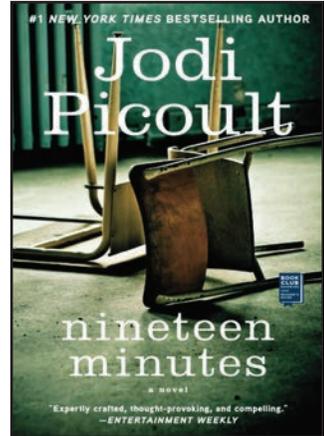
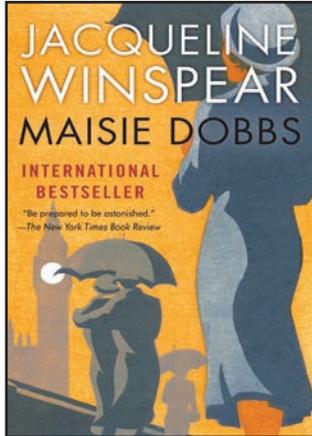
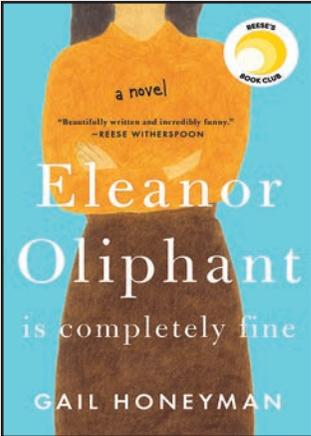
I'm sure you've heard the glib little response, "I laughed, I cried," right? Well, this book could have been the catalyst and inspiration for that phrase.

Because that's exactly what you'll do if you read it. Even in that order.

Jesus, Eleanor. What are you telling me?

A brilliantly crafted, perfectly narrated in first person life story of a tragicomic eccentric; even a person with the littlest heart and shallowest brain can't help but be drawn in to the day-to-day experiences of Eleanor Oliphant (if that's her real name).

Chuckle at others' eccentricities and oddities; really... it's okay. But shed tears for their pain; such empathy is required...



if you're human. Reach out and just hold someone's hand (who may only be touched when they pay for it—like at a nail salon or hair dresser).

We've got to love one another, people. An emotional roller-coaster that will stick with you. Read Gail Honeyman's *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* (Penguin; 2017).

—Tom Field

## Gettin' on

I was about a quarter of the way in, reading *Maisie Dobbs* (Penguin; 2003) when I started thinking, why is this so familiar? And then I realized, all the scenes playing in my head were directly from *Downton Abby*, the PBS series that I had watched. There's the bucolic countryside, the hustle and bustle of Charing Cross, the aristocracy and service employment, and the horrors of WWI. And of course, the characters. Jacqueline Winspear throws in a small slice of detective story (well, the TV show had that, too)—but it's more Nancy Drew than Agatha Christie. Our storyteller gives us a well-crafted timeline with well-defined flashbacks and flashforwards that are not too numerous. Unless I missed it, there are no religious interjections, but there is plenty of proverbial British resolve. Stoicism illustrated. My favorite practical observation is the idea that sequestering people who have challenges is not a good solution, except possibly for short-term recovery. Indeed, the over-arching theme of *Maisie Dobbs* is to "get on with it." Our

protagonist certainly does. A good story and a good study that won't take you six seasons and 52 episodes. You'll have to supply your own scenes and soundtrack (or pull them from your recall of *Downton Abby*—it's a perfect companion).

—Tom Field

## Shocking twists

Jodi Picoult (*Nineteen Minutes*; Washington Square; 2008) absolutely knocked this book out of the park.

I loved reading this book, in order to get perspectives on what it's like to worry about a school shooting (I was homeschooled my whole life). This book gave me goosebumps while reading/listening and was super emotional. I loved reading about all the characters, and the twists were even shocking for me!

This has been one of my favorites so far. Hear more of my thoughts in my reading vlog: [youtube.com/c/JacquelineWheeler24](https://www.youtube.com/c/JacquelineWheeler24)

—Jacqueline Wheeler

*The reviewers:* **Shannon Domingues** is Virginia director of operations for Building Beloved Communities in Roanoke, a business consulting firm focused on community-centered solutions; **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; **Jacqueline Wheeler** is a vlog/macro-influencer book reviewer from Roanoke.

## Former Rescue Mission CEO releases first book

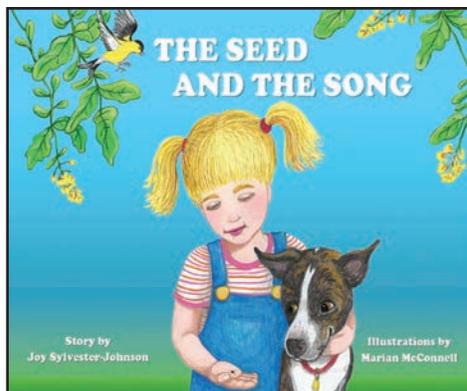
Joy Sylvester-Johnson has written several plays but, “*The Seed and the Song*,” a modern re-telling of the parable of the mustard seed for children of all ages, is her first book. It’s aimed at children and is colorfully illustrated by local songwriter-singer and artist Marian McConnell. The three siblings in the story are based on the author’s own grandchildren. “I wanted to teach my grandchildren that life is a collaborative effort between people and God, [who] plants the seed in us – the yearning to do good. It’s up to us to nurture that,” says Sylvester-Johnson, the former long-time CEO for the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, who has also become a climate change warrior these days.

