

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 197

FEBRUARY 2025

Virginia Tech
Transportation Institute

Arts Commission's
Douglas Jackson

Feeding Southwest
Virginia's Pam Irvine

Wag-n-Wash

vbFRONT.com



Genya Kalinina
Hello Roanoke



Roanoke
market

INFLUENCERS

INVOICING

ONLINE PAYMENTS

QUICKBOOKS

LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR
BUSINESS
BANKING
SERVICES:



Scan the code
with your phone's
camera!

AUTOBOOKS

YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS BANKING PARTNER

Manage your business's financial operations more effectively, improve your cash flow, and streamline your payment processes with Autobooks - a chameleon tool that comes with your Freedom First Business Banking account and Online Banking.



www.FreedomFirst.com
Federally insured by NCUA.



WELCOME TO THE FRONT

Thanks, Tony. The Roanoke ad-man Tony Pearman of AccessU challenged attendees at a summit sponsored by Freedom First Credit Union to consider the value of “conversational marketing.” It’s not new, he said, but it’s more effective now than ever when leverage by social media. We had been talking about doing a feature on “influencers” for a long time; and his reminder how important it is for businesses (yes, including and perhaps especially local small businesses) to engage clients and prospects with real two-way communication—was good timing for our FRONTcover. Back in the day, we recall “push” marketing and “pull” marketing, where both proved effective. Today, it’s push-and-pull. Back-and-forth. Talk-and-listen. And listen more.

So, we bring you some local examples in this month’s edition. Our writer told us most of the local subjects were more focused on “content creation” than worrying about their ranking as true influencers. And that’s exactly what we saw. Tony agreed, citing our own Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, and how an influencer drew attention to the stores. Which reminds us... the new grocery store is open at Melrose Plaza. Not everybody is aware of that yet—so, maybe you can help us influence some attention on this new community asset.

Tom Field
Publisher

Gene Marrano
Editor



Residential Services:

- SUNROOMS
- PERGOLAS AND AWNINGS
- KITCHENS AND BATHS
- TIMBERTECH/TREX PROS
- HOME RENOVATIONS
- ADDITIONS AND GARAGES
- EXTERIOR UPDATES

Call us for a
FREE estimate!



FSFourSeasons.com | 540.985.9160
2944 Orange Ave. NE; Roanoke, VA 24012

+45 yrs. Experience | Class A Contractor | In-House Design Services



DEPARTMENTS

**18 Virginia Tech
Transportation Institute**

by Jennifer Poff Cooper

**24 Arts Commission's
Douglas Jackson**

by Hart Fowler

**28 Feeding Southwest
Virginia's Pam Irvine**

by Aila Boyd

36 Wag-n-Wash

by Gene Marrano

PERSPECTIVES

22 Lead By Example

by Carrie Cousins

26 Business Cents

by Daniel Colston

34 Small Business Tool Kit

by Molly Gutierrez

38 Best Job Ever

by Jennifer Leake

REVIEWS & OPINIONS

40 On Tap from the Pub

by Tom Field

**41 There's Something
Happening Here**

by Gene Marrano

42 Reviews

FRONTLINES

32 Spotlight FRONT'n About

44 FRONT'n About

54 Career FRONT

58 FRONT Notes

vbFRONT.com

LEAD STORY PAGE 8

A Local Traffic Report: ONLINE

by Lauren Webb



“ ”
Every one of those
interactions is a multiplier. — Page 22

KNOW THE SIGNS!

SAVE A LIFE



SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK



Pressure or squeezing in the center of the chest



Shortness of breath



**Shooting pain through shoulders,
arms, neck or jaw**



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.*



Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital's Chest Pain Center is accredited by the American College of Cardiology.

Cardiovascular Institute

CARILION CLINIC 

Valley Business FRONT

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

Staff

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

Departmental Contacts

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

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

© Copyright 2025; Valley Business FRONT, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of this publication in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Information within Valley Business FRONT is obtained from sources considered reliable, but cannot be guaranteed. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the ownership. Valley Business FRONT is primarily distributed to subscribers by mail, digitally and select locations throughout the Roanoke Valley, New River Valley, and western Virginia.

FEBRUARY



Aila Boyd



Daniel Colston



Tom Field



Hart Fowler



Nicholas Vaassen



Lauren Webb

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.

2025 CONTRIBUTORS



Jennifer Poff Cooper



Carrie Cousins



Dan Dowdy



Molly Gutierrez



Jennifer Leake



Gene Marrano

“”

Know your employees as individuals.

