

Valley Business **FRONT**

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 173

FEBRUARY 2023

Name, Image
and Likeness

CowanPerry

Gentry Locke

Roanoke City
Economic Development

RND Coffee

vbFRONT.com



Expand.
and take a chair

Monica Monday
Gentry Locke

KJ FORD
K&J PROPERTIES



I FOUND MY FREEDOM
BANKING WITH  FreedomFirst

KJ Ford of K&J Properties in the New River Valley found his freedom banking with Freedom First. As a local business owner, KJ enjoys the close relationship that Freedom First has with their members, like they're friends or family.

He finds that it makes it so much easier to be able to call or text someone and get a response to his banking questions without even leaving his project sites. Now that's local Banking for Good!

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

WELCOME TO THE FRONT

There is a lot happening in the business and economic world right now as we go to press. The Fed may slow down on interest rate hikes as inflation slows, gas prices overall are trending down, used car prices are slumping and the sharp spike in housing prices appears to be flattening, as higher mortgage rates put the brakes on the buyer's market. Job growth is still strong – and companies are still looking for workers. Meanwhile the Commonwealth is issuing grants for site preparation, looking to have more "shovel ready" plots available for prospective employers. Some of that money wound up in our region (see details inside). More site prep money could be on the way if Governor Youngkin gets his way during the current General Assembly session.

This month we take a look at the local legal landscape, involving leadership succession, a local boutique firm – and how college athletes are cashing in on NIL – name, image, likeness. We also profile two brothers that now have a pair of gourmet coffee shops in the Roanoke Valley, and our rotating corps of columnists offer plenty of wisdom as well. Happy reading.



Tom Field
Publisher



Gene Marrano
Editor



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COVER STORY PAGE 8

Gentry Locke's Monica Monday ends successful managing partner tenure, becomes chair

By Aila Boyd



“Ok... you're not going to be shivved in the yard. — Page 26

FRONTcover photo of Monica Monday by Tom Field



Bringing us closer through Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

While inclusion and diversity have always been part of our fabric, we see inclusion as the golden thread that weaves our collective experiences together, unleashing the potential of our employees and so much more.

We thrive on what makes us different and encourage all our people to champion inclusion and celebrate other's unique abilities and perspectives. Therefore, we can only accomplish our purpose – to build a better future for the next generation – if all our employees are included, heard, engaged and empowered to reach their full potential.

Meet Lynnette Clark, Director of Field Operations and Co-Chair of the Virginia Region Inclusion Diversity & Equity Council.



Everyone has a unique story and experiences that's shaped who we are. The ability to take those experiences while remaining open to learning from those with different perspectives and backgrounds is what fostering an inclusive, diverse and equitable space looks like to me. I'm grateful to work for a company that's committed to supporting their employees, customers and communities through meaningful and purposeful actions. Cox understands that ID&E is more than just policies and programs but advocacy, education, trust, representation and respect to name a few.

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FEBRUARY



Aila Boyd



Bonnie Chavez



Jen Grassler



Frazier Hughes



Gene Marrano



Shawn Nowlin

Advisory Board

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

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senior services

“ ”

Wait! That's the same statistic from 1990—have we made no improvement?

— Page 18

“ ”

Both understand just how important coffee is.

— Page 34

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

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During Monday's tenure, roughly 20 additional attorneys and two satellite offices—Lynchburg and Richmond—were added.



Tom Field

Gentry Locke's Monica Monday ends successful managing partner tenure, becomes chair

By Aila Boyd

One of Roanoke's largest law firms, Gentry Locke Attorneys, is undergoing its first major managerial shakeup in nearly a decade.

Monica Monday transitioned out of her role as managing partner, which she assumed in 2013, at the first of the year and into a newly created chair of the executive board position. She was replaced as managing partner by K. Brett Marston, who has been at the firm since 1994.

When Monday took over the reins of the firm she has been at since 1993, she was one of the first women to lead a large law firm in Virginia.

Leading up to that moment, her path to leadership was a bit unconventional. She assumed an ownership stake in the firm in 2004, the same year her son was born. Instead of going the traditional route, she asked to be a part-time owner. The move allowed her to work—commuting from her home in Martinsville—and devote time to her son.

“It had never been done before, but the firm was really open to that,” she remembered. The experience, she said, provided her with a unique insight into the challenges lawyers face when “being the best attorneys they can be while also being there for their families.”

When she returned to full-time work in 2013, she took over as managing partner from Mike Pace, who had held the role for 14 years. Pace’s vacating of the role to accept a general counsel position with Roanoke College provided an unexpected opportunity for Monday.

At the time, the goal wasn’t necessarily to grow the firm but to make sure it was operating as efficiently internally as possible, which prompted the initiation of a wellness study. A rebranding effort, including the creation of a new logo, followed.

During Monday’s tenure, roughly 20 additional attorneys and two satellite offices—Lynchburg and Richmond—were added. Lynchburg-based attorney Herschel Keller partnered with Gentry Locke a few years after Monday took over to establish the firm’s first branch office. Another branch location was established in 2018 when Greg Habeeb, a partner and former delegate, decided to relocate to Richmond and Chip Dicks, another former delegate, joined the firm.

“Richmond has been an incredible success. We’ve also had success in our Lynchburg office,” Monday said, adding that the firm now has 21 attorneys based in the capitol.

“It has been an incredible experience and an honor to lead this firm,” she said. “It’s also been a challenge for me. It has pushed me. It’s required me to develop some skills I didn’t have.”

Throughout her tenure, she continued to actively practice law, which is a firm tradition. Finding a balance between leading and practicing was the biggest challenge she faced.

Gentry Locke

Brett Marston,
managing partner

“ ”

While we have grown, we have done it in a way we feel is relatively organic and smart

- Brett Marston

Gentry Locke

Monica Monday,
executive board chair

Gentry Locke

Herschel Keller,
partner (Lynchburg)



Tom Field

Gentry Locke, Roanoke

“ ”

He admits that he has ‘large shoes to fill, even if they are high heels.’

“It was exciting and rewarding and very challenging,” she said.

Monday’s move to a new role is part of a larger restructuring of the firm’s top leadership.

“We’ve been so successful in what we’ve done over the last 10 to 15 years that we’re in a position where we realize the managing partner role can’t really be done by one person anymore,” she explained. “We realized we needed to diversify what we were going to be doing, so we created the chair role.”

Another new role—general counsel—was added last year, which is occupied by Guy Harbert.

The decision that Monday would transition to a new role was made roughly six months ago.

In her new role, Monday will still play an active role at the firm, including leading its appellate practice. Additionally, she

will dedicate a considerable amount of time to recruitment, retention, professional development, diversity and pro bono.

As managing partner, Marston will be focused on strategic planning and the day-to-day operations.

He admits that he has “large shoes to fill, even if they are high heels.” Leading up to the transition, he worked closely with Monday to gain an understanding of the decisions the managing partner is faced with each day.

Since joining the firm, the Appomattox native has been involved in its management, notably in the establishment of the firm’s construction contracting litigation practice.

“I feel like I’ve been preparing for this since the day I arrived here,” he joked.

The firm’s direction going forward will be guided by a strategic plan.

Diversity is a significant goal for the firm. “We want to continue to enhance the diversity of the firm in all respects,” Monday said.

Marston also noted the plan continues to place an emphasis on achieving good results for the firm’s clients.

Despite the growth the firm underwent during Monday’s tenure, Marston said he doesn’t just want to grow the firm for the sake of growth. “While we have grown, we have done it in a way we feel is relatively organic and smart, so we’re

Gentry Locke

Jeff Southard,
of counsel

Gentry Locke

Kevin Holt,
partner

“ ”

We’re saying
around here:
‘100 years, 100%
committed.’

- Kevin Holt



Gentry Locke

Gentry Locke

Guy Harbert, III,
general counsel

A timeline of Gentry Locke managing partners: William (Bill) Rakes, Michael (Mike) Pace; Monica Monday



GENTRY LOCKE
Attorneys



The management change comes at a time when the firm is marking a major milestone—its 100th anniversary.

Gentry Locke, Richmond

going to continue to look at options on that front," he said. "We're looking to add talent that helps us grow in areas where we have not been as deep, for example railroad work, as we have in the past."




Gentry Locke

Gentry Locke, Richmond—with view of the Capitol

As the firm continues to expand, both Monday and Marston are aware that it will likely be difficult to maintain a sense of cohesion. “We want to maintain our ‘one firm’ approach,” he said. “We do not view ourselves as multiple operations. We view ourselves as one firm.”

The management change comes at a time when the firm is marking a major milestone—its 100th anniversary.

Kevin Holt, a partner at the firm, said, “We want to celebrate our past while we look forward this next year and years to come. We’re saying around here: ‘100 years, 100% committed.’ That’s what we are for the future—100% committed.” 



Gentry Locke

Gregory Habeeb,
partner (Richmond)



Gentry Locke

Chip (John G.) Dicks,
partner (Richmond)

Gentry Locke



Gentry Locke, Richmond



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
What is the best remote working policy for your company? Why have a policy at all?

Send your questions
or comments to Mike@
OpXSolutionsllc.com

Where to work?

Recently, Walt Disney Company reported that they were requiring all their employees to return to the office Monday through Thursday each week. Their reasoning was that an innovative and collaborative company like Disney needed to have everyone present face-to-face. Disney was the latest large company to ask employees to return to the office for at least part of the workweek.

As the pandemic has wound down, businesses large and small are trying to figure out what their policy should be regarding remote work. One extreme is a 100% remote workforce and no central office. The other extreme is having all employees work from the office every day. Most companies are settling for something in the middle, trying to balance teamwork and collaboration with the needs of employees who want to work from home.


Every company, every department, and every job are unique. The needs of every employee are also unique. When it comes to the physical location of each worker, why lump everyone into the same policy?

Some will say a policy is necessary so everyone is “in the same boat” and is treated the same. If that was true, why do some people have offices and others have cubicles? Why are some employees paid more than others? Or have different working hours?

A better solution is to review each role in the company and define what the requirements are to fulfill the responsibilities of that job. Can the work be done remotely? Is in-person collaboration needed? Are there times the team needs to be in the office? Can the company be flexible on where the work is completed?

Once the requirements are defined, ensure they are clearly understood by whoever fills that role, and discuss when those requirements can be flexible. Then based on the needs of the employee, a mutual decision can be made of where the work will be done. If an employee’s needs do not match the needs of the job, then look to help the employee transition to a different role.

Taking these actions for every job in the company is more work than having a standard, company-wide policy, but it’s the best route to achieve greater motivation, engagement, and productivity.

As for those who think that working from home will cause employees to skate and productivity to drop, that can indeed happen. However, setting clear performance standards and holding employees accountable is a leadership issue and not a work location issue. 

Reducing capital gains taxes with real estate

Qualified Opportunity Zone program legislation was passed in 2017 as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This was designed to provide tax cuts to help improve economically distressed areas through investing unrealized capital gains. The tax benefits can be considerable.

Let's say you sell a high capital gain investment property. This happens a lot with house flippers, particularly in our recent house buying craze. Maybe you have \$60k in capital gains you'd ordinarily be expected to immediately pay taxes on. Now you can invest this into another property in a specified area, usually lower income urban or rural neighborhoods. You don't need to live, work or own a business where you invest.

There are four designated Opportunity Zones in the City of Roanoke. These represent 18% of the population, or approximately 18,000 people, earning a median income of \$29,000 to \$78,000 (opportunitydb.com/cities/roanoke-virginia). Roanoke County and Salem have one apiece. There are more than 8,000 Opportunity Zones in the United States.

In many cases, these programs allow investments in blighted areas, or for those who prefer rosier terms, up-and-coming communities, to be tax free after ten years.

Qualified Opportunity Funds

This one doesn't require owning real estate directly. Investment entities need to be specific for this purpose. There's an accreditation process you need to go through to prove you're putting in money you can afford to lose. Couples are usually required to have earned at least \$300k over the past two years, or have high net worth (\$1MM). Most of these Funds are security investments registered with the SEC (www.sec.gov/education/capitalraising/building-blocks/accredited-investor).