The story begins when the children discover something precious is missing – the “life purpose and joy,” their song, and then set out to reclaim that song. Accompanied by their dog, Lilly, the trio begin their quest to find what has been lost. Lily is actually based on McConnell’s own dog of the same name. “You have the faith, as tiny as a mustard seed, it can grow into something large. This was a fun story about a little girl who has lost her song; she and her brother and sister go in search of it,” says McConnell, who even wrote a song about the book. It doesn’t hit anyone over the head with its message – which Sylvester-Johnson says is for people of all ages - and besides, who doesn’t like vivid illustrations of dogs and kids? She says for now the best way to purchase the book is via [theseedandthesong.com](http://theseedandthesong.com). All proceeds will go to the Mercy Care Academy, a school in Kenya that Sylvester has visited.

—Gene Marrano

## Derring-do at dizzying heights

A renowned Nepali climber and British citizen Nims Purja left his job with the British Royal Navy to pursue a record that seems other-worldly. That is, climbing all 14 of the world’s highest peaks over 8000 meters (26,250 feet) in record time, besting the previous mark of seven years. He made it with more than 13 years, yes years, to spare: Purja and the hardy support team he assembled did it in just over SIX MONTHS! That included summiting Mount Everest (not his first time), Lhotse and Makalu



in 48 hours, and the first winter ascent of Pakistan’s vaunted K2. *Beyond Possible: One Man, 14 Peaks and the Mountaineering Achievement of a Lifetime* (National Geographic, 2022) is Nims Purja’s own story of goal setting, dedication, change course mid-stream, courting death on a number of occasions (scores die on these peaks in the Himalayas every year attempting to summit) and finally attaining his end result.

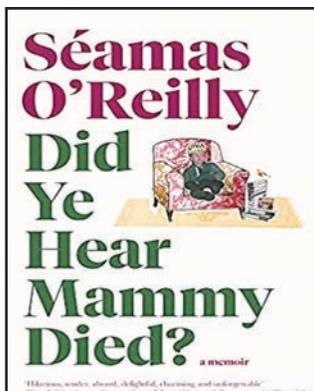
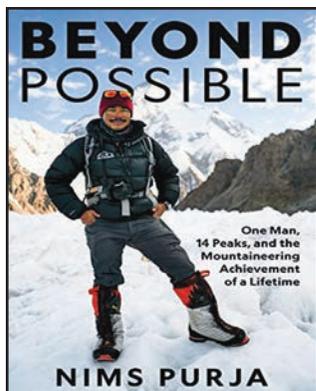
Purja is single minded in his goal, starting with the funds he had to raise from sponsors who were skeptical at first, doubts about leaving his military life (and part of his looming pension) behind. But he learned how to use social media platforms like Instagram adeptly, attracting attention and ultimately the funds he needed to accomplish this amazing feat. Those who may not summit anything higher than Mill Mountain or perhaps Mount Rogers in southwest Virginia can go along instead for the hair-raising journey with Nims Purja in *Beyond Possible*.

—Gene Marrano

## Best title award

Oh, how fun! A memoir about losing you mother at a young age. Despite that I can relate; this *Did Ye Hear Mammy Died?* by Seamus O’Reilly (Little Brown; 2022) really is fun. Delightful. LOL and all that. First of all, the act of reading this (which I got on Kindle) is simply one of ease and enjoyment. Our narrator has subscribed to that format where each chapter is so self-contained, what we’re really getting it a series of sketches. You want to gobble it all up at once—but you certainly don’t have to.

The humorous-grief-memoir (is there such a



genre... yes, there is—but this one is exceptional) is a beautifully drawn life reflection in the voice (which may or may not match the age at the time) that delights the soul. I liked it all... the stories of an Irish lad and his ten (that's right, ten) siblings, the stories of the father and his eccentricities, the stories of growing up during The Troubles, and mostly... the scenarios where you are clearly riding right along with the big ol' Catholic family in the caravan. As light as it is, you can reach down deep if you want—or you can chuckle the whole way through in the same vein as you would watching a comedy movie like *Home Alone*.

At times I felt like I was reading my own story. Some death, for sure, knocking ye down; but more than enough life to pick ye back up. (An absolutely brilliant title, by the way. It describes just one tiny episode that indeed, sets the tone, and blows like the wind at your back as you trek *along the road that rises up to meet you*, as they say.)

—Tom Field

## Tradition, admittedly

I don't even want to share with you what our monthly expenses reveal for one regular entry called Mama Maria's—a restaurant in Salem. Let's just say if one of those financial advisors reviews our register, they would probably highlight it in yellow.

My wife, Emily, and I have some traditions when it comes to eating out. And, maybe it's a result of the pandemic, but we have narrowed down those traditions to a select few. Though the service and quality of eating out seems to

have slipped over the past two-plus years, no one remains more vigilant and consistent than Mama's. It's just good, basic, satisfying Italian cuisine. I'll jump around the menu; but I also have to admit I gravitate to the same dish more than often. Like a brand of shirt you get over and over, you stick with what works, right?