— Page 38

“”

It's nice to change every couple of years to keep things interesting.

— Page 20



Linda Balentine
Crowning Touch /
senior services



Micah Fraim
Fraim & Cawley CPAs /
finance - accounting



Kevin Holt
Gentry Locke /
legal



Shatenita Horton
Freedom First Credit Union /
finance—credit unions



Mary Ann L. Miller
Bank of Botetourt /
finance - banking



Alicia Smith
F&S Building Innovations /
construction

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

“”

We're tending to find the people that want the storefront. — Page 37

twitter
facebook

Website: www.vbfront.com
Facebook: [vb front](https://www.facebook.com/vbfront)
Twitter: [@vbfront](https://twitter.com/vbfront)
Blog: morefront.blogspot.com



Submitted

Genya Kalinina and Stan Myshkovskiy, with their newest addition, who arrived in 2024.

A Local Traffic Report: ONLINE

By Lauren Webb

Local content creators for places to go, things to do,
what to buy, and special interests are curating audiences

Influencers. Content Creators. Social Media Connoisseurs. People who have undoubtedly changed the realm of social media. While you are scrolling through your social media feeds, you are being influenced, but exactly how you are being influenced depends upon your specially curated algorithm. With this influencer effect, why not fill your feed with local content creators whose objectives are to share experiences or inform and educate followers about happenings within the community?

You might not have heard of the term “conversational marketing,” but it’s likely many of you are aware of some content creators who utilize this strategy. Although conversational marketing is not new, it has exploded with the growth of social media and content creators, who are able to highlight a business or event and respond directly to followers through comments or direct messaging, which helps build a trustworthy connection.

This report is about influencers in Roanoke; but the market impact does spread to and from adjacent communities, such as retail influencers, like:

- **Shop Botetourt**
[@shopbotetourt]
- **Blacksburg Eats**
[@blacksburgeats]

THE TRAFFIC REPORT

The specific use of “influencer” for online media has been described many different ways; but the identity is always about traffic—and the following. One breakdown commonly presented uses the following figures:

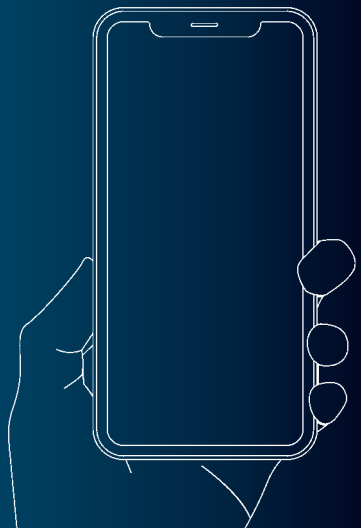
- Nano-influencers:** 1,000 to 10,000 followers
- Micro-influencers:** 10,000 to 50,000 followers
- Mid-tier influencers:** 50,000 to 500,000 followers
- Macro-influencers:** 500,000 to 1,000,000 followers
- Mega-influencers:** 1,000,000 or more followers

In our local content market, there is only one independent, individual influencer who has reached right at the mid-tier level, using the ranking above: HelloRoanoke.

Examples of global mega-influencers include:

- SPORTS > Cristiano Ronaldo (647 million)
- MUSIC > Selena Gomez (423 million)
- CELEBRITY > Kylie Jenner (395 million)
- STUNTS > Mr. Beast (503 million)
- COMEDY > Brent Rivera (106 million)
- DANCING > Charli D’Amelio (214 million)
- SCIENCE > Mark Rober (62 million)
- VARIETY > Rhett & Link (14 million)
- REACTION > Khaby Lame (255 million)
- FIGHTS > Paul brothers Logan (76 million)
& Jake (70 million)
- GAMING > “Markiplier” Fischbach (70 million)
- VIDEO TRAINING > Zach King (149 million)
- ZOMBIES > Alan Chikin Chow (71 million)
- FASHION > Haley Baylee (23 million)
- KIDS > Ms. Rachel (18 million)

SOURCES: Forbes and others





Conversational marketing has exploded.

Virginia’s Blue Ridge has always thrived in supporting local businesses, but local content creators have helped expand the promotion of businesses, events, and experiences in the area. While other forms of marketing can provide more of an in-depth look into a particular subject, conversational marketing is something to consider for a quick and broad outreach. Social media is something many people spend their time on anyway, and local content creators and influencers provide followers the opportunity to engage in real-time. This engagement allows content creators to gain more and more traction within social media feeds.