Any type of capital gain, including long and short term, can be deferred through the Funds. Some can be eliminated completely. Usually, you have 180 days to get money from an asset sale or other gain into a Fund. Most Funds are focused on real estate development. Some of the deferral details get more complicated, including step-up basis calculations, so it makes sense to reach out to a financial advisor who understands this investment type if you're interested. For the right situation, these can be a good strategy for tax savings and wealth building.

The upside of Opportunity Zones and Funds is potential capital gains tax reduction or elimination. The down side is the investment choices are limited and this program can tie up your money for a long time if you're looking for maximum tax benefits. For those getting hit with high capital gains taxes, these programs are worth considering. 🏠



FINANCIAL FIGURES

By Michael Shelton

Executive Summary:
Opportunity Zones in the City of Roanoke—where they make sense, or don't.

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



Submitted

What billable hours?

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

Is your New River Valley business looking for outside legal help that is both highly specialized and client service oriented? Perhaps a boutique law firm—like CowanPerry—is the answer.

A boutique law firm is a collection of generally two to ten attorneys organized in a limited liability partnership or professional corporation specializing in niche areas of law practice.



Jim Cowan

CowanPerry PC opened in April of 2013 as such a firm. Jim Cowan, Chairman, had worked at a national law firm before he and David Perry decided there was a need for a new service model in southwest Virginia. Growth in the area brought about the need for more sophisticated legal services. Cowan said that people generally think first of technology firms as their clients, but CowanPerry serves a “diverse range” of companies: manufacturing businesses making everything from furniture to high tech or biotech products, non-profits, economic development entities (Onward New River Valley and the Wythe County Joint Industrial Development Authority), community banks, and commercial real estate and developers.

The firm decided to situate its NRV office (there is also one in Roanoke) in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research

Center, where many of its clients have easy access to it. Part of its location appeal, Cowan said, is casual seating, break areas, and cubicles for clients to use, as lawyers are often working on the go.

The business model is that if a company is not big enough to have in-house legal counsel, CowanPerry can act as the outside general counsel, helping in all areas of its practice. Instead of “billable hours” that lay persons hear so much about with lawyers, CowanPerry works mostly on monthly retainers (while still maintaining impeccable records).

“People can pick up the phone [to us] and the meter is not automatically running,” Cowan said.

CowanPerry helps new companies get established, and assists with compliance work, hiring and benefit plans, and taxes. These services are especially needed if the company is coming in from out of state or out of the country.

The mix of seven core practice areas with fairly sophisticated legal services has proven popular enough that Cowan said their firm is busy and looking for attorneys who would be a good fit – having both deep subject matter expertise plus interpersonal skills for teamwork and maintaining long-term relationships with clients. It can be a challenge to draw people with experience in one specialty to our geographic area, said Cowan. They either tend to have a connection with Virginia Tech or local family or are “culturally compatible.”

Changes in the legal landscape have precipitated the advent of boutique law firms. Cowan said that practices are becoming more specialized as the business environment has become increasingly intricate. Complexities such as software licensing entered the picture, making it “more complicated to stay compliant.”

CowanPerry is defined as much by what it doesn’t do as what it does do, said Cowan. It focuses on business


services, not general legal matters. It uses new technology, such as a cloud-based platform off-site, to be more efficient. In fact, efficiency is one of the main advantages of a boutique law firm. Cowan said that if there is a legal change needing to go into an employment handbook, every client will need the same change made and CowanPerry can “share the value of the efficiency with the client.”

Another advantage of boutique firms is responsiveness. Cowan said clients have his cell number – in fact, it is listed on the firm website. A smaller firm can be more agile and flexible; he pointed to learning about a new business “on our nickel, not theirs.”

Said Katie Boswell, Executive Director of Onward New River Valley, “CowanPerry PC serves as the general counsel for our organization. We continue to retain their services after many years because their team is knowledgeable, approachable, and easily accessible to our staff.”

Employment law is one area of the firm’s specialty. Cowan said that a big issue in that arena now is, post-pandemic, having employees working either remotely or hybrid. This means complying with differing state laws, including hourly wages, mandated paid time off, and non-compete clauses; registering as a business and tax issues also need attention.

If CowanPerry cannot help or if an issue is outside its wheelhouse, it can identify a firm that can assist the client and manage that relationship as its lawyers are well-connected through the bar. Said Cowan, “Clients are very appreciative of that.” CowanPerry doesn’t advertise, with most of its clients coming through word of mouth. “Referral is the biggest compliment you can get as a lawyer,” Cowan said.

He also said a source of pride is that every company the firm started out working with, it is still working with. “The idea was to have the expertise of a larger firm with the service of a smaller firm.” Mission accomplished. 



BEST JOB EVER

By Jennifer Leake

Executive Summary:
Your people are a valuable asset – and one of your biggest expenses.

Jennifer Leake CMC® is the creator of the Best Job Ever program, a workplace consultant, podcaster, and certified assessment expert.

Are you wasting your most valuable asset?

While you have systems for most other areas of your business – accounting, safety, sales, operations – you probably lack a people system. Finding and keeping productive employees has always been a business challenge, but it's an even bigger one today.

A word that is often heard is "employee engagement." It was coined in 1990 with the belief that motivating others was mostly a matter of hiring the right people and giving them the right incentives. This premise was radically different than the thinking of the time, designed to improve the fact that 1/3 of employees were disengaged, affecting both your business and other employees.

Fast forward to 2015. I'm asked to speak at an HR conference on Employee Engagement and begin my research on the subject. Multiple studies and statistics stated 1/3 of employees are disengaged, negatively affecting both your business and other employees. Wait! That's the same statistic from 1990 – have we made no improvement?

This led me on a multi-year research project, combining information from the internet, and my 20+ years as a consultant working with clients in multiple industries, different states, and various sizes. I was determined to discover what actions make a difference in engagement so we can move the needle on this "1/3 of employees are engaged" statistic.

My research indicated there are three key "people" systems all businesses must have to make any difference in engagement. Not one ... not two ... all three. Too often I've seen a business focus on one area and ignore the other two. It's OK to start in a single area, but consider it only a starting point, not the end solution.

I challenge you to examine your system in each of the 3 areas:

- 1. A system to hire the right people.** The outcome focus of this system is better candidates, objective hiring decisions, and less turnover.
- 2. A system to engage people for top performance.** The outcome focus of this system is motivated and engaged employees, retaining key talent, and increased results, revenue, and profits.
- 3. A system to develop bosses people want to work for.** The outcome focus of this system is productive managers employees respect, greater discretionary effort, and a succession plan or leadership bench.

Why is this important? Because statistics as recently as January 2023 report only 34% of the workforce feels engaged. Sound familiar? I fear it could be even lower based on the current work environment. Retention is the #1 issue I hear from employers, with recruiting being a close second. How do we engage employees if we can't find them or keep them? We must stop the exit bleeding, and employee engagement is a vital part of that.

Upcoming columns will address each of these systems, with ideas to strengthen your systems and develop a Best Job Ever culture in your organization. 📖

Text the word SYSTEM to 540-802-4333 to learn more about the vital pieces of each system.

Pay attention to the details

When writing contracts as all realtors should, I take them seriously. I've caught myself going back over some contracts a few different times to make sure everything is correct. I will give you some examples to give you an idea of what can go wrong so we make sure your transaction goes right. Timelines are key and also having the right boxes checked, too.

One box checked or unchecked can make the difference in a solid transaction or complete chaos. For instance, if you forget to sign the box to have a home inspection and the sellers sign, they can move forward, and you do not get a home inspection, which is key in a buyer beware state like Virginia and to make sure the home is safe. The only time I do not see a home inspection is if the buyer's family member is a contractor or it's a sought after house and it's the only way to win the offer. But that's risky.

Cash and loan timelines are key. If you are paying cash for a house, you have a certain amount of time to prove you have the funds. If getting a loan, you have about the same time to apply for loan approval, which most smart buyers have already done.

The earnest money deposit is put down before closing on a house to show you're serious about purchasing. In Roanoke you do not see high earnest money deposits very often. Typically I see \$1k and sometimes \$10k or higher to show the seller the buyer means business. Why? The seller keeps it if the buyer backs out. If the earnest money is not dropped off in 5 days, the seller can cancel the contract.

Having a survey may be important to you. I just sold my neighbors house and the buyers had a survey done to ensure the property lines are correct to know exactly where their yard is. No survey could mean you buy a property where your fence or even driveway is on the neighbor's property and they could ask you to move it in the future.

Getting cold feet because you all of a sudden do not want to sell your house or buy a house can have lawyers chasing you and brokers too. How? The selling and buying agents' brokers can sue for commission. This was recently done by a listing agent in our area, and he got his commission. Get a great realtor who pays attention to detail and you will be in good hands. You'll have a better chance and getting the home you are putting an offer on. 🏠

“Get a realtor who pays attention to detail.”



REAL ESTATE MATTERS

By Frazier Hughes

Executive Summary:
A real estate contract is a legally binding contract. Here are some do's and don'ts.

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



Dan Smith

Victor Cardwell: "...they have to strike while the iron is hot. It won't stay hot for long."

NIL is here; get used to it

By Dan Smith

Name, Image, Likeness is the new buzzword in college sports. What are its limits ... if there are any?

Victor Cardwell has this recurring fantasy that his namesake son, Victor, a freshman track athlete at Division III Roanoke College,

will sign a lucrative NIL deal. Sure, it is a fantasy right now, but just a couple of years ago, NIL deals of any kind were a fantasy and



Brennan Armstrong



Alexa Spaanstra

Cardwell's dream is as possible as anybody's these days.

NIL, of course, is "Name, Image, Likeness," the newest buzzwords in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA), but it primarily involves athletes at the highest level and mostly only the best of those. It allows what was forbidden since there has been an NCAA: professional payment for use of an athlete's name, image and likeness for promotion, advertising and goodness knows what-all the agents will come up with to rub two sawbucks together.

Already, we have multi-million-dollar freshman quarterbacks at major universities. We have soccer players and track athletes being paid in six figures, quarterback bench warmers looking at half a mil a year.

We have a woman gymnast, Livvy Dunn of LSU, raking in north of \$2 million and a pair of blonde, twin basketball players at the University of Miami with lot to play with, as well. The twins represent 40 brands and \$1.7 million, according to various sources. The Cavinder sisters, transfers from Fresno State, are above average basketball players, though hardly great, but they have the elusive benefits: they are beautiful and outgoing, and they are in a major advertising market.

This is one area of athletics where women are not being left in the locker room. Virginia Tech basketball players Ashley Owusu and Elizabeth Kitley (ACC Player of the Year) sit

NIL AND VIRGINIA TECH

The following three NIL organizations have chosen to align with the Hokies:

Commonwealth NIL: Founded by former Virginia State Delegate Nick Rush and Tech alum Forrest Rush. Focus on companies serving Virginia.

Hot Route Marketing: Led by Tech alumni Kelly Woolwine, allows businesses and fans to donate.

Triumph NIL: Partners athletes with corporate clients and lets donors contribute to specific athletes. Led by James Cowan, chairman at CowanPerry PC and includes former Tech All-American Kevin Jones.

at \$33,000 and \$17,600 respectively with their NIL money, according to On3.com, which keeps close watch on these developments and is the source for the numbers here. Their numbers likely would be higher in a bigger market than Blacksburg and Southwest Virginia, but, still, they are nothing to sneeze at.

According to the Stillman Exchange, "Many companies such as Nike have publicly mentioned since the inauguration of NIL deals that they want to see an equal representation of both men and women



Ashley Owusu



Keytaon Thompson



Virginia Tech

Elizabeth Kitley

athletes. As a result, Nike has signed women's basketball players from both the college and high school level. Female athletes have a larger influence on multiple platforms such as Instagram, Tik Tok, and more. A study done by Opendorse, a platform for college athletes with NIL deals, proves that NIL compensated female athletes are almost 20 percent more active on social media than male athletes."