What works at Mama Maria's extends beyond the food. We like our seat, we like our servers Al and Suzanne, we like our bottle of wine and Manhattan brought to the table before we even open our mouths. And then, of course, we do like opening our mouths for the entrees with their consistent and familiar sauce. *Buono!*

Recommendations: any of the appetizers (bruschetta and garlic knots are popular); all of the classic pasta dishes; more than one friend/family swears the pizzas are the best; chicken-seafood-vegetarian selections all good; calzones/stromboli; sandwiches and salads; they even have gelato with their desserts. The sauce—particularly if you “build your own dish” could be your heftiest decision: they're all good in their own ways... tomato, marinara, vodka, parmesan. Focaccia bread, of course.

Our own kitchen (my wife's kitchen, that is) remains my top choice by far. There's no match; and she's not even Italian. But Mama Maria's kitchen has that *at home* feel. It's stupendo good, and you'll continue to see our car parked there every week. My accountant can find another use for his highlighter.

—Tom Field

*The reviewers:* **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is a veteran news journalist and editor of FRONT.



## Second Standalone ER for LewisGale >

LewisGale and Roanoke County officials held a ribbon cutting recently to celebrate the opening of the health system's second freestanding ER in the valley. Roanoke County leaders, residents, and officials LewisGale gathered for a ribbon cutting ceremony at LewisGale Medical Center's Blue Hills Emergency Room located on West Ruritan Road, next to the Chic-Fil-a, in the Bonsack area. Alan Fabian, Market President for LewisGale, says the location allows residents in Roanoke, Bedford and Botetourt counties to receive care when they need it. "It will relieve the main hospital (ER at LewisGale Medical Center). That is a challenge we have. All of the hospitals are busy right now. This will alleviate some of the pressures on our emergency room, allowing people to get better throughput at the hospital." The 12-million-dollar facility features eight private rooms, has the ability to do x-rays, ultra-sounds and more. More than 30 staff members will operate the almost 10,000 square foot facility.



## Another area first says LewisGale >

LewisGale Medical Center in Salem says it is the first hospital in the Roanoke Valley to offer robotic arm assisted technology for partial knee replacement, total hip replacement, and total knee replacement procedures. Known as the Mako Robotic-Arm Assisted Technology, the platform provides surgeons with a personalized surgical plan based on the patient's unique anatomy before entering the operating room. The robot provides real time intraoperative feedback about the patients precise ligament balance. Robotic-assisted cuts help enact the surgeons plan with precision as well as less soft tissue dissection during the joint replacement procedure. Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Phillip Patterson performed the first total knee procedure at LewisGale Medical Center using the new technology. "After surgery, patients will likely experience less pain in the days and weeks following surgery than non-robotic surgery patients, as there is less bone and soft tissue damage."



## Gauntlet top winner has big plans >

For those who want to raise chickens or other poultry from eggs on a small scale - and can't be home to monitor conditions in the incubator - an entrepreneur who tied for first place at this past Spring's Gauntlet business competition says she has the answer. Natalie Ashton and her family live on a modern homestead or "microstead" in the Grandin Village area of Roanoke City, raising poultry from eggs, attending "chicken swaps" after they hatch. During the pandemic Ashton, an accountant by trade, bought a 3-D printer and started making incubator trays to hold eggs of various sizes; she says they've been selling well. Now she wants to create a phone app for people that work away from home but still want to hatch poultry. "It will give alerts if there are any issues with your hatch." It would work in concert with what Ashton calls a smart incubator.

That could take up to 5 years says Ashton. Her company is Electric Iris 3-D; follow it on social media she says. Her smart incubator pitch, where microsteaders can check on conditions (temperature, humidity levels) inside their incubators while off the property via an app helped land a near-\$30,000 prize package at the Gauntlet in May, after months of mentoring that she says was well worth it. "The way that my business has professionalized through the process has been awesome. I have met so many other amazing business owners. I really didn't know there were so many entrepreneurs in the Roanoke area."

The Vinton-based Advancement Foundation runs the Gauntlet business mentoring and competition every spring, calling it the largest such program of its kind in Virginia. Natalie Ashton's prize included more than \$12,000 in cash. "Everybody who goes through The Gauntlet gets something and the prizes that I got have been extremely valuable, [like] grant writing help, legal help ... all under the umbrella of this prize package."



## Northwest Hardware pitches in >

In June, fair fans purchased hundreds of Megapass unlimited ride tickets for the 2022 Salem Fair at area Northwest Ace hardware stores. The purchase of the tickets before the start of the fair enabled the Overstreet family that owns and operates the chain to donate \$7,725 to 127 Place. The 34th Salem Fair attracted visitors from all over Virginia and neighboring states during its 12-day run at the Taliaferro Complex. "Buying the passes early not only allowed fairgoers to save money, but it also provided a donation back to this deserving organization," said Nathan Overstreet. 127 Place in Salem helps children who are unable to help themselves – "working to positively impact the lives of vulnerable children."