Here are some of our most influential local content creators. [Instagram is the social media platform that most utilizes influencers, brand partnerships, and marketing campaigns, therefore Instagram is the platform used for this data.]



Responding directly to followers helps build a trustworthy connection.

Hello Roanoke (Genya Kalinina) @hello.roanoke

Hello Roanoke, run by Genya Kalinina, is one of the valley’s most well-known content creators. Whether you are trying to find some local events or attractions, wanting updated recommendations for local eateries, or hoping to visit a fun park or trail, Hello Roanoke is there to help. With the regular “weekend-roundup” posts, followers are informed about what is going on specifically this weekend, which is helpful for residents of the valley. Genya really focuses on Roanoke and surrounding areas as a whole, highlighting why it’s such a great place to live. Her website explains her move to Roanoke in 2019 and the creation of her social media pages with the goal of sharing her personal experiences in order to “help others discover what makes it so special.” She has a successful partnership with Roanoke real estate firm MKB and even posted a reel with top realtor, Amanda Ostrander, sharing the reasons why people might want to move to Roanoke. Genya also regularly posts a “community bulletin board” on her stories for followers to respond to with shout-outs, events, jobs, etc. She will share everyone’s responses,



HEY, WHAT'S MISSING?

No doubt, the list below is covered by some content creators in our area; but we didn't find any in a big way. Perhaps there is an opportunity?...

PETS / ANIMAL ADVOCACY

(some organizational accounts, but nothing substantial)

MUSIC

(podcasts exist; but we found no huge following for the local music scene)

HOBBIES

(railroad enthusiasts, car clubs, biking groups, etc., but none with 5k+ followers)

WELLNESS / ALTERNATIVE

(a number of independent accounts, but no clear leader)

CREATIVE / ARTS

(clubs, associations, venues, theatres, museums, but no substantial local collective account)

HUMANITIES / HISTORY / CULTURE / RELIGION

(specific accounts exist; but no big leader—given the rich history of this region)

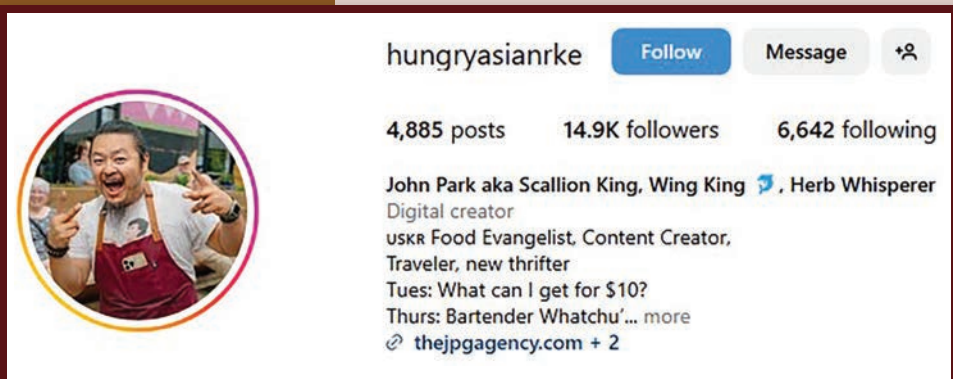
using her platform to amplify others' voices and spread helpful information.

In addition to Hello Roanoke's social media, helloroanokeva.com allows you to buy Hello Roanoke merchandise, find locations for Roanoke Happy Hours or trivia and bingo, and read through her various guides of Roanoke. Hello Roanoke has been a wonderful addition to the Roanoke Valley community with her curated local guides and thoughtful recommendations.

"Managing one of Roanoke's most-followed Instagram pages has shown me how impactful social media can be—how something shared online can lead to real, tangible change in the community. Whether it's helping local businesses gain customers, inspiring people to discover a new trail, or highlighting local causes, it's rewarding to see how my work makes a meaningful difference in my city. The best part is hearing from followers who tag me in their adventures or seeing businesses thrive after a post."

“ ”

It's rewarding to see how my work makes a meaningful difference.