Cardwell—a former University of Virginia football player, president of the Virginia Bar Association, labor lawyer at Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black in Roanoke and a man with an intense interest in and support for NIL—waxes strong, long and assuredly on the topic from both a personal and professional standpoint.

He can easily see what he missed out on

as a knock-down defensive back in the early 1980s and he can envision the potential legal cases that may well begin showing up in the courts eventually. In fact, UVa's best defensive back last season, Anthony Johnson, had an NIL value of \$32,000, but chucked that and declared for the NFL draft.

The commonwealth has joined 40 other states and the NCAA in support of NIL. The House of Representatives bill was sponsored by Del. Terry Austin (R-Botetourt) and Gov. Glenn Youngkin enthusiastically signed it. It was one of those deals where Democrats and Republicans pretended to be friends.

NIL representatives for young athletes, according to On3.com, "establish a market and project a 12-month growth rate. They measure the national licensing and sponsorship market [based upon]



Justyn Mutts



Grant Wells

performance, influence and exposure." NIL contracts are good only until graduation. No athlete from a Virginia college or university is in the top 100 NIL earners nationally, according to On3.com, but there is a good bit of money out there, especially for those with major programs or in big media markets.

NIL athletes are given products, gift cards, cash, appearance fees, branded training camps and autograph sessions, among benefits.

Cardwell (who once considered becoming an NCAA compliance officer but thought better of it) says that in the past "meat was given to the NCAA and the bones to the athletes" when they got even that. "The new law says the NCAA can't impede athletes from benefitting" from their sport.

The NCAA, he says, "had a vision of amateurism and kept a close rein on it. It always controlled the minor things and NIL was the last to fall." He wonders out loud just how much money J.J. Redick, the former Cave Spring, Duke and professional basketball player might have made as a high schooler under NIL. Without it, he made nothing. This year, high school basketball player Bronny James from Ohio (LeBron's son) will make \$7.5 million, says On3.com.

Cardwell says he once figured up his hours on the football field and determined he "made less than minimum wage" with his scholarship.


TOP NIL EARNERS AT VT AND UVA (AS OF EARLY JANUARY)

UVa: Anthony Johnson, Chico Bennett, Brennan Armstrong (now-former Virginia quarterback), Dontayvion Wicks, football; Keytoan Thompson, Jayden Gardner, basketball; **Women's soccer:** Alexa Spaanstra.

Tech: Tyjuan Garbutt, Nasir Peoples, Jalen Stroman, Jason Brown, Justyn Mutts, Grant Wells Football; **Women's basketball:** Ashley Owusu, Elizabeth Kitley.

Note: Liberty's standout basketball guard Darius McGhee has also jumped on the NIL train, appearing in ads for the Good Feet orthotics stores (Lynchburg and Roanoke), as have several UVA athletes. McGhee has also appeared in ads for Schewel's.

Cardwell is encouraged that many schools have hired staff to educate their NIL recipients on handling money, legality, ethics, etc. But, he says, "they have to strike while the iron is hot. It won't stay hot for long" because college ends all too quickly; and just to put things into perspective, he says, in the history of pro basketball, there have been just 4,000 roster members. Today, there are 460,000 college athletes and most won't get NIL deals.

But some will. That's the point. 



Virginia Tech

Justyn Mutts and Elizabeth Kitley



Jayden Gardner



SMALL BUSINESS TOOLKIT

By **Bonnie Chavez**

Executive Summary:

Generally, I don't help to create new nonprofits. I can think of one exception: when a program has outgrown its fiscal sponsor and is ready to become a 501(c)(3). That's when things get interesting.

*Bonnie Chavez is the CEO of Building Beloved Communities, a local consulting firm specializing in community-centered business solutions.
bonnie@buildingbelovedcommunities.com*

Decolonizing bylaws - can you legally ditch Robert's Rules?

Honoring Mission and Values

To respect the nonprofit I did work for, I will call them the Urban Native American Organization (UNAO). When the UNAO contacted me to help them become a stand-alone nonprofit, I was excited. Below is a summary of their Mission and Values.

Mission: To create, advocate for, and provide resources for Native Americans to access affordable housing opportunities. To serve those Native Americans who are experiencing homelessness, housing instability, in a metro city in the US.

Values:

- **Native-Led:** Center around the Native values of respect, compassion, and generosity.
- **Equity:** A driving force to achieve racial and economic justice.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Forming and using culturally responsive partnerships and resources.
- **Community-centered:** Accountable and responsive to community identified needs.
- **Creativity:** Continued focus on innovation to implement transformational methods and equally transformational outcomes.

Beyond voting – creating an inclusive option

UNAO uses a consent-based decision-making process. It's focused on consensus but has parameters in place to facilitate decisions in an effective, timely manner. This allows the organization to intentionally consider any objections, allowing for all voices to be equally heard, and then collectively move forward with decisions.

Their goal is to model respectful communication. When called upon during a meeting, it's common for someone to say, "Yes, I did have my hand up first, but I will defer to XXX as she is an elder. I will speak after her." Or "Thank you XXX, with deepest respect, I would offer this counter point..."

UNAO uses hand signals when a proposal is brought forward: thumbs up (in favor), thumb sideways (need more info), thumb down (objection, causes harm to our community), no thumb (abstain). There is a more detailed process to move toward a decision – and allow for context and communication – but that's a good overview.


Building a bespoke nonprofit

As I authored the bylaws, they were very clear about two things.

1. Do not use the word "vote" in the bylaws
2. Do not use Robert's Rules of Order for decision-making and conducting of business.

Success!

After a few revisions, we had it. We created rules to ensure that board composition and leadership will remain Native-led. Our only concession: we met the legal requirement to name a board chair, secretary, and treasurer. That was it.

Everything else was centered in the organization's communication, organizational, and decision-making style. I consider this the most authentic set of bylaws I've ever helped to create. UANO received their 501(c)(3) approval that honors their ancestral heritage while protecting future generations. 

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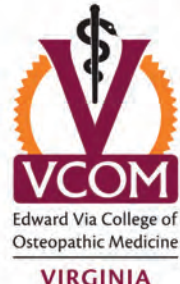


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Don't go to digital jail!

Ahhh jail. I don't know about you, but when I was a kid, I was always afraid I'd end up "in jail." I didn't have any plans to commit big heists or anything, but I think TV had it ingrained in my head that you could simply end up "in jail" for a crime you didn't even commit. I mean, have you SEEN "Shawshank Redemption?" That's some pretty bad jail right there!

And guess what everybody? Jail is back and better than ever! OK ... you're not going to be shivved in the yard by a rival gang, but "digital jail" is something you could easily end up in (or already have). "Digital jail" is when our social media robot overlords decide your content has somehow violated one of their 6,523,222 unspoken regulations and you are summarily sentenced with little to no chance to argue your case. Huzzah!

If I tried to list ALL the ways to avoid digital jail, the finished product would be the size of one of those giant old books on "Game of Thrones," but here's some of the most popular ones.

DON'T: Run contests asking for likes, shares, and tags: we've all done this one (and probably gotten away with it), but Meta is very clear that this one is against the rules. Additionally, it just kinda looks sleazy and desperate. What you CAN do instead is run a giveaway and ask people to contribute with relevant comments. Example: An outdoor store could offer a \$25 gift card and ask, "What's your favorite winter outdoor activity?" That's totally fine, and in many cases will actually help boost page engagement as more people comment on the post.

DON'T: Use banned hashtags: explicit and defamatory hashtags are obvious, but what you may not know is Instagram has an unpublished list of "shadowbanned" hashtags. These are seemingly normal tags that have been hijacked by spam accounts, so IG starts hiding posts that use it. Example: #adulting is currently shadowbanned (who knew?) and will get your post crushed by the algorithm. Use Google to find more.

DON'T: Share other people's stuff without permission: in some ways this is silly where a person enters YOUR business, takes a picture of YOUR stuff, and tags you in the post and yet it's still totally against the rules to repost without permission. Even though 99% of people don't care, take the extra minute to shoot them a DM and ask if it's OK to repost. All it takes is that 1% to decide to complain and you're in trouble.

OK friends ... that's all we have time for today.
Good luck staying out of jail! 🚫

TECH WHISPERER

By Zack Jackson

Executive Summary:
*Shaddowbanning
and other no-no's.*

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

By bot

Executive Summary: *We requested a "professional-tone" report using a popular Artificial Intelligence Content Generator. We chose commercial real estate as that is a common industry we cover. Here is the result with no edits (except for the "add more" text, which was necessary to reach a suitable word count). We expect the technology to improve, of course.*

We have compiled a report of commercial real estate in southwest Virginia that provides an overview of the current market conditions, available properties and details on each property.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of commercial real estate in southwest Virginia. It is intended for the general reader and will not be suitable for professional or legal use.

Commercial real estate in Southwest Virginia is experiencing a growth spurt, and with this comes opportunity for investors. With high demand for commercial property in the region, there has never been a better time to invest in real estate!

Commercial real estate in southwest Virginia has continued to grow over the past 10 years. Southwest Virginia has become a mecca for retirees and young families, who are drawn to its rural charm, low cost of living, and small-town feel. In fact, more than 20% of the population in this area is age 35 - 54 and over 6 million people live within a 2-hour drive of our region.

[add more]

The report provides an overview of the commercial real estate market in southwest Virginia. The objective of the report is to serve as a resource for general information regarding the commercial real estate market, including market drivers and trends, current conditions and forecasts for office, retail and industrial space.

The commercial real estate market in southwest Virginia is made up of several regions and locales. The following report provides an overview on the commercial real estate market in each area, including developments that have taken place within the last 10 years, current average price per square foot, and average size of buildings.

The real estate industry in the state of Virginia is a strong and growing one. The supply of commercial space is on the rise, and demand for office, warehouse and industrial property is expected to rise over the next five years.

[add more]

Located in the heart of the coalfields, our commercial real estate in southwest Virginia is a diverse region consisting of a variety of industry sectors. The "mountains" of this region consist mainly of rugged Appalachian peaks and valleys that range from 1,500 feet to over 4,000 feet above sea level. These "hills" often consist of porous limestone that were formed by ancient seas hundreds or thousands of years ago.

Southwest Virginia is home to many commercial opportunities. Located in the southern part of the commonwealth, this region experiences a temperate climate that is ideal for cultivating crops and raising livestock. While agriculture is a chief industry, mining has also played an important role in developing the economy.

The real estate industry in southwest Virginia is one of the fastest growing industries and has the potential for continued growth. Southwest Virginia is made up of a network of communities and unincorporated places, with a total population of 1.2 million. As the largest region in the state and home to three major metropolitan areas, Southwest Virginia stretches from Bedford County in the north to New River Valley in central Virginia and from Roanoke County on its southern border to Wirt County in the northwest.

The commercial real estate market in southwest Virginia is characterized by a diverse offering of properties and competitive pricing. Both the demand and supply of commercial real estate have grown or remained steady from 2016 to 2017. This indicates that the area is generally healthy, but may be facing some challenges regarding the availability of quality tenants to occupy vacant office space and high prices for properties suitable for industrial use.

Commercial real estate in southwest Virginia is a growing field and many new companies are seeking to expand their business here. We have collected this report for general information on commercial properties in the area, so that businesses can make an informed decision on whether it is right for them.

HERE IT IS!
YOUR FIRST FRONT ARTICLE
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Roanoke City crafts several plans to move economic development efforts ahead

By Gene Marrano

With newly adopted plans in place, “now we have to sit down and do the hard work,” says Marc Nelson



Marc Nelson

Roanoke City Council has approved two long-range plans including a Neighborhood Centers Plan. Four areas in the city have been chosen as "test beds" for revitalization. 11th Street Northwest, West End SW, Melrose Avenue Northwest at 24th Street and 9th Street Southeast were the areas selected with help from an outside consultant. Marc Nelson is the Director of Economic

Development for the City of Roanoke; he says it is not a cookie cutter approach to redevelopment, as Roanoke looks to develop more successful neighborhood centers.