## New class welcomed at Med School >

The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTC SOM) officially welcomed members of its Class of 2026 to begin their medical education in late July. 49 students were selected from a record number of 6,916 applicants. The number of applicants was an increase of more than 500 from the previous year. VTC SOM enrolled a record 31 female students, accounting for 63 percent of the class. "The four years ahead will develop their professional identities with the core values of collaboration and excellence; innovation and discovery; humanism and compassion; and diversity, equity and inclusion," said Lee Learman, dean of VTC SOM. The Class of 2026 includes five students from racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population. Eight students come from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background, and one is a first-generation college student.

## LewisGale Montgomery physician honored >

Brian Ekey, DO, Emergency Medicine Specialist with LewisGale Hospital Montgomery, was recently honored with the Dr. Cheryl B. Haas Award for Outstanding EMS Physician by the Western Virginia Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Council, presented to an EMS physician who exemplifies outstanding leadership and dedication in the exercise of prehospital care. Ekey, who also serves as the Operational Medical Director (OMD) for the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad, was presented the award during the Western Virginia EMS Council 2022 regional recognition ceremony. "It's a privilege to serve the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad as well as practice at LewisGale Hospital Montgomery" said Dr. Ekey.



## NRV Business team recognized for efforts during pandemic >

At the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) held in Staunton in July, the VAPDC presented the New River Valley Regional Commission's Business Continuity Team (BCT) with the Robert M. deVoursney Best Practices Award. The purpose of the deVoursney Award is to recognize organizations

that have initiated innovative regional best practices which have contributed significantly to the effectiveness of a region. The NRV Business Continuity Team was developed through a collaboration with the New River Valley Public Health Task Force and began operating under the NRVRC in August of 2020. Throughout the pandemic, the BCT provided services for businesses, public schools, and childcare facilities to navigate and operate in the COVID environment, in order to keep the region's workers both safe and productive.

## FSWVA corporate partners step up >

Carilion Clinic, Delta Dental of Virginia and Freedom First Credit Union spent two weeks collecting food donated by employees and community members at each organization's various locations. The net result? Two thousand pounds of non-perishable food donated to the Feeding Southwest Virginia food bank in Salem, which has been straining to keep up with demand as inflation pushes up prices, also making it harder for the foodstuffs FSWVA must purchase itself to make up for deficits not covered by donations. They also delivered \$10,000 in cash. "Fall and winter are extremely challenging for families that have limited budgets," says FSWVA President & CEO Pamela Irvine, "because their utilities increase, along now with fuel and food [price] increases. Their budgets are shrinking." The donation said Irvine will continue to help provide over 100,000 meals monthly to the wide region in Southwest Virginia the food bank serves.





Alex Powell

## A new approach to senior day care >

The 2020 Census shows that almost one fifth of Virginians are over the age of 65, making senior living care a talking point for many people. At an open house recently, the local community was invited to visit the InnovAge Virginia PACE Roanoke Valley Center that opened last June. InnovAge Senior Regional Director of Business Development Eric Beasley on the importance of older adults' independence: "these folks have worked very hard their whole lives to be able to build up their community and to live in the homes that they've lived in. To say because your body not able to do all

the things that it used to be able to do you should have to live somewhere else – that's not fair." Beasley said he believes the senior care community is acknowledging the importance of personal independence and that it helps those receiving care have better outcomes. The InnovAge facility opened last June and is located in Salem. The 25,000 square foot, daytime care facility is InnovAge's fourth in Virginia.



Gene Marrano



## WRABA grows again >

For the second time in just over a year The Greater Williamson Road Area Business Association has cut the ribbon on a new home office - and an even larger shared workspace for small businesses. It's in a renovated strip mall space at Williamson Road Plaza. Valerie Brown is the executive director for "WRABA"; she hopes that others see the potential as well. "We believe that if we take it seriously for what we want to offer Williamson Road, then Williamson Road will take it seriously as well. We're hoping to attract those people who don't want to work out of their home or out of their care anymore."

WRABA had just moved into a smaller renovated office and shared workspace last June. Brown said the new 2900 square foot property at Williamson Road Plaza was completely re-done by Structures Design Build, with help from a \$150,000 state grant that came from ARPA funds. First came a new office and small "Co-lab" type space for startups in June 2021 inside the former Happy's Flea market - but the new, larger office also features office suites that new businesses like Upward Financial Planning can rent. Daniel Colston says his firm is about two months old: "I really needed a place to land ... this was a wonderful place to come. Brand new construction, beautiful flooring, updated lighting, huge conference room. Perfect for everything I needed." The former "new home" for WRABA has been leased to another tenant in what is now the Fort Knox storage building just down the road. Local elected officials from Roanoke City and Roanoke County helped cut the ribbon.



Submitted photos



## VTC-FBRI debut joint inclusion room >

A ribbon cutting last month on the Virginia Tech Carilion campus, as the Center for Inclusion opened its doors to students at the medical school and the research institute - couches, comfortable chairs, student artwork and a large white board ball to write messages on, to express yourself. Dr. Angelica Witcher is an assistant dean for student vitality and the director of student affairs. The new Center for Inclusion has been on student's radar screens says Witcher: "a space for people to be intentional, to be inclusive, to invite others into their space, to learn what they're doing – and to learn together."