John Park

@hungryasianrke

John Park is a local content creator focused on the food industry and co-founder of JPG Agency. He highlights local restaurants in the Roanoke Valley and other places he travels to. John collaborates with other content creators in special segments which are dropped on Tuesdays and Thursdays, including “What can I get for \$10?” and “Bartender Whatchu’ Drankin’?” respectively. These segments have been a huge hit with the community. Who doesn’t want to try a new restaurant without breaking the bank? The surprise drinks from the featured bartenders provide followers with new bars or drinks to try, and being able to see these fun interactions with the bartenders gives them inspiration to try these places. In these segments, viewers get high-quality audio and footage with quick clips of “behind the scenes,” including “uncut” moments or maybe a view of the filming set up. Everything is high quality but so authentic, making it feel like the set of a reality television show and keeping viewers engaged.

"I got started in content creation as a photographer, which led to video work and eventually launching a digital marketing company where content is key. I create my own content for two big reasons: 1. To highlight local restaurants that might not be on social media or don't have the resources to market themselves. 2. To test new ideas and sharpen my skills—it's like R&D [research and development] but way more fun. It's all about staying creative and giving back to the community at the same time."

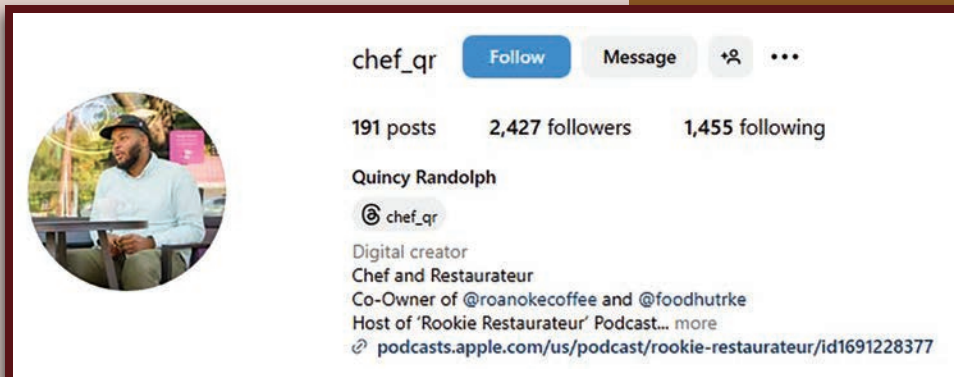
Quincy Randolph

@chef_qr

Quincy is a local content creator, co-owner of RND Coffee (@roanokecoffee, @rndvinton) and Food Hut (@foodhutrke), chef, and restaurateur. Not only is he a successful business owner and



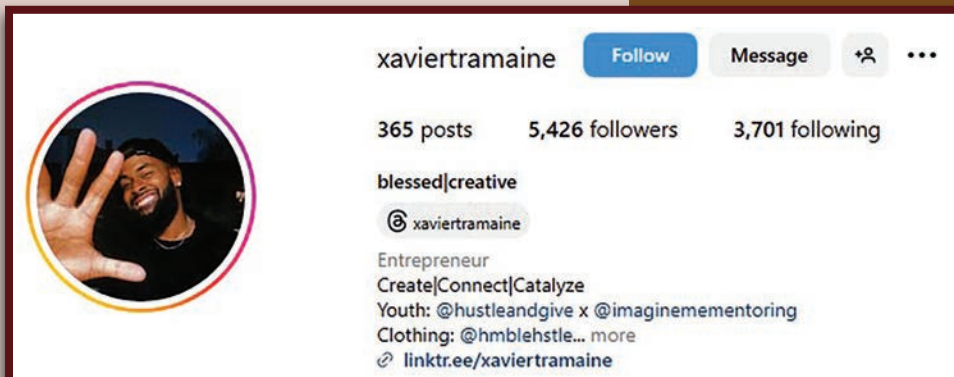
It's like
R&D, but way
more fun.



restaurateur who has been featured on the Food Network multiple times, he has also started a podcast, Rookie Restaurateur, where he “sits down with emerging restaurateurs and industry professionals to explore their stories, challenges, and personal journeys.” His first episode aired in May of 2023 where he chatted with his brother, Steffon Randolph, about how they launched their business. Since then, he has featured many local business owners, chefs, writers, “Chopped” champions, sommeliers, farmers, and more. Quincy has many interesting conversations and fun segments, allowing listeners to get to know many industry professionals they see at their local restaurants or farmer’s markets, as well as other places of business.