A consultant group called Downtown Economics LLC worked with Nelson and others to identify communities ripe for revitalization in the City of Roanoke. The consultant first visited Grandin Village, South Roanoke and Wasena, looking for takeaways on what has made those neighborhood center successful. “Why are they the way they are? Are there examples you can extract from that?” Nelson asks.

The selection was based on “the high potential for success,” considering activity drivers like residential density, traffic levels and amenities that include parks. All have seen better days perhaps and seem ripe for rejuvenation/investment. Some of it is already underway - like streetscaping and a planned grocery store in the Melrose area and the city's already-targeted revitalization efforts in southeast. (The Gainsboro area in northwest is also working on its own separate Neighborhood Plan.)


An advertisement for Anytime Fitness. On the left is the Anytime Fitness logo with a stylized figure and the text "ANYTIME FITNESS". Below it is the slogan "YOU'RE NEVER TOO BUSY FOR ANYTIME". To the right, the word "SALEM" is written in large white letters. Further right, "SPARTAN SQ 375-2900" is listed. Below "SALEM", the words "BLACKSBURG" and "RADFORD" are written in large white letters. To the right of "BLACKSBURG", "FIRST&MAIN 951-1340" is listed. To the right of "RADFORD", "FAIRLAWN 633-3004" is listed. The background is dark purple with white text.

"These neighborhoods have their own distinct fabric and history. It's not trying to say we'll make 11th Street into a mini South Roanoke. That's not what we're trying to do." To that end, Nelson says local residents will have input on any redevelopment plans. "It's important for people to understand that these are suggestions [and] may not happen just that way." The next step is to meet with residents and neighborhood associations, looking for input and buy-in. When local governments get involved in neighborhood planning, "these are not easy conversations," at times. Much of any revitalization will involve bringing local investors on board, those with deep pockets who can grasp that long term vision of better places to live, work and play.

Both macro and mini plans for economic development in Roanoke have been adopted by City Council. The broader "Economic Development Strategic Plan," created with help from Ernst & Young, was also adopted by City Council in December after months of drafting and input from the public. It's not as deep in the weeds as a Comprehensive or Community plan that all localities create and then update on a regular basis focused on appropriate land use, but more of a big picture where-do-we-want-to-go type of approach. "This provides a series of guideposts to help shape [future plans], general strategies," says Nelson. The plan will also focus on retail business attraction, something Nelson says is not the target for the Roanoke Regional Partnership that he also notes does

a "fantastic job," when it comes to more of the big-box major employers in the manufacturing realm, for example. "The plan goes out about five years," notes Nelson, pointing to a city retreat coming up this winter to focus on this new approach. "[It] captures all of the things we're doing now."

After ten years in the economic development department, Nelson felt while things were moving in the right direction on many fronts, it was time to craft a true strategic plan after he took the helm (following retirements as well) within the city department. Part of that plan involved innovation, as in the Innovation Corridor trumpeted by Nelson and others along South Jefferson Street, including the RAMP accelerator, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and the wet/dry lab shared space being built with support from Johnson & Johnson Innovation (JLABS). It's focused on the Life Sciences sector that continues to grow in the Roanoke Valley (and in the New River Valley where a similar lab space is being built at the Corporate Research Center).

Nelson also says Roanoke City is one of the very few localities in Virginia to have hired an Innovation Administrator – former Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport executive/spokesperson Brad Boettcher. Nelson had focused on innovation before he was promoted. City Manager Bob Cowell then suggested he look for someone focused on that sector. "We've got a lot of things going on," says Marc Nelson. All good reasons to have a solid plan - or two - in place. 

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Roanoke Higher Education Center receives \$50,000 grant to launch Career and Workforce Training Center


The Roanoke Higher Education Center (RHEC) has received a \$50,000 grant from Roanoke Women’s Foundation to support the launch of a new Career and Workforce Training Center. Currently, the RHEC provides access to a vast array of educational opportunities through the 13 member institutions including colleges, universities and workforce training agencies. With this new service, the RHEC will provide students with the necessary resources to seamlessly enter the local workforce after completing their training or degree.

“The Career and Workforce Training Center will be such a benefit for our students seeking new employment opportunities and for the business community,” said Dr. Carla James, Senior Director of Academic & Student Services, Roanoke Higher Education Center.

The Career and Workforce Training Center will offer graduates tools and strategies that will connect them with employment opportunities. Services will include help with writing resumes and preparing for an interview, developing portfolios and presentations, as well as guidance on career re-direction, internship opportunities, and more. The staff will provide support on entering the workforce and facilitating a job search that is tailored to an individual’s interests and career goals.

Locally, careers in research, technology, and healthcare are in demand. By aligning an educated and skilled workforce to the needs of the local community, students are primed to graduate from their programs with an internship or job already secured. Cultivating connections between students and employers will keep talented workers in the region, contributing to the economic growth and vitality of the Roanoke Valley.

Career and Workforce Training Center services are free for students of the RHEC educational member organizations. Members of the public may utilize some services for a fee. The Center will tentatively open in Spring 2023. For more information, contact 540-767-6201 or email careercenter@education.edu.

The Roanoke Higher Education Center recognizes Roanoke Women’s Foundation for its generous grant in support of our mission, our clients, and the greater community. 

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Careers in research, technology, and healthcare are in demand.

The lost art of listening


In a world where polar opposite views and rigid opposition to any perspective that doesn't align with one's personal thoughts are becoming the norm, opening one's ears and subsequently one's mind can often enlighten both parties involved.

How many times have you stepped into what you thought was a conversation and discovered after a few minutes of dialog that there was an agenda of forced perspective taking place. Now before I get bucked off my high horse while writing this article, I need to admit that stubborn is a term that has been used to describe me, well... often. I have been known to lock and load on a perspective and drive my point home. In a nutshell... there is always room for self-improvement.

What are some simple things that anyone can do to begin stepping up their listening skills?

1. ASK QUESTIONS - At the end of my intakes I ask new clients "What is your goal with today's massage?" Asking a client what their expectations are and acknowledging their responses gives the customer/client power in the situation. It encourages collaboration and discussion where the goal is getting everyone on the same page. It creates a pause that makes the client identify their needs and wants and then relay that information clearly to you. It gives you both a common road map to follow.

2. LISTENING DRIVEN BY CURIOSITY EQUALS FLEXIBILITY - When you have a limited knowledge base you have limited flexibility. Being able to pivot on a dime is more difficult if you don't have a large tool kit to pull from. Curiosity in your craft/profession and continued growth in your area of expertise allows you to make the necessary changes to accommodate their unique needs. This tailored service allows the client to feel special and creates loyal repeat business.

3. ASK FOR FEEDBACK - This can be a tough one. It's not the greatest thing to hear from someone that they think you've dropped the ball on something. It's essential though if you want to streamline operations and determine what direction you need to place time and energy into in order to improve client relations. In the way of health and wellness it also asks that clients/patients start connecting with their own bodies. It encourages them to take stock of how they are feeling and can potentially help them see what contributing factors they may be making that is affecting their overall health. This can help empower them to take ownership of their personal habits and choices. 



WELLNESS

By Jen Grassler

Executive Summary:
Building on last issue's topic of Curiosity is its friend ... listening.

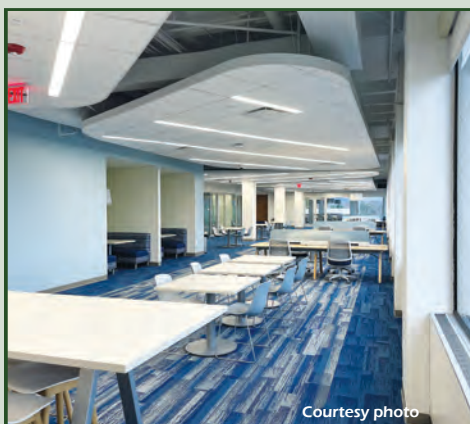
Jen Grassler, LMT is the owner of Overland Therapeutic Massage located in the Cave Spring area. She focuses on body alignment by utilizing the Myoskeletal approach to bodywork.
overlandmassage@outlook.com



Gene Marrano



Gene Marrano



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

Galen College sneak peek >

HCA Virginia Health System and its affiliate, Galen College of Nursing, have announced a second Virginia Galen campus will open in Roanoke in Spring 2023. A single-purpose nursing college with a mission to increase access to quality nursing education, Galen will bring an additional educational option in Roanoke to help address Virginia's nursing workforce needs. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 194,500 average annual openings for registered nurses over the next 10 years, with employment projected to grow 9 percent.

"This new endeavor will help us continue to attract the next generation of nurses and help support the delivery of quality care in the state," says **Mark Vogt**, Galen's chief executive officer. "With over 30 years of experience exclusively educating nurses, Galen is well-positioned to help expand the pipeline of practice-ready nurses in the Roanoke area." The Roanoke campus will

feature advanced patient simulation labs and classroom environments designed to encourage practice-based hands-on learning. Galen says it has helped over 30,000 graduates enter the profession over the last 30 years. The Roanoke County campus will be its 15th nationwide.

"The addition of Galen College of Nursing will complement and increase the availability of high-quality nursing education available in Southwest Virginia," said **Amy Woods**, chief nursing officer at **LewisGale Medical Center**. LewisGale's parent company, HCA, has a majority stake in Galen College and gets a first option on program graduates. Located at Metis Plaza on Electric Road the campus will initially offer a 2-year Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program and a Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse to Associate Degree in Nursing Bridge (LPN/LVN to ADN Bridge) starting in April. With four quarterly enrollments per year, admission for the first term is now in progress. The first student classes on campus are projected to begin in July.



Pro Lacrosse comes to Salem >

The **Salem Civic Center** had an historic night for local sports in late December when mayhem broke out. The **Salem Mayhem** to be precise, of the new Professional Box Lacrosse Association had their debut game against the Hampton Hammerheads. **George Manias**, Team President of the Salem Mayhem and Vice President of the PBLA says box, or indoor, lacrosse is a lot like hockey on foot – and on the artificial turf installed for their matches: "It becomes more physical because there's less space to move around [than the outdoor lacrosse game.] Every time you get possession you have 30 seconds to take a shot."

Manias says he the PBLA will open up the pro-lacrosse world for more American players, who mostly play the outdoor version of the sport. Lacrosse is dominated by Canadians at this point and each PBLA team actually has a 4-player cap on the number of players that

can be on a roster from Canada. Mayhem head coach **Lindsay Anderson** is a member of the Ontario & Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame and previously coached in the National Lacrosse League – the major league for box lacrosse. "There's penalties, there is fighting. A lot of the same penalties, tripping, holding, slashing, that type of stuff. If there's a penalty call the coach has the option of taking a two minute penalty (and being shorthanded 4 on 5) or getting a penalty shot. It's going to be very strategic of when you decide to do that."

Manias hopes to see the PBLA become an official feeder circuit to the NLL as it continues to grow. Salem is a local hotbed for youth lacrosse and home to Roanoke College – which won the 1978 Division III college championship on a goal by **Bob Rotanz**, the co-owner of Mac & Bob's restaurant in Salem. Rotanz was honored before the Mayhem's opening game, which was attended by a sizable, boisterous crowd at the Salem Civic Center. The Mayhem will play seven home matches ending on April 1.



Quincy Randolph

Java and passion

How RND Coffee became a Roanoke Valley community favorite

By Shawn Nowlin

RND Coffee recently celebrated its third year in business and has no plans to slow down anytime soon.

Successfully running a coffee shop requires many things – knowledge of the community and neighborhood, maintaining a welcoming atmosphere and establishing a standard of quality, just to name a few. Throughout Virginia, there are more than 1,000 coffee

shops. A recent study conducted by Statista found that nearly 39 percent of adults visit a coffee shop at least twice a week. Quincy Randolph and his older sibling, Steffon, have a unique relationship with coffee. From personal experience, both understand just

how important coffee is and its many benefits.