The new Center for Inclusion is located at Riverside One - home to the Medical School and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute. There is a diverse student and employee population on the VTC campus; The Center for Inclusion is designed to help build bridges says Witcher. "We haven't really had a space where different groups could meet together. The students really advocated for this. A task force put together by Dean [Lee] Learman at the medical school [suggested] we have a space; a team got together and we started working on it." The Center for Inclusion also includes shared workstations where students can collaborate – or just get to know each other.

*Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the social media links at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com) for more coverage.*



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## FINANCIAL FRONT



Terry

Farm Credit of the Virginias (FCV) announces that previous Credit Analyst **Clayton Terry** was promoted to the role of Loan Officer at the Roanoke branch. Terry spent summers working and learning on a dairy farm in southwest Virginia and has a Dairy Science degree from Virginia Tech with a minor in Agricultural and Applied Economics.

## WELLNESS FRONT

Community Health Center of the New River Valley welcomes **Jean R. Duetsch**, MSN, CPNP-PC, IBCLC. Duetsch

received her Master of Science in Nursing from Old Dominion University in 2021 and will complete her Doctor of Nursing Practice in May 2023. She also holds degrees from the University of Delaware School of Nursing and William & Mary. She is licensed as a Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner – Primary Care, and is an International Board-Certified Lactation.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Hawkins

Deb Beran Properties, Inc. at Smith Mountain Lake, announced **Judy Hawkins** has joined the company as a REALTOR® and buyer's specialist. A native of New Jersey, Hawkins

is an equine enthusiast and former English teacher. "For clients looking to buy the farm of their dreams at Smith Mountain Lake, Judy's experience will be priceless," Beran said.

## EDUCATIONAL FRONT

**Kevin Rice** has been named the director of the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC), at Virginia Tech. Rice most recently served as an assistant professor of entomology in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Missouri.



Reed

Roanoke-based Virginia Children's Theatre (VCT) has hired **Luke Reed** as the new Director of

Education. Reed will oversee VCT's Theatre Academy, the Education staff and VCT teaching artists. As Director of Education, Reed will also direct the Company's annual VCT KIDS ON STAGE production. Relocating to Roanoke from Fayetteville, Pennsylvania, Reed previously served as the Director of Education for Totem Pole Playhouse.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Miller

Inorganic Ventures in Christiansburg has announced the appointments of **Amanda Miller** to Head of Product Strategy and **Courtney Gibson** as Customer Experience Manager. As head of product



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



**Gibson**

strategy, Miller works directly with corporate leadership to develop long-term strategic plans. As Customer Experience Manger, Gibson oversees a team with responsibility for consumer relationship building, fostering customer loyalty through high-quality interactions, and improving overall user satisfaction. Inorganic Ventures manufactures analytical inorganic standards, specializing in certified custom reference materials.

OpX Solutions, a Roanoke County business that helps organizations with issues including leadership and operational excellence, has added **Peter Mierke** VP of Operations. After separating from the

## Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto: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.



**Mierke**

Navy, Mierke spent time with GE Energy, Mitsubishi Power and Logisticus Group in project management. He will be based in Savannah, GA.

### SENIOR FRONT

The Board of Trustees for Virginia Lutheran Homes names **Charles Downs, Jr., Esq.** as President and Chief



**Downs**

Executive Officer. Downs began his service with VLH and Brandon Oaks in the mid-1980's by volunteering with Christ Lutheran Church's youth group at the Virginia Synod Lutheran Homes (what is now the NRC). After attending Virginia Military Institute, followed by Pennsylvania State University for law school, Charles

returned to the Roanoke area and joined VLH's Board of Trustees in 2013. He was named Executive Vice President in February 2021.

### MUNICIPAL FRONT



**Boyer**

The Town of Blacksburg has hired **John Boyer** to serve as its Director of Public Works, following Kelly



# Bank of Botetourt



# CONTRIBUTORS

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

**Bonnie Chavez** is the CEO of Building Beloved Communities, a local consulting firm specializing in community-centered business solutions. Her driving force is to help all organizations overcome business barriers with a lens focusing on smart solutions that benefit the community. Bonnie is a proud lesbian, Latina woman who values her family, roots, heritage, and culture. [bonnie@buildingbelovedcommunities.com]

**Jennifer Poff Cooper** is a senior correspondent for FRONT, and a graduate of the RB Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Hollins University. She is a native of Christiansburg, where she lives and writes in her family's home place. [cooperrjp91@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]

**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 FamilyYMCA. 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.

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

**Nicholas Vaassen** is a graphic designer with 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.

Mattingly's retirement in August. Boyer began his career with the Town of Blacksburg in 2006, as Horticulturist and Certified Arborist, where he directed daily activities of the horticulture and grounds field crews, created landscape designs for public

gardens and outdoor spaces, supervised collection services and snow removal, and led Blacksburg's urban forestry program.

**Brea Hopkins** has been named Montgomery County's Director of Planning and GIS. In her role



**Hopkins**

as director, overseeing daily operations in

the Montgomery County Planning and GIS Department. Hopkins joined Montgomery County in 2001 as the administrative assistant for the Planning and GIS Department.