One Final Note

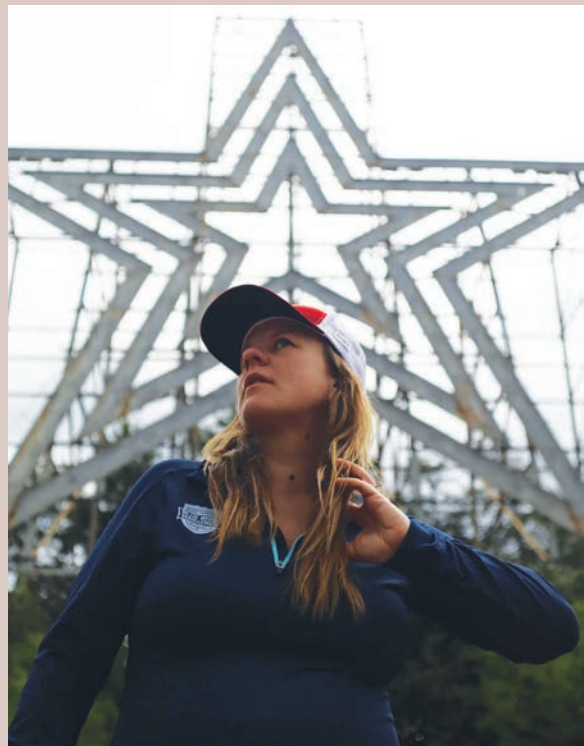
This report is about Roanoke market influencers. We do have major influencers in Roanoke who address other markets. Examples include Adam Linkenauger (sports, veterans, etc.) and Abby K Brown (art).



Xavier Tramaine

@xaviertramaine


Xavier Tramaine is a local influencer with a seemingly endless resumé. He has founded a mentoring program, non-profit organization, and clothing company based on the idea of giving back to his community. He offers keynote speaking, program development, and brand engagement services. Imagine Me Mentoring (@imaginementoring) focuses on connecting youth to mentorship opportunities through school-based mentoring, community-based mentoring, tutoring and



BUT HOW COULD YOU FORGET... X?

You might be surprised to know that identifying local influencers isn't as easy as you might expect. With all the online sources, you'd think it would be simple to list content creators with the highest rankings and audiences. Not true. First, there are a lot of channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X threads lead the pack), each with its own stats. Then, there are social accounts built around individual brands versus organizational/institutional brands, which generate followers by different algorithms). And you also have different parameters based on subject area—which affects ranking influence (for example, advertisers would gravitate to a global celebrity chef much differently than a local community reviewer of independent diners). There is also a distinction between public and private accounts. All that said, let us know the "influencers" you can't believe we didn't include in this feature. One thing is for sure, a list of influencers even one year from today, will likely be a lot different. That game changes constantly. -TF

academic help, and more in order to initiate and nurture excellence and create long-lasting relationships. Xavier also started the non-profit, The Humble Hustle Co, as "a commitment to uplifting youth and empowering underprivileged communities" which provides programs focused on leadership development for young Black girls and outdoor education for Black youth. What started out as selling t-shirts at local events to raise money for his nonprofit led to the creation of his clothing company, Humble Hustle (@humblehustle). The Humble Hustle Co. has also launched a creative space, The Collective, for daytime co-working and studios for local creatives, a Youtube Channel (@TheHustlerSpiritShow) to hear "raw, unfiltered conversations on the gritty reality of the entrepreneurial hustle," and Not Your Average Events (@nyaeverything), hosting festivals, parties, and other social events. With his creativity, leadership, and influence of giving back to the community and helping others, Xavier is a powerful embodiment of the term "influencer."

There are many other notable accounts in the area, whether run by individuals or organizations, that produce the same effect of influencing followers to discover more about where they live. 

LOCAL INFLUENTIAL CONTENT DISTRIBUTORS

**Individuals:**

- Genya Kalinina, Hello Roanoke [@hello.roanoke; general Roanoke content; 49.1K followers]
- John Park [@hungryasianrke, “foodie” content, 14.7K followers]
- Xavier Tramaine [@xaviertramaine, @hmblehstle, @hustleandgive, @imaginementoring, @thecollectiveroanoke, @nyaeverything; nonprofit, retail, entrepreneurial, and event content; 5,426 followers]
- Eating Roanoke [@eatingroanoke; local food and drink content; 3,764 followers]
- Hal and Kris Cone [@conerealtygroup; real estate content and moving to Roanoke content; 3,598 followers]
- Our Roanoke [@our.roanoke; local family fun content; 3,128 followers]
- Quincy Randolph [@chef_qr, @roanokecoffee, @foodhutrke, @rookierestaurateurpod, @cafewithq; “foodie” and restaurant industry content; 2,432 followers]
- Logan Sherrill tourr; “foodie” content including “Hometown Eats” segment; 2,261 followers]
- Tour Roanoke [@tourroanoke; historic food tour content; 1,919 followers]
- R Frazier Hughes Jr. [@bestofroanokerealtor; real estate content; 1,272 followers]
- Everything Roanoke [@everythingroanoke; general Roanoke content; 1,074 followers]