In April 2019, the brothers opened Roasters Next Door (RND) Coffee, a small batch roastery and coffee shop, at 1114 Main Street in Wasena and two years later, after accumulating the capital through both private and bank investments without giving up a lot of equity, a second location in Vinton at 101 E. Washington Ave. had its grand opening. Approximately 1,100 square feet is the size of the Wasena location, compared to 2,300 at Vinton.

The story of how RND Coffee became a reality involves tremendous teamwork, a detailed business model and a little luck. Passionate for as long as they can remember, the brothers were taught an invaluable life lesson from their parents at an early age: if you are afraid to fail, you will never succeed. "Our parents, both educators, owned a coffee business [as well]. We saw up close what works and doesn't work.

"When Steffon recruited me to take over

the operations of RND, I was working in Chicago as a chef at the time," said Quincy, who has since appeared on the Food Network's "Beat Bobby Flay" national segment. "He was always more of the coffee connoisseur, but he'd never worked in the restaurant industry. When he opted to join the military, I became the majority owner of the business." Today, both locations employ half a dozen individuals.

On days where he can, Quincy usually arrives at the coffee shop in the morning. What often follows looks like this: make sure the logistics are taken care of, check on the customers and complete whatever task needs to be done. "Through people supporting us, we have been able to sell our products in local grocery stores," he said. (The brothers also co-own a plant-based ice cream store in the Wasena neighborhood with the owner of Bloom Restaurant across the street from RND.)

Valley Business FRONT asked regulars a few questions about RND Coffee, and this is how they responded;



Submitted

Vinton store



Submitted

Wasena store

How do you like your coffee?

"That is easy. Black, with a couple packets of sugar. I never add milk or cream. Because I drink it diluted, it varies in strength" – Kimberly Pham

"When I was in high school, my parents regularly made sure to put either non-dairy creamer or milk in my coffee. Twenty plus years later, I remain a content member of the milk in coffee club " – Carter Smith

"This may sound odd, but I've sort of been an odd individual my whole life. But what I like to do is gauge the amount of creamer I put in my coffee by how it matches the complexion of what I'm wearing" – Veronica Thompson

When do you usually frequent RND Coffee?

"For me, it's usually when they first open in the morning or when they are about the close. My schedule can be beyond hectic at times, but I always make the time to support RND" – Samira Ragland

"RND Coffee has been a part of my weekly routine for over two years. I tend to visit during my lunch break. Sometimes I have to wait in line longer than I'd prefer, but once I get my purchase, it is always worth it" – Jay Hunter

"It depends on my schedule. My best experiences have been early in the morning when there's not a whole lot of people. I'm an introvert so I don't like being around a lot of people " – Parker Smith


What separates RND from other coffee shops?

"For me, it's the hospitality. I visit both locations a few times a month and I've never, ever had a bad experience" – Riley Coleman

"The passion in which they do things. It's pretty obvious when lackluster effort is given. These guys know their coffee and have a way of making you feel important" – Sinethia Awusah

"The coffee itself is top notch. Ask my GPS. I will literally drive out of my way to get my favorite small latte at RND." – Tom Field

"I'd say for starters, everyone always has a smile on their face. The first time I visited I told them how I heard of them and when I returned a few months later, they remembered my name. Small things like that speak to their attention to detail" – Jordan Hernandez

Excellent guest service is a priority at both RND locations. When people walk through the doors, Quincy wants them to feel appreciated, whether they are a regular or first time visitor. The Wasena and Vinton doors are open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Sunday, respectively. For the most up to date information, visit RND Coffee's social media pages. 

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Shooting pain through shoulders, arms, neck or jaw



Shortness of breath



Heartburn, nausea or indigestion-like pain



Dizziness, fainting or sudden abnormal sweating



Extreme fatigue or exhaustion



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

** Women may experience signs that may not be as easy to recognize, such as fatigue or feeling flu-like symptoms.*



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Submitted by AFP,
First Virginia Chapter

Executive Summary:
Our Good Work column presents nonprofits and community service organizations. Since none of those missions work without financial resources, this report celebrates some exceptional fundraisers.

Fundraisers do good work

The Association of Fundraising Professionals First Virginia Chapter in cooperation with the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia has honored the following with National Philanthropy Day Awards:



Outstanding Philanthropic Organization:
West End Center for Youth
(Karen Pillis, Executive Director)



Outstanding Fundraising Executive:
Katherine (Kay) Strickland



Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser:
Rob Cassell


West End Center for Youth was founded in 1979 and serves more than 150 children and their families each year who live in Roanoke's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The goal of the program is to equip children with the developmental assets they need to become productive, responsible adults. To accomplish this goal, West End Center offers a comprehensive educational program in afterschool and summer programs. Priorities for learning center on academic enrichment, social skills development, and wellness. During the pandemic, the staff pivoted to meet the needs of students and families by offering daily meals to ensure proper nutrition and serving as a daytime satellite location for Roanoke City Schools

to ensure children had the resources and supervision needed to be successful in a virtual learning environment while families could continue to work.

Katherine F. (Kay) Strickland is the Chief Development Officer for Carilion Clinic and the Carilion Clinic Foundation. Since joining Carilion 11 years ago, her focus has been to establish a philanthropic program for the Clinic which is headquartered in Roanoke. The Carilion Foundation is currently engaged in its first capital campaign to raise \$100M to transform cancer care and build a new cancer center for our region.

Ms. Strickland has also served as: Executive Director of the Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation and External Relations; Senior Director, Major Gifts and Planned Giving for Hollins University; and the Executive Director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation. She has served on numerous national, state, and local boards including the national Council for Resource Development, Virginia Association of Museums, the Commonwealth Council, the Committee to Advance the TransDominion Express, the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Oliver White Hill Foundation, Family Service of Roanoke Valley, and Richfield Living. She is a beloved mentor to dozens of fundraisers who have gone on to successful careers throughout the field.

Rob Cassell has been a passionate supporter of the YMCA of Virginia's Blue Ridge (YMCA) since 1996. He has served as Treasurer and Chairman of the Corporate Board of Directors, chaired the annual fundraising campaign, and worked on various capital campaigns. Over the past four years, the YMCA has seen double-digit, record-breaking growth in fundraising. Rob has been instrumental in that achievement by making personal asks and serving as an ambassador for the organization.

Mr. Cassell began his career with an accounting degree from Virginia Tech in 1980. As a Certified Public Accountant, he worked in management accounting positions and retired as Vice President and General Manager of Graham White Manufacturing in Salem. Rob's community service includes more than 30 years as Treasurer for First Church of the Brethren and volunteering and serving on the board of directors for the Salem/Roanoke County Food Pantry. He attained the Rule of 85, a designation of senior active status, and became a Paul Harris Fellow in the Salem Rotary Club. 



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ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Repurposing older
commercial buildings
and sites is not an old
idea... just a good one.*

From old haunts to nuance

How did this happen?

In less than a three month period, we received news about three commercial buildings/sites that were sold or slated for a new use. That's not unusual. But the fact that I worked at all three, and all three were significant milestones in my professional journey? A crazy coincidence. Or... I've worked too many places. Or... I'm just old.

I'll go with coincidence.



The first announcement was a cool-architectural gray and red-trimmed tech office in the then-exciting (ok, still-exciting) Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology. Its first occupant, **Bell South Communication Systems**, was an employer that embodied all that one thinks of when one thinks of the 1980's dot-com bubble and rapid growth of corporate America clamoring for a position on Fortune 500. Oh, do I have stories. I was a young marketing manager, who, among other tasks, got to run all over the country setting up trade shows and client cruises and ad campaigns. My office—when I was in it—was a sweet spot among the C-suite, with a huge picture window overlooking the golf course. I once watched a hawk devour a rabbit (like watching a nature show documentary—or our company taking over other PBX accounts). The new occupant—Virginia Transformer Corp—should be a good fit.



The second announcement was a neat, slug-block, compact office building off Starkey Road that housed an efficient production area just-below-ground level, while offices perched above. This was built by and for the Jefferson family, who ran **Dominion Graphic Services**, that later became part of **Source4**. I had worked with both as a customer for years; but also took a short contracting role when the business expanded to other revenue

continued on Page 43


Non-profit BRAAC looks to the future with merger

Angie Leonard founded what became the Blue Ridge Autism & Achievement Center about twenty years ago after her toddler son was diagnosed as being somewhere on the autism spectrum – and she couldn't find sufficient services to help him. Now BRAAC (operating under the St. Vincent's Home-SVH Services banner) has merged with the Charlottesville-based organization Leonard says BRAAC was modeled after, the Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA). The merged organization now employs around 300 people. No one lost a job due to the merger says Leonard, who is now the Chief Operating Officer Southwest for VIA.

Leonard says she is not ready to pack it in any time soon but looking ahead to retirement at some point was one motivation to explore an SVH-VIA union. "It was exactly what we need in our area," she recalls thinking on her initial visit to VIA as she thought about establishing a similar operation in the Roanoke area two decades ago. The "new" VIA offers behavior analysis, speech language therapy, special education, autism diagnosis and treatment. More than 200 students, 175 outpatient families and around 100 adults over age 22 rely on BRAAC or VIA as they or their families cope with the impact of autism at various points on the spectrum. BRAAC had branched out to Lynchburg and Lexington and now those locations as well fly under the VIA banner.

Having a good succession plan in place for the autism services provided by BRAAC – well past whenever she decides to retire – was important, says Leonard. "We're very excited about this opportunity to come together. [It's] a match made in heaven." Leonard says Virginia has a ways to go before it is considered a Top 20 state in terms of the services offered for those with autism, especially in the funding set aside by lawmakers in Richmond for those services.

Leonard recalls not being able to find any professional in the Roanoke Valley that could help her with her autistic son. That sent the family to Charlottesville or even beyond she says looking for help – and it led to the creation of BRAAC. "Now there's a dozen agencies in Roanoke that help serve the needs of autism-specific disabilities. We have made lots of improvements [but] we still have a long way to go."

It's been quite a journey, from two students at the start (one of them, her son Joshua) as the Blue Ridge Autism Center in 2002, a merger with The Achievement Center and then branching out into adult services (independent or group living, employment assistance) as BRAAC students aged out. "It all started with just a small little school right here in Blue Ridge Virginia," recalls Angie Leonard, as her next chapter with VIA unfolds. 



THERE'S
SOMETHING
HAPPENING
HERE

By Gene Marrano

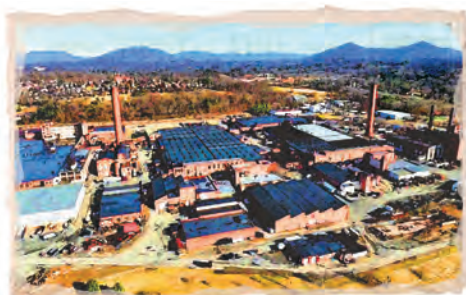
Executive Summary:

"Mostly we're on the same page. I cannot imagine a better group to merge together with."

Field / On Tap

from Page 40


sources that involved marketing systems. Now, the building is going to be home to Press Press Merch; another graphic company—and that makes me happy.



And most recently—a place us oldtimers call “American Viscose Plant” that sits in the shadow of Roanoke’s Mill Mountain and along the Roanoke River—gave me the most exciting news involving commercial real estate. That’s because the news of Ed Walker proposing a complete redevelopment of the industrial campus is way above and beyond a construction task. What a project! Although many of us can envision such enchanting possibilities (I can already see the postcard), most of us cannot imagine the scope of work. I have stories of this site, too... and a good many of them are about a time and place long before I was there. All those buildings, and smokestacks, and loading docks, and red bricks-bricks-bricks holding leaky-leaky roofs. I had the pleasure of being the marketing manager for **Valcom**, another telecom business (that was the undisputed leader in telephony-based intercom systems at the time); and that stint brought me in as a brand-spanking new advertising coordinator, which I quickly scaled up in unheard-of fashion, thanks to an employer who believed in my ideas and efforts.