*Compiled by  
Gene Marrano*

“”  
Set aside a day in Q4 (that's next month) and really understand your numbers. — Page 28

“”  
My accountant can find another use for his highlighter. — Page 43



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*New strategic plan will be a first for city*

The City of Roanoke is crafting an Economic Development Strategic Plan it says will be a first - with input from outside consultants - and the general public. Marc Nelson says when he became economic development director for Roanoke a year ago, he sat down with the City manager about crafting a true strategic 5-year plan. The firm Ernst & Young was then hired to engage local businesses and other stakeholders, looking to establish clear and timely goals - and implementation strategies.

Nelson says the process is in Phase 2 of a 3-part project schedule timeline, with a draft being readied for City Council by September. One major component - a more robust "attraction strategy." Nelson, who was promoted to Director of Economic Development last July, calls it, "A better plan to define how we move forward."

That includes an enhanced "attraction strategy" to help attract more retail and other smaller businesses to the city - yes, perhaps like Trader Joe's - separate from the larger industrial companies the Roanoke Regional Partnership is going after. "There are always those businesses out there that are the hallmarks to a lot of communities. This is one of them." The goal says Nelson is to deliver a 5-year plan draft to

City Council by September. "You get a lot of questions about what we don't have business X, business Y. Traditionally we really haven't done much of that. Its going to conferences, the training sessions, having the resources available to be able to go out and do that attraction."

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*Chips bill could bring more opportunities for Virginia*

U.S. Senator Mark Warner is applauding Senate passage of a bill he co-authored aimed at helping the United States compete with China for production of semiconductor chips. Among other things, the "CHIPS-plus" bill, as it became known, provides tens of billions of dollars to encourage more domestic production: "In recent years we continue to lose ground, not just to China but to east Asian markets. As a country we've gone from 1990 when we produced 37 percent of all the chips in the world - today we're down to about 12 percent. Our leadership has languished."

Semiconductor chips help operate motor vehicles and electronic devices, and there have been pronounced shortages in recent years. Micron in northern Virginia hopes to expand its chips production with incentives built into the bill; Warner has also expressed optimism that it could lead to development of production facilities

elsewhere in the Commonwealth - building those plants, which supply chips for everything from vehicles to phones runs into the billions. Shortages have led to escalating product prices and lengthy back orders. Warner was an early mover in the cell phone industry before he became a politician.

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*Vinton eatery closes doors suddenly*

An anchor of the Vinyard Station in downtown Vinton opened with much fanfare, Joe Goodpies closed its doors suddenly last month - as customers waited outside for its lunchtime opening. "We had food in the oven, we were getting ready to open the doors for lunch," says a former employee who was there at the time, "and at 10 minutes to 11 [the owner] completely shut it down." She says the owner than called Vinton police when those employees "became chaotic." She says they were told to leave immediately, or he would charge them with trespassing. No word on what might move into that space, which was built to offer gourmet pizzas and other fare.

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*5 Points upgrades its website game*

5 Points Creative, the award-winning marketing and communications firm based in Roanoke, has re-launched its own website, which company President Bruce C. Bryan says is designed to attract new clients in need of marketing and

advertising assistance - by showing them the future: "people want information quickly, at their fingertips, they want a good user experience. The old days of the drop-down menus are gone. Easy navigation and access to that information in a handy way is really important. So [now] we just try to model that with our own site." See [5pointscreative.com](http://5pointscreative.com) to take a look. The Roanoke-based firm now has clients in at least six states.

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*Ride the rapids in Roanoke*

The City of Roanoke recently announced plans to construct an in-river whitewater park in the Roanoke River, the first of its kind in the state. An in-river park, also commonly referred to as a kayak park or whitewater park, is the modification of a natural river by adding man-made features to create play-waves and whitewater. It will include features for kayakers, tubers, waders, and shoreline sunbathers alike. This project originated when Roanoke Outside hired S20 Designs to conduct a feasibility study of the Roanoke River in 2015. That study identified a section of river near Wasena Park as a viable location for an in-river park. In June 2022, the City of Roanoke allocated \$2 million toward the project. Parks and Recreation Director Michael Clark says, "there is certain permitting associated with building in a

waterway, and of course, the project will be conducted responsibly with respect to any and all wildlife regulations." This project is grant funded, with requirements for completion by 2026.

### *SML Center funding advances*

The nonprofit Smith Mountain Lake Center has raised about seventy percent of the funds needed to purchase the 40,000 square foot former Grand Home Furnishings building at Westlake Corner. The goal is to turn the building into a community center that houses education, arts, entertainment, private events, and "hang-out areas". Smith Mountain Lake Center President Vicki Gardner: "it is so needed in our community and as each year goes by it is becoming more and more needed. We have a lot of new people that have moved [to the lake] and we want to be able to keep them. Having more and more to do in our community will bring

our community together." Gardner says the plan is to turn the SML Center into a community center that houses education, arts, entertainment, private events, and "hang-out areas".