Organizations:

- Virginia's Blue Ridge [@visitvbr]
- Get2KnowNoke [@get2knownoke]
- Roanoke Outside Foundation [@roanoke_outside]



Liz White

From Cola to Cars

By Jennifer Poff Cooper

People. The word rises to the top over and over when talking with Liz White about her new position as chief of staff at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTI), the largest transportation research institute in the country.



VT photos

Liz White had been steered toward the engineering field by a mentor, her high school physics teacher. As an undergraduate at Virginia Tech, she settled on industrial and systems engineering because there was a “people side along with the technical side.” At Radford University, White earned an MBA, which she felt could apply across many fields and industries.

Her first job out of college was at PepsiCo in Wytheville. White had completed her undergraduate senior design project there, so the company knew enough about her, and vice-versa, for everyone to realize the pairing was a good fit. White appreciated that it was a large, well-known company, and she said, “it was nice to stay local.”



While at PepsiCo, White worked in multiple industrial engineering roles, most recently as quality manager of the New River Valley manufacturing facility.

With the operation at PepsiCo being 24/7 and the job requiring long days – often 60 hours per week – White decided in 2012 to make an interesting career pivot to VTTI, where she was drawn by its “lifesaving mission” of safety work. “VTTI’s focus on the human factor drives me every day,” White said.

“And I thought the Smart Road was cool,” she added. The Virginia Smart Roads are state-of-the-art, closed test-bed research facilities, managed by VTTI in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), that conduct advanced testing for transportation technology and safety research.

For 35 years, VTTI has advanced transportation through innovation. Created as the Center for Transportation Research in 1988, it traces its roots to a handful of faculty members who leveraged the power of teamwork in pursuit of a future with safe and effective mobility. According to executive director Zachary Doerzaph, via the VTTI website, its key to success is a team of individuals who dedicate their lives to saving lives. “Every member of VTTI plays a critical role

enabling or performing research which saves lives, time, money, and protects the environment,” he writes.

In over 12 years at VTTI, one of White’s favorite initiatives has been the deployment of electric scooters on campuses. This hands-on research project looked at crash causes, determining that transitions such as from pavement to grass were a primary problem. The hope was to help inform people’s decisions to keep them away from high-risk activities.

Plus, she said, “It was fun riding e-scooters!”

Another favorite was collecting autonomous pickup truck data in northern Virginia, where these vehicles were deployed and tested on actual roads. Because of the location, this was a high-profile project, and researchers were able to interact with federal employees.

The appeal of switching from engineering to administration at VTTI pointed back to one of White’s favorite subjects, math, in that she enjoys handling budgets. Additionally, it means that she is involved in a broader portfolio of projects, as well as exposure to all divisions in VTTI, and that she now works with the executive leadership team. White said, “It’s nice to change every couple of years to keep things interesting.”


While the impact it makes on people’s lives is her motivation at VTTI, White says that people are also her biggest challenge in the new role. “I have to find ways to help people with different needs and personalities excel at their jobs,” she said.

As chief of staff, the position she began in May 2024, White provides support and resources for VTTI teams. As with industrial engineering, continuous improvement is a key principle. One organization-wide change she is overseeing is standing up a project management office, for which she has hired people specifically to make sure programs stay on time and on budget. She explained that, previously, researchers were performing this function, but that that time is better spent on their specialty areas instead of on administration.

In addition to looking at ways for VTTI to be more efficient and effective, White is focusing on VTTI's 300-400 employees. In this human resource capacity, she tries to reduce their job burnout and make sure they are happy. She noted that people switching jobs frequently is a particular issue since the pandemic.

"The goal is to retain great employees and recruit new talent," White said. White says others have often described her as "a closer"

in that she enjoys bringing a project from opening to completion. Organizational skill is also required to "keep balls in the air moving."