The “Viscose” redevelopment job (we think, we hope it’s happening) could be the most amazing infrastructure-related development for Roanoke City since the entry of the railroad and Carilion Clinic. If it’s truly a complete development, rather than partial, this would be one for the books. A monumental residential-commercial achievement to be called “Riverdale.” The Viscose Company employed as many as 5,500 people at one time (1928); and though it has a gritty, industrial-Darwinian aura—there’s no question it served the growth and prosperity of the Star City of the South. Let’s just say I’d like to be there when that ribbon’s cut.

Two actions are too-often taken when it comes to commercial redevelopment: a property is razed (so someone can build what he really wants in the same footprint) or a property is abandoned (so someone can build what he really wants right down the street). Owner-operators are free to move in either of those directions; and indeed, sometimes it’s easier or more cost-efficient to do so or necessary for operations. But giving an old building a slap on the back (not too hard... gentle, please!) and another chance to keep on serving... I rather enjoy celebrating that.

It’s always part of someone’s timeline. 



The Viscose redevelopment job could be the most amazing infrastructure-related redevelopment for Roanoke since the entry of the railroad and Carilion Clinic.

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“ This is the modernized version of your Paw Paw telling you to 'rub some dirt in it'... — Page 45

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FRONTReviews >

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

Mountain memorable

We haven't been reviewing hotels and resorts in our FRONTReviews section (as those typically fall under our regular business reports... our "Resorts Report" many years ago is a good example, as the old photo above depicts). I'm making an exception. And, this place—Mountain Lake (as we know it; formally though: Mountain Lake Lodge) in Giles County (Pembroke)—does have its restaurant and bar, of course—and we do review those. So there.

But what I mostly want to share is simply—the experience. I generally go to Mountain Lake when most people don't think about it. (That's the dead of winter.) The place known for the *Dirty Dancing* movie, summer getaways, outdoor recreation, and... romantic interludes... well, that's what most people will travel for... not the frigid, icy, almost trepidation some feel over snow-encrusted windy mountain roads, excluded from the population, with challenging WiFi signal. I happen to love Mountain Lake when it's white. When the night sky is pure and clean and black and full of stars. And inside—is a warm fire with equally warming libation. And if you're lucky, some perfectly matching music from some soloist or small ensemble.

Even better—is when you pair your visit (and yes, is must be overnight!) with one of Mountain Lake's special escapades. Nothing—and I mean N-O-T-H-I-N-G—will ever compare to the old version of Oktoberfest the place used



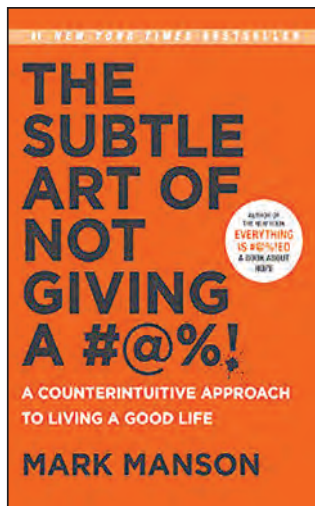
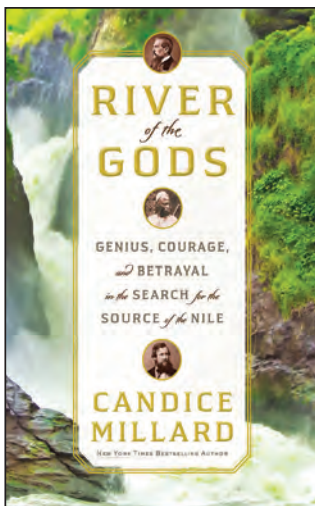
to host (I have stories); but you can't hardly beat a tasting affair, a paint-night, a themed shindig, or any event at Mountain Lake.

Memorable.

—Tom Field

All in on The Beautiful Game

I admit it, the World Cup last November drew me in and the finale that saw Leo Messi win his first World Cup ever with the Argentina side over France was one of the best sporting events this lifelong baseball-football-basketball-hockey fan has ever witnessed. With that in mind I picked up a copy of *Messi VS. Ronaldo: One Rivalry, Two Goats and the Era that Remade the World's Game* (2022, Mariner Books), digging a bit deeper into soccer – football outside of the U.S. The book by two Brits, Joshua Robinson and Jonathan Clegg, examines the two decade-long debate about who was the world's best soccer player over that stretch – Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, both now in the twilight of their exalted careers but still playing at a high level. *Messi VS. Ronaldo* reveals how standout stars are often identified in youth academies even before they are teens. It also looks at some of the backroom deals that involves transfers from one soccer club to another and the staggering amounts of money often involved. For those who want to know more about all the hype behind *The Beautiful Game* that the rest



of the world seems to grasp – and most Americans do not, it’s an illuminating read.

—Gene Marrano

Another tale of courage

Candace Millard knows how to spin a captivating, page turning work of non-fiction. The River of Doubt chronicled ex-President Theodore’s journey with others as they explored the Amazon River in South America, a trip that left Roosevelt very ill and may have hastened his early death. *Destiny of the Republic* is an acclaimed book on the short tragic presidency of James Garfield. Millard’s newest work, *River of the Gods: Genius, Courage and Betrayal in the Search for the Source of the Nile* (2022, Doubleday) details the trials and tragedy of Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke as they sought a 19th century Holy Grail – the source of the Nile River. Sometimes comrades, sometimes enemies, Burton and Speke spent years out of their lives in Africa, fending off disease, starvation and hostile native populations in Africa as they searched for and eventually found what is now called Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River that flows into the Mediterranean Sea. A fascinating tale of persistence and bravery that also includes the heroics of Bombay – an African formerly enslaved and a man whom without the search for the Nile most likely would have ended in total disaster.

—Gene Marrano

Recalibrate

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a #@\$! (Harper; 2016) by Mark Manson is the equivalent of that ice cold splash of water in your face first thing in the morning. With chapters titled, “Don’t Try,” “You Are Not Special,” and “You’re Wrong About Everything” what did I expect?

You know when you have some sort of realization or emotional breakthrough and you don’t feel like crap, but you don’t necessarily feel revitalized either? You just feel “alright”? Like you’re balanced and recalibrated and on to complete your day? Later that same day, you find that person cutting you off on the highway simply... not surprising. Your reaction is numb or deadpan instead of flicking them off. That’s the effect of this book. At least on me.

This book is the modernized, crude version of your Paw Paw telling you to “rub some dirt in it” and “there are a homeless and starving children out there.”

And I highly recommend it.

—Kelsey Monahan

The reviewers: **Tom Field** is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; **Gene Marrano** is a news journalist and editor of FRONT; **Kelsey Monahan** is a technology field account representative who lives in Salem.



Art show really moves >

Even the longest-attending patrons agreed, the “From Titian to Monet” exhibit at Roanoke’s **Taubman Museum of Art** (that ran from mid-October to early January) was one of the most impressive ever. The 52 works included masterpieces by Titian, Veronese, El Greco, Lorrain, Rembrandt, Courbet, Pissaro, and Monet that spanned 500 years from Renaissance to Impressionism. A collaboration between Taubman and Joslyn Art Museum (Omaha, NE) arranged by director, **Cindy Petersen**, the exhibit also included an interactive “immersive” experience with period music from Roanoke College professor **Gordon Marsh** and animation by Virginia Tech’s Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology.



The writers are back >

The **Roanoke Regional Writers Conference**, founded by previous FRONT editor **Dan Smith**, returned for its 2023 session at Hollins University on January 20-21. The popular (and sold-out) event was on a hiatus through the two-year pandemic; but all the enthusiasm quickly returned as both new and familiar faces showed up. Conference director **Liz Long** said she was "honored to play a part in bringing everyone together" which included about 20 presenters, among them, **Kris Spisak** (*Grammartopia*); **Melanie Almeder** (poet, *Writers by Bus*); **Betsy Ashton** (her newest: *Betrayal*); **Ken Conklin** (*Norvel*); **Tom Field** (FRONT); **Kristina Gorcheva-Newberry** (*The Orchard*); **Bryan Hancock** (*Soul Sessions*); **Renee Harless** (romance author); **Doug Jackson** (Roanoke City arts coordinator); **Liz Long** (Roanoker; YA urban fantasy); **Cameron Mackenzie** (*River Weather*); **Jim Minick** (*Fire is Your Water*); **Valerie Nieman** (*In the Lonely Backwater*); **SB Rawz** (creative coach); **G. Samantha Rosenthal** (*Living Queer History*); **Meighan Sharp** (*Effusive Greetings to Friends*); **Dan Smith** (*News!*); **Susannah Smith** (Propertius Press); **Tim Thornton** (journalist, teacher); **Doloris Vest** (*Book No Further*); **Leah Weiss** (*All the Little Hopes*).



Submitted

Virginia Transformer expansion >

Roanoke-based **Virginia Transformer**, the largest US-owned manufacturer of electrical transformers in North America will officially inaugurate its new state-of-the-art, 130,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Chihuahua, Mexico on February 10. The new plant

began production in late October 2022 and has begun to ship transformers. The new plant is the fifth for Virginia Transformer's, which says it has shortest lead times in the industry. "Our new plant in Chihuahua is a technical achievement in every way," said **Prabhat Jain**, Virginia Transformer CEO/CTO, "the new plant is the most sophisticated transformer operation in North America."



Tom Field

Staying warm on the mountain >

Mountain Lake Lodge (Pembroke) hosted a JH Bards (Fairlawn; soon moving to Blacksburg) Whiskey Tasting Event on a cold, clear mid-January evening. The packed room (event organizers were surprised by the turnout; and future tastings have already been booked) sampled five selections (bourbon, rye, single malt, single malt barrel proof, maple infused) as "the two Jasons" shared their story of whiskey-club-to-distillery. **Jason Hardy** welcomed the attendees and **Jason Hudson** guided the tasting, which included whiskey-making and the history of the spirit. The Jasons also announced the micro distillery is moving to South Main Street, Blacksburg in the next few months (since alcohol production ordinance was modified) which will increase their foot traffic substantially.



Chelsea Seiber for Virginia Tech

Yes, 6G research >

Virginia Tech professor **Lingjia Liu**, from the **Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering** and director of **Wireless@VT**, has been awarded an \$800,000 grant by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to help create next generation (NextG) mobile broadband networks that increase the availability of access to users by providing seamless wireless coverage and supporting varying service requirements. Liu will work with a team that includes students to develop the fundamental research necessary to integrate and operate terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, termed Ground and Air Integrated Networks (GAINs). The project will focus on the use of artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning algorithms to improve communication and computing efficiencies under this extremely dynamic environment.

Youngkin: expedite business growth >

Governor **Glenn Youngkin** (far right) rolled out his "Compete to Win," economic development policy to grow the economy, announced at the 2022 Virginia Economic Summit and reiterated during his State of the Commonwealth address as the General Assembly session opened. Accelerated support for targeted industries, better connections between workforce talent and key industries and more rapid site/infrastructure development are among the Compete to Win talking points. During an appearance at **Carter Machinery** in Salem last month with local Republican state lawmakers, Youngkin also spoke about competing to win: "we're building on a really strong foundation, but we've got to move [faster]. We can do more but we've got to do it faster. We want more Carters all across Virginia." As for accelerated site development, Youngkin said "we actually got land, but have to invest in grading, planning and utility connections and some transportation [improvements]. All of that takes years." Youngkin said Virginia has fallen behind neighboring states in having shovel-ready sites ready for new business prospects.



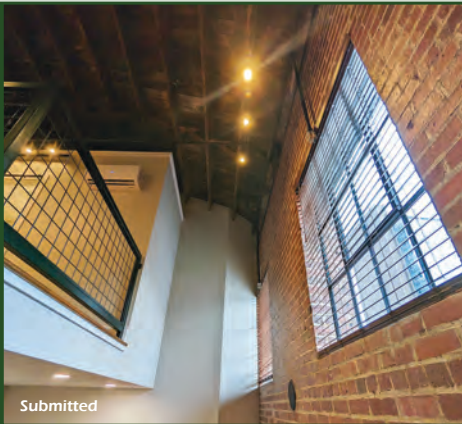
Ian Price



Submitted

Pressing on to larger digs >

Press Press Merch, LLC has purchased a 32,926 square foot mixed-use building from Starkey Road Properties LLC for \$1,650,000 and will use the property on Starkey Road next to the Country Store in southwest Roanoke County for their custom screen printing and embroidery. Press Press Merch specializes in custom screen printing and embroidery, as well as posters, postcards, stickers and thousands of promotional products. Their new home has sat vacant for a number of years; Press Press Merch will relocate from its Roanoke City location on Albemarle Avenue.