### *Governor announces appointments to boards and committees*

Nick McNeil of Radford is now a member of the Cattle Advisory Board; Dr. Paul L Ruzsler of Blacksburg, Virginia Egg Board; Michael Karmis of Blacksburg to the Southwest Virginia Energy Research and Development Authority; Amanda Cox of Franklin County/Appalachian Power to the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. Also: Kathy Lu of Blacksburg/Virginia Tech to the Board of Trustees at the Science Museum of Virginia; George Hayth III, Shatenita Horton and Tracy Harper to the Roanoke Higher Education Authority Board of Trustees and Nancy Howell Agee, President and CEO for Carilion Clinic, to the Advisory Council on

## *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.

Revenue Estimates for the Commonwealth, along with Bill Kirk of Roanoke, Chairman of Associated Asphalt.

### *East Coasters changes name, owners*

East Coasters Bike Shop, a staple in Roanoke and Blacksburg since 1974, is now Trek Bicycle Roanoke and Trek Bicycle Blacksburg. Roanoke Outside reports that the original owners are stepping away "to pursue new adventures."

### *BoCo wins VACo honors*

The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) has announced the 29 recipients of the 2022 Achievement Awards, which recognizes excellence in local

government programs. Botetourt Fire & EMS won in the public safety category. Botetourt Fire & EMS was nominated for the VACo award after being recognized as the 2021 EMS Agency of the Year by the Governor's Office and for their work during the COVID-19 Pandemic, during which the department launched a "Boost Botetourt" Campaign, which brought COVID19 vaccines to the homes of those most vulnerable.

### *Partnership with local business means new art along greenway*

A public-private partnership has led to a new mural when a business along the Roanoke River Greenway partnered with Roanoke City and

Mended Fences  
August 19



The Kings  
September 2



Fuzzy Logic  
September 16



The Worx  
October 7



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the Parks department. Douglas Jackson, Arts and Culture Coordinator for the City, says that the decision to put up a mural on the walls of Barrows Inc. came in part because officials realized that many of the spots where they wanted to put up public art were privately owned. That sparked the partnership, which can now be seen by greenway users on the Salem end of the Roanoke River: "we've got so many great public spaces that are bordered by private property, and we're interested in how we can partner with the private sector – [how to] use public resources on private property?" Jackson says that this is just one of many projects planned to bring more art to such spaces.

The Barrows mural was created by three local artists - Josh Nolan, Libby Shafer and Maggie Perrin-Key.

### *Improvements along Williamson Road coming*

Roanoke City Council has passed a resolution supporting the Smart Scale 2024 applications that among other improvements could fund turning Williamson Road from 4 lanes within city limits - two in each direction - to three lanes total, including a two-way center turn lane. It's all about safety says Dwayne D'Ardenne, transportation manager for the city: "if we're going to solve the problem of vehicle

crashes and pedestrian [accidents] its going to be difficult to think of something other than from 4 to 3 [lanes] that will be a better, more cost-effective solution." The Williamson Road smart scale proposal would also fund pedestrian improvements and traffic light signalization. Any construction is still several years away. The Greater Williamson Road Area Business Association has championed for these improvements as a way to boost commerce along the busy thoroughfare and as a way to encourage more local residents to shop or eat there.

### *Regional planning commission takes on the opioid crisis*

A \$1.4 million-dollar federal grant spread over four years will allow the Roanoke Valley Collective Response - now under the umbrella of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission - to fight substance abuse. Niles Comer, director of the Collective Response, is ten years substance-free himself. The coalition includes law enforcement and emergency medical services, healthcare, local government agencies and the business community. The grant will allow for the hiring of three trained Peer Recovery

Specialists - all former addicts themselves.

"The Regional Commission at the end of the day is all about quality of life in the Roanoke Valley. They have focused mainly around environment and infrastructure and transportation, [but] mental health and addiction are a huge component of quality of life." Comer also says the Roanoke Valley Collective Response hopes to have these Peer Recovery Specialists hired and out in the field, working alongside first responders, within the next few months. He says becoming a program of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission affords the formerly volunteer organization to have a more stable infrastructure - and a farther reach into the Alleghany Highlands.

### *Growing non-degreed jobs*

75 percent of the jobs typically listed require a four-year bachelor's degree - less than half of those looking for a good job have one. So says the non-profit Virginia Ready Initiative, formed in 2020 as a response to the economic hardships connected to COVID-19. VA Ready executive director Natalie Foster says one-thousand dollar "achievement awards" are available

in more than 30 credentialed training programs that can lead to good-paying jobs without a bachelor's degree, after students finish one of those programs.

The Paper Ceiling VA Ready calls it: "what we want to do is spread the word about getting a credential for an in-demand field. Then you will be able to get a good job with one of many business partners that are looking to hire." Of the almost 2500 VA Ready "scholars" to date since 2020, 130 have come from southwest Virginia. Foster also says the program has relationships with companies looking for qualified employees. "We are always working with our business partners to see what their needs are in that workforce piece and how we can help meet those."

### *Inc. recognizes local HVAC, plumbing, electrical contractor*

Southern Trust Home Services, headquartered in Roanoke County, has been selected to the annual Inc. 5000 list, a ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in America. This is the first year Southern Trust has made the respected list.