While White's days in project management tended to be similar, now every day is different. She said, "I go to work and have no idea what will pop up." With the 2020s predicted to change transportation more than the prior half century combined, such flexibility seems integral to navigating VTTI's future. 





LEAD BY EXAMPLE

**By Carrie Cousins,
Vice President at
Lead Point Digital**

Executive Summary:
*Influencing goes beyond
the social media rankings.*

Your circle of influence is wider than you think

There is no way anyone would ever confuse me with a social media influencer.

I have never danced on TikTok.

I have never sold anything on Instagram.

I don't even have that many followers on Facebook or X.

But my social actions and interactions have a lot of impact. And so do yours.

There's a multiplier effect that happens whenever you do something in a public space – such as social media where even private profiles can turn into public spaces thanks to screen sharing and copying.

Let's follow the path:

You post on social media that you got a promotion. You get 20 likes and a handful of people comment. Maybe your mom shares it. Three people email you or call you with a congratulatory note (and don't interact at all online).

Every one of those interactions is a multiplier, generating more potential eyeballs and recognition for your original post.

If someone comments about the promotion to you offline, you've crossed "platforms" or "channels" with your information, creating an even wider circle of communication.

Weeks or even months later, you may still get residual "congrats" from people you had no idea knew about the promotion.

And you have influenced their thought process. They appreciate you for your work and remember that you were recognized by others. Your message imprinted on them, even if you didn't know it.



**DIGITAL
MARKETING**
is easy with a good partner.


leadpointdigital.com sales@leadpointdigital.com

You are an influencer.

As someone who works in marketing and advertising, we are projecting this impact all the time with activities designed to create influence. From selling bikes to event registrations, every post, picture, and soundbite is a touchpoint to create influence.

The multiplier effect has long been identified in advertising as a viable strategy when it comes to creating cross-platform touchpoints that build on each other as more people interact.

It's why you'll often hear me recommended an "and" strategy when it comes to marketing. (You should try this and that.)

And it works for a simple reason, you create the greatest influence when you combine reach, communication, and messaging for your brand or cause. Try it and watch your circle of influence grow. 



Every post, picture, and soundbite is a touchpoint to create influence.



MemberOne[®]

A Division of Virginia Credit Union

Business banking that makes
ANYTHING PAW-SIBLE.



Choose from four different types of checking accounts



Savings, share certificates, and money market account options



Web design and management services**



Free Online and Mobile Banking with 24/7 account access*



Merchant Services including card payment processing services**



Business Visa* debit card



HR and payroll services**



memberonefcu.com | 800.666.8811

Loans subject to credit and collateral requirements. Not all applicants will qualify. Membership eligibility required. Federally insured by NCUA. *Carrier data rates may apply. **Services provided by third party partner company.



Doug Jackson

Michael Hemphill

Douglas Jackson - Arts Connector

By Hart Fowler

The part-time city employee is dialed in to doing the full-time job of professional arts liaison in 2025.

“Roanoke, for a long time, has been the arts capital of the western side of the state,” Roanoke Arts and Culture Coordinator Douglas Jackson told me in a zoom interview from home in the middle of a recent ice-storm.

“Creating every day the place we want to be,” is the new mantra building upon Roanoke City’s first Arts and Cultural Plan he co-authored, a highlight during his 11 years tenure on the Roanoke Arts Commission.

Jackson took over as director of the Roanoke Arts Commission from Susan Jennings in 2019.

The blueprint for boosting the city’s economy, creating more livable communities and finding ways to promote civic engagement and lifelong learning through the arts has paid off, with recent data on the City’s website showing Roanoke arts and culture infrastructure boasting three times the average to similarly sized regions in jobs (1,774 full-time), local government revenue (\$2.7 million), with a total impact estimated at \$64.2 million.

And Roanoke is investing more in the homegrown culture outside of the many

museums, galleries, performance halls, concert venues and theaters the city has to offer. "Arts are all around us and we can engage them in so many different ways," says Jackson. "It's more than just going to a museum and it's more than sitting in a theater seat or listening to a band perform."

We're seeing organic growth in our arts scene with hugely successful events at the Taubman and the announcement of a new 750-person music venue in the First National Bank Building," says Roanoke City's economic development director Marc Nelson. "We're also seeing major interest in city sponsored events via the Arts Commission. These things might run on the background for some, but they definitely factor into the decision-making process when business owners or job seekers consider a community."

For Jackson, local participation is key and "for a community our size, we've had a very high per capita level of engagement in the arts." That includes people picking up