Submitted



The Junior repurposed >

Juniors Lofts, a mixed-use historical development located in downtown Roanoke, with one commercial unit and fourteen residential units, has cut the ribbon. Juniors Lofts combines original historical elements and features of exposed brick, original barrel roof ceilings and curved trusses, original windows, stained concrete and finishes of granite countertops, soft close cabinetry, and modern fixtures. The building was once home to the Junior Lunch diner owned by John Apostolou, for 46 years until 9, 7 days a week 5am to 2am, and was a cornerstone of downtown dining. The beloved operation closed its doors in April 1994 upon Apostolou's death. Dave Jones procured the Junior Lunch building in November 2019, realizing the potential of the historic building as an adaptive reuse development. Construction began in 2022 with the guidance of **Hill Studios** to preserve the historical integrity of the Junior Lunch building while revitalizing its purpose. "When I first came on [City] Council there we had very few people that lived downtown," said Roanoke Mayor **Sherman Lea Sr.**, "now there are around 3000."



The Gauntlet grows again >

From its humble roots at the Grandin Co-Lab as a Shark-tank like mentoring competition to its own home base in Vinton, **The Advancement Foundation's Gauntlet** program has spread far beyond the Roanoke Valley to Rockbridge County and the Alleghany Highlands. The Gauntlet program includes Botetourt County, Bedford County, Floyd and Martinsville Now in partnership with UVA-Wise and Opportunity Southwest, The Gauntlet is coming to far southwest Virginia. The Advancement Foundation executive director **Annette Patterson**: "one of the strong points of our program is the idea of mentor and industry experts networking. We started talking with various folks [at UVA-Wise] including the gentleman in charge of their ecosystem." Patterson says switching to a mostly virtual mentoring program since the start of the pandemic has allow them to work with more far-flung business startups and entrepreneurs.

The Advancement Foundation has also announced a second major grant that will be used to further renovate the **Virginia Business Accelerator in Buena Vista**. "This [state] grant of almost \$1 million is a joint win with the city of Buena Vista and focused on the 3rd phase of the project that will attract tourism and outdoor recreation," says Advancement Foundation president Annette Patterson. "The grant will build out a brewery space, café, retail space, ADA bathrooms, and community event space." A previous grant of almost \$750,000 is focused on the build out of phase 2 – including a commercial shared kitchen space. The business accelerator is already open and operating with eight companies working to commercialize their value added products to scale.

Bariatric program recognition >

LewisGale Medical Center in Salem has announced that its bariatric surgery center has been accredited as a Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP®), a joint Quality Program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). "To earn the MBSAQIP designation, LewisGale Medical Center is meeting essential criteria for staffing, training, facility infrastructure, and protocols for care, ensuring our ability to support patients with severe obesity," said **Darren Glass**, board-certified general and bariatric surgeon with LewisGale Physicians. "

Alan Fabian, market president and chief executive officer at LewisGale Medical Center, said, "this national recognition for excellence in bariatric surgery is another example of our commitment to offer the highest quality care close to home." Pictured (L to R): Darren Glass, MD, board-certified general and bariatric surgeon; Franci Sifers, MSN, RN, bariatric coordinator; and Kelleigh O'Toole, RD, bariatric dietitian.



Delta and Carilion team up >

Carilion Clinic and **Delta Dental** will work together to create a pediatric dental residency based at **Carilion Children's-Tanglewood**. It's also about helping to address a shortage of dentists. **The Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation** has announced a two million dollar endowment during a joint event with Carilion officials. will help Carilion develop a pediatric dental residency program at its Tanglewood location. **Frank Lucia** is Delta Dental of Virginia President and CEO: "It ties back to our mission. We are a non-for-profit oral health insurance company, and we look for ways to improve community access to oral care."

Up to four dental school graduates a year could soon be doing their two-year residencies at Carilion Children's starting by some time in 2024. **Nancy Agee** is Carilion Clinic's President and CEO: "increasingly it's through the support of donors like Delta Dental that we able to enhance care and accelerate our ability to meet the region's health needs." The goal is also to attract more dentists to the valley - hoping they will stay here once their residency at Carilion Children's is over. Carilion's pediatric dentistry practice already serves more than 10,000 young patients annually in southwest Virginia.



FloydFest already a sellout >

It's the fastest sellout in the music and outdoor festival's 22 year-plus history - **FloydFest 23** tickets were gone by December, as were the campsite passes. All this as the FloydFest co-founder says their new home is taking shape. **Kris Hodges**—on the new larger property in Floyd County along US 221 that **Across the Way Productions** now owns, says they leased the former site just off the Blue Ridge Parkway, "because of the logistical challenges we were dealing with off the Parkway, having to transport and shuttle people from three satellite lots, we're kind of done with that after 22 years or so."

FloydFest will shrink from 9 stages to 6, with the new permanent main stage not expected until 2024. Sheryl Crow, The Black Crowes and Goose are among the performers announced to date. Hodges says some single-day passes may be offered for sale before the July 26-30 event. "We have such a loyal following of people; they bought in to our decision and choice of properties to move to – it was the quickest we sold out in our 23 year history."



Courtesy of Sycamore Development Co.

Buchanan redevelopment >

It's called **Factory Flats** and, in a few years, a long-abandoned manufacturing facility in Buchanan is slated to become home to more than 20 living spaces and a craft brewery. A significant loan from **Botetourt County** will help make that happen. \$450,000 from the Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development's Industrial Revitalization Fund will be made available to the private developer for Factory Flats, as a loan. The former Groendyk Manufacturing buildings date back to 1906. **Amy White** from the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors is a lifelong Buchanan resident: "I will bring residents into the town, as well as tourists. A lot of people will come from far away to visit different breweries."

White, also the Dean of STEM at Virginia Western Community College, credits Botetourt County Economic Development director **Ken McFayden** with helping to secure the grant, which will be passed through the county's Economic Development Authority. "This is not new money for us," says White, "but if we can help them access this money it will benefit the county and the town immensely."

White says Factory Flats and the craft brewery could be open less than two years after Roanoke-based **Sycamore Development Company** breaks ground. It's worked in downtown Roanoke and in Vinton, where state and federal historic tax credits helped turn rundown or idle properties into living spaces. The former rubber products and button manufacturing property in Buchanan dates back over a century. White says at one point Groendyk Manufacturing was a major employer in the town. Factory Flats and the craft brewery will be located on Buchanan's Main Street near Twin River Outfitters. White adds that James River boating traffic in the area should benefit the brewery and vice-versa. "It will complement very well the different outdoor activities that are going on in the town."

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

EDUCATION FRONT



Hoover

Robert Hoover, Ed.D., will join the Radford University leadership team as vice president for finance and administration, effective March 1, 2023. "Rob" Hoover most recently served as the senior associate dean for administration and chief financial officer at the University of Virginia, McIntire School of Commerce, and previously was associate dean for finance and administration at Emory University, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing in Atlanta. He brings extensive experience in higher education finance and operations, as well as a background in admissions and student services.



Sikes

Mark Sikes is Virginia Tech's new dean of students, effective Jan. 17. Sikes, a VT alum, previously served as the vice dean for student success at William & Mary since 2018 and the associate dean of students from 2007-18. Also, during his tenure at William & Mary, he served as interim dean of students from 2021 to 2022. Prior to these roles, Sikes' work focused on the first-year experience and student life at Gettysburg College and residential life at Towson University and Virginia Tech.

Jamie Snead is the new Director of Marketing and Strategic Communications for Virginia Western Community College. She is a graduate of



Snead

Virginia Western with an associate degree in Business Administration, Longwood University with a bachelor's in Business Administration/Marketing and Hollins University with a master's in Liberal Studies/Leadership. Snead's professional experience includes serving as Vice President of Marketing and Development at DePaul Community Resources, Marketing Consultant at Carilion Clinic, Public Relations Manager at StellarOne Bank and Manager of Networking Events at the Roanoke Regional Chamber.

LEGAL FRONT

Gentry Locke is pleased to announce that **Harrison E.**

Richards has joined the firm's Roanoke office as an associate. Richards is a member of the firm's Employment & Labor Practice Group. Prior to joining Gentry Locke, Richards was an associate with a boutique litigation firm in Washington, D.C. He has experience in state and federal courts as well as with arbitrations and administrative evidentiary hearings before the American Arbitration Association. Four other Gentry Locke attorneys have been promoted to partnership: David R. Berry, Charles L. Calton, D. Scott Foster Jr. and Alichia M. Grubb have been promoted to the partnership.

Gentry Locke has welcomed **Jeffrey C. Southard** to the Roanoke firm's statewide Construction Industry Contracting and Litigation group. He most recently served as the Executive Vice President of the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance. Southard spent 15 years with the Alliance,

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where he managed all of the alliance's business, advocacy, and government regulatory affairs programs.



O'Boyle

Gentry Locke has announced that former federal prosecutor **Melissa E. O'Boyle** has joined the firm's Criminal & Government Investigations practice group as a partner. Prior to joining Gentry Locke, O'Boyle worked for more than 15 years as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia, investigating and prosecuting a broad array of criminal matters.

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

The Roanoke Regional Airport Commission has announced the

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hiring of **Eric H. Monday** as the RRAC's new General Counsel. Monday previously served as City Attorney of Martinsville, Virginia, and as General Counsel for the Blue Ridge Regional Airport since 2003. Additionally, he served as Martinsville's Assistant City Manager since 2019 and as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Compliance Officer since 2003. He also served as County Attorney for the County of Patrick, Virginia, between 2004 and 2008.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Coldwell Banker Townside, Realtors has announced that **Megan Roschelli** will be joining the local real estate brokerage as the Sales Manager



Roschelli

of their Christiansburg office. She will partner with Coldwell Banker Townside leadership in their Blacksburg and Roanoke offices. A native of Christiansburg, Roschelli started her career in real estate at a Coldwell Banker office in Texas and returned to the New River Valley in 2013.

NON-PROFIT FRONT

Building Beloved Communities has welcomed two new members to its team.



Neal

Nik Neal is a student at Hollins University and an intern. The new Director of Government Contracting is **Sam Sokolove**, who has moved to Roanoke, from Albuquerque, New Mexico. He brings more than 25 years of executive-level experience with a



Sokolove



CONTRIBUTORS

Zenith Barrett is the Vice President of Business and Community Engagement for Goodwill Industries® of the Valleys in Roanoke. She has been with Goodwill for eight years. She holds a Masters in Public Administration from Columbus State University and a Bachelors of Science in Psychology from Virginia State University. Zenith is a native of Massachusetts and lives in Roanoke with her husband, Richard and daughter, Lauren.

Aila Boyd is a Roanoke-based writer and educator. She writes both locally and nationally for a number of publications. As an educator, she teaches English to college students. Her MFA in writing is from Lindenwood University. [ailaaboym93@gmail.com]

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. [cooperjrp1@gmail.com]

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

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]

Jen Grassler, LMT is the owner of Overland Therapeutic Massage located in the Cave Spring area. She focuses on body alignment by utilizing the Myoskeletal approach to bodywork. [overlandmassage@outlook.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).

Frazier Hughes was recruited by the CEO of Keller Williams Realty after being named 2017 salesman of the year at Berglund Luxury of Roanoke. He also hosts The Roanoke Real Estate Podcast, is Dale Carnegie Trained, a former radio personality, and is a Social Media Influencer. [frazierhughescom@gmail.com]

Zack Jackson is the host of the K92 Mornin' Thang

radio show on WXLK and co-founder of The JPG Agency, a freelance marketing and creative consulting department for small businesses. He can be reached at [zack@thejpgagency.com]

Jennifer Leake CMC® is the creator of the Best Job Ever program, a workplace consultant, podcaster, and certified assessment expert.