*Compiled by  
Gene Marrano*

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Photos courtesy Mike Stevens and Salem Civic Center

Oak Ridge Boys Concert in 2019

# How the Salem Civic came to be the success story it is today

By Shawn Nowlin

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**Every month, memories are made at the Salem Civic Center. What will yours be?**

While Salem may not be a major market, its civic center complex is on par with some of the best venues across the Commonwealth. The history of the Salem Civic Center goes back more than five decades. Fifty-five years to be exact. The need for such a facility was first introduced by Salem Town Council in 1955. Less than eight years later, community members were pushing city leaders to start the construction process. Roanoke City built its own civic center a few years later.

Opened in 1967, the Salem Civic Center is part of the James E. Taliaferro Sports and Entertainment Complex (named after the former Mayor), which includes the Salem

Memorial Baseball Stadium (home of the minor league Red Sox) and the Salem Football Stadium. Until Roanoke County withdrew financial backing in the 1980s, the facility was known as the Salem-Roanoke Valley Civic Center. Since then, everything from birthday celebrations to high school graduations have taken place at the venue.

During the 1960s and 70s, the building was home to the Salem Raiders and Salem Rebels ice hockey teams. Today, the facility holds the NCAA Division III Men's College Basketball Championship, among many other sporting events. A 7,000-seat multi-purpose arena with multiple conference size rooms, the



Hank Williams on July 2022, was the highest grossing show ever



Salem Civic Center is one of the largest facilities in the Roanoke Valley. The City's Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs all use the building regularly for their meetings.

The list of notable musicians who have graced the site's stage over the years include Kenny Chesney, Def Leppard, James Brown and Big

Sean. One of the greatest basketball players of all time, Julius "Dr. J" Erving, displayed his dominance in the arena as the MVP of the American Basketball Association in the 1970s. Here is another fun fact about the Salem Civic Center: the film Borat used the facility for its national anthem scene. It was the scene when Sacha Baron Cohen duped

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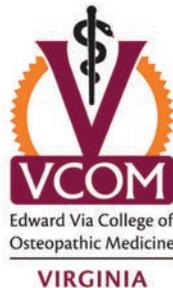


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Wendy Delano

civic center officials and sang his off-kilter version of the Star Spangler Banner before an event, leaving onlookers befuddled – and providing a memorable segment for his movie.

Some of the venue’s most anticipated events this year will happen in the fall – Gary Allen’s Ruthless Tour (September), Kazim Shrine Circus (October) and the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra’s Holiday Pops Spectacular (December). It was in the civic center parking lot where P.J. Sanogo met his best friend. As he explained, “I was attending the Salem Fair with some friends when I noticed this beautiful woman wearing a Dreamville sweater. I’m a huge J. Cole fan so my first question to Leela was, ‘If I were to play Crooked Smile right now, would you know the lyrics?’ Our love story

continues strong to this day. Had we not both been in Salem that day, we likely would have never met.”

Keeping the Salem Civic Center afloat in all facets has not always been easy. Like all businesses, the civic center had to make significant adjustments during the height of the pandemic. When the facility administered COVID vaccine testing last year, Sanogo and his family took full advantage of it.

Every employee, from the part-timers to the facility director, has a role to play in the Salem Civic Center puzzle.

The organization’s current brass is as follows: Wendy Delano, Director; Brian Horsley, Events Manager; Chris Fischer, Production Manager; Debby Huffman,



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Delano, who is responsible for overseeing everything, said of the Salem Fair, "I think it is popular because it gives people an escape. They can come out for an evening or a day and enjoy getting away from the daily routine. It also doesn't cost an arm and a leg, which obviously helps. Eighteen years ago, before I was working in my current role, my husband and I would come to the fair in the evenings just to get an apple dumpling with ice cream. Creating memories and having fun...that's what it's all about."

Added Salem's Director of Tourism Carey Harveycutter, "We are the largest fair by attendance of any type in Virginia. I think many times fair visitors focus on only the outdoor events and forget the cakes, pies, quilts and art inside the civic center that are created by their neighbors."

The history of the Salem Civic Center is captured through many visuals in Jonathon Hunter's scrapbook. Among the small percentage of individuals who can contrast the Salem Civic Center today to what it was when it first opened, Hunter, 76, says he's experienced a lifetime of memories at 1001 Roanoke Boulevard and has no intentions of stopping anytime soon. "Anytime I have family or friends in town, and something is happening at the facility, I always add it to our itinerary, regardless of the function. I have never had a bad experience at the Salem Civic Center. Not once." 

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“ ”  
He has never participated  
in a hostile deal. — Page 15

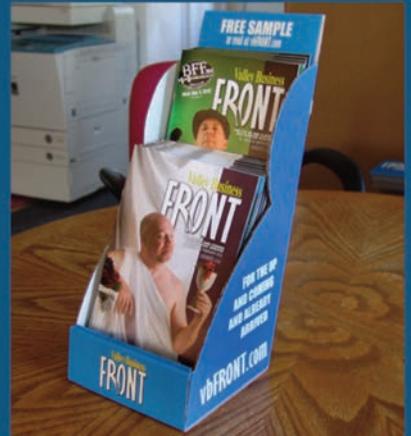
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