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 WFR Newstalk radio. He recently won best feature award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters for his Dopesick interview with Beth Macy. He also now hosts and co-produces "Business Matters" on Blue Ridge PBS. [gmarrano@cox.net]

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

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

Anne Sampson is a photographer and writer who has been active in local arts and events for 20 years. Her work highlights the sights of people of the Roanoke Valley. She specializes in fresh looks at familiar subjects. [sampsanar@gmail.com]

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. [shawnowlin1989@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]

David Todd is the owner and president of EZ Rampz / Mobility Solutions, based in Roanoke, and serving Virginia and North Carolina primarily; but also nationally. The business rents, sells, installs, and services products that resolve mobility issues, including walkways, ramps, stair glides, platforms, lifts, chairs, grab bars, etc. He's a graduate of Virginia Tech; married with three children.

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]

variety of impactful nonprofit organizations and is focusing on government contracts that directly support the nonprofit world.

United Way of Southwest Virginia (UWSWVA) has added **Beth McConkey** to the organization as the new Vice President of Development &



McConkey

Outreach, bringing in more than a decade of experience to the organization. McConkey,

a Texas native, brings 16 years of marketing expertise, previously holding leadership positions at multiple organizations, including a community foundation with nearly \$500 million under management, and a mid-sized liberal arts university.

Compiled by Gene Marrano

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“” This is one area of athletics where women are not being left in the locker room. — Page 21

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Governor makes new appointments

Wesley Reid of Roanoke County, Senior Director of Operations, Marvin Company and Dr. Eileen Van Aken of Blacksburg, Department Head and Professor, Virginia Tech have been appointed to the A. L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership Board of Trustees. The extension is established as a political subdivision of the Commonwealth to help create and maintain industrial and manufacturing jobs.

VALET grads, newcomers

10 more companies across the Commonwealth have graduated from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's (VEDP) Virginia Leaders in Export Trade (VALET) program. VALET, which now has more than 350 graduated companies, assists Virginia exporters that have firmly established domestic operations and are committed to international exporting as a growth strategy. Moog Inc. (Montgomery County) a manufacturer of high-end controls and systems for various industries, was among the VALET graduates. Meanwhile HUB in Roanoke City and TechLab in the New River Valley are entering the VALET program.

Patrick County facility will be repurposed

Apex Mills, a specialty supplier and manufacturer of warp knit fabrics geared towards

industrial and technical applications, will invest \$3.1 million to expand its East Coast presence by acquiring the former HanesBrands facility and its equipment in Patrick County. The company will fulfill contracts for the Hanes basic apparel brand and maximize the full capacity of the facility. Virginia successfully competed with Pennsylvania for the project, which will retain 96 jobs and create 44 new jobs.

Local food producers to receive grants

The largest ever award round from the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund Infrastructure Grant Program supporting local farms and food producers. A total of ten projects will receive \$368,885 in competitively awarded, matching grants for new community infrastructure development projects that support local food production and sustainable agriculture. Created by the General Assembly in 2021, AFID Infrastructure grants are awarded biannually to support locally identified investments that aid small-scale farmers and food producers in growing their operations. Bedford County has been awarded \$21,500 as the county seeks funding to support a new commercial kitchen by established meat processor EcoFriendly Foods. The company has had success selling value-added products, such as hand pies, soups, and stews, prepared in rented

kitchen space. The company anticipates sales to double with consistent access to a kitchen facility.

Franklin County (\$33,000) seeks funding to support an expansion by KC Farms Meats, a family-owned custom meat processing business. KC Farms Meats offers custom meat processing services to 39 livestock producers in the region who sell directly to their customers. Funds will be used to purchase a new smoker and walk-in freezer. The city of Roanoke requests funding to support the Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP), a non-profit focused on creating economically viable outlets for local farmers and food producers, including farmer's markets and commercial kitchens. LEAP distributes food to an estimated 10,000 people each year. In addition, LEAP's commercial kitchen in the West End neighborhood supports over 40 food businesses with equipment, resources, and training.

IRF grants will help rehab blighted properties

The Commonwealth has awarded more than \$24.7million in 22 Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF) grants. IRF grants provide gap financing for construction projects aligned with local and regional economic development strategies. The Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF) leverages local and private resources and is targeted toward vacant non-residential

structures whose poor condition creates physical and economic blight to the surrounding area in which the structure is located. Botetourt County (\$450,000), in partnership with Factory Flats LLC, will renovate the former Groendyk manufacturing facility into a mixed-use complex, complete with a brewery and retail operation, as well as up to 21 housing units on the site. The town of Pulaski (\$750,000) will redevelop the General Chemical Company building. The owner of Great Wilderness Brewing Company has committed to operating at this location once renovations are complete.

Patrick County (\$850,000) in partnership with a private developer, will renovate the former Cockram Grist Mill into the Freehouse Meadows of Dan Brewery. The proposed facility will include a brewery, full-service restaurant, tap room, lodging facility and rentable venue space. The county receives another \$900,000 for the Economic Development Authority of Patrick County and in partnership with STEP Inc., will renovate downtown Stuart's former hardware store into a multi-use facility to meet community needs including childcare services, co-working space and a business development center. Danville (\$5,000,000) will redevelop the White Mill, a 20-acre property on the south bank of the Dan River, a 650,000-square-foot industrial building which once served as a textile mill. The two-phase project will transform the building

into modern commercial space with interior parking and 150 new housing units.

GO Virginia grants

More than \$5 million in Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) grant awards have gone to 10 projects focused on expanding talent pipelines, strengthening workforce development and job creation. The awarded projects will also leverage an additional \$4.5 million in local and non-state funding. The Botetourt County Economic Development Authority (almost \$167,000) will expand the current Botetourt Technical Education Center (BTEC) welding program that will help serve the unmet need for additional welders in the region. The Counties of Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke, and the city of Roanoke, together with the Virginia Tech College of Engineering will scale up their transportation and autonomous vehicles sector through the formulation of an Automated-Connected-Electrified (ACE)

Coalition of over 150+ public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

Floyd County manufacturing plant to expand

Hollingsworth & Vose (H&V), a global manufacturer of advanced materials used in filtration, battery, and industrial applications, will invest \$40.2 million to expand its operation in Floyd County. The company will add over 28,000 square feet to its facility to accommodate new production equipment to meet increased demand. Virginia successfully competed with Georgia for the project, which will create 25 new jobs. "Hollingsworth & Vose has generated positive economic impact and job opportunities in Floyd County for more than four decades, and this significant investment further solidifies the company's commitment to Virginia," said Governor Glenn Youngkin. H&V made news in the early days of the COVID pandemic by retooling to produce the N-95 style facemasks

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that were in short supply at hospitals and clinics.

Carilion cancer care boosted by major gift

Former Carilion board member and Roanoke businessman George Logan and his wife, Helen Harmon Logan, have given \$1 million to Carilion Clinic to help fund the expansion of cancer services. George Logan served on Carilion Clinic's board of directors from 2003 to 2007 following a 10-year stint on the board that oversees the health system's Roanoke operations. Prior to that, he served on the board of Community Hospital of Roanoke Valley.

During that time, Carilion says he helped lead the organizations through the flood of 1985, the merger

of Roanoke Memorial with the Community Hospital, and the early days of Carilion's move to a physician-led, integrated care system now known as Carilion Clinic.

New neuro services in Franklin County

A recently opened new clinic in Rocky Mount has become the first in the area to offer one specialty that previously had people traveling to Roanoke for. In a move to address access concerns for the residents of Franklin County, Carilion Clinic has opened Carilion Clinic Neurology - Franklin in Rocky Mount. The practice, housed within the Bernard Health Center, is the locality's first neurology clinic. Lindsey Woods, RN and

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DAVID CAWLEY, CPA

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Practice Manager of the clinic says they offer a variety of non-invasive services for conditions like seizures, strokes and dementia: "we are able to service patients closer to their home, for them to get personal transportation to a closer site. [Our] practice has been filling up:"

Woods says that the reception they've had since their opening several months ago, has demonstrated the need for these services. Currently, the practice sees some patients from as far away as the Virginia/North Carolina border. For now, patients still have to travel to Roanoke for more invasive procedures, but the Rocky Mount neurology clinic is just one of a number of recent steps Carilion has taken to bring more specialties to the area.

City will try again at Evans Spring tract

Roanoke City once again will put forth proposals and seek community input for development of what it calls the only large, vacant site left

to build on - the Evans Spring tract across from Valley View Mall. It includes 150 acres, 107 private-owned lots - most by a Limited Liability Company - and public property running along I-581 from the Valley View traffic cloverleaf to Hershberger Road. Chris Chittum is an assistant City manager: "the city is a stakeholder. The property owners are stakeholders, the neighborhoods are stakeholders, other businesses are stakeholders." That helped convince the City of Roanoke to partner in any development visioning says Chittum, who envisions a neighborhood center concept.

A plan being developed now with help from a consultant group could take about 8 months to complete before being made public. There has been opposition in the past adjacent northwest Roanoke neighborhoods to a concept plan first drawn up over a decade ago. A Charlotte developer withdrew a proposal three years ago that Chittum says was more towards of a "big box"

plan. "I've not seen any development proposal that didn't have at least some objection or raised eyebrow. Our intention here is we will try to engage the surrounding community in all the ways that we can think of doing." The means surveys, public meetings – even knocking on doors before anything is approved according to Chittum.

A better way to address flooding

A state grant recently awarded to the City of Roanoke will be used to help craft a plan that may provide "action items," to help prevent future flooding after heavy rains, an issue that has plagued local neighborhoods and businesses in the past. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation grant will be used to develop a Flood Resilience Plan that includes community surveys. McKenzie Brocker is a Water Quality Administrator with the City of Roanoke: "It will open us up to more opportunities in the future to receive grant funding to actually implement

some of the projects we suggest in the plan. That's a really great opportunity. Sometimes we get burnt out on these surveys." It should take about 8 months to complete the Flood Resilience Plan.

Growing more teachers

Hollins University has received \$428,000 in federal government funding to enhance dual enrollment offerings for high school students in the Roanoke Valley region. The Hollins project, which will be coordinated with Roanoke's Virginia Western Community College, is designed to support the development of a new program for educators in Roanoke City Public Schools, Roanoke County Public Schools, and Botetourt County Public Schools who seek to complete graduate-level coursework in English, history, mathematics, or art in order to build dual enrollment teaching capacity and opportunities. Hollins will use the funding from Congress to pay all tuition costs to enroll 45 teachers from Roanoke area high schools in

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graduate-level courses in the coming year and will supply them with iPads and smart keyboards so that they can store lessons and content to make future planning easier.

Old American Viscose plant will be transformed

A public-private partnership is set to bring a new type of neighborhood to Southeast Roanoke. The former American Viscose Plant in Southeast Roanoke is about to get a new purpose thanks to a partnership between several local agencies

and local developer, Ed Walker. At a Roanoke City Council meeting this week City Manager Bob Cowell, described how they'll take the property and turn it into a Development called Riverdale: "this is not a single building or a single project, but a neighborhood that will include residential uses, food and beverage, art studios, maker spaces and manufacturing." Over the next several years, officials say Riverdale will grow to span 75+ acres and feature a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial spaces. The first phase could

include around 375 apartments. Walker will have to raise \$50 million in private investment to jump start the project.

LewisGale baby boom

LewisGale Medical Center in Salem has broken its record of babies birthed at the hospital for the second year in a row. From Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2022, 1,249 babies were delivered, the most in the hospital's 113-year history. "Our recent investment into renovated patient rooms, delivery suites,

and birthing tubs, among other advanced resources for pain management, make this the hospital of choice in the region," said John Harding, MD, labor and delivery department chair. The hospital recently began construction of a new neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). This is the second record-setting year in a row. The previous birth record was set in 2021, with 1,181 babies born, topping 1995's 1,075 babies.

Compiled by
Gene Marrano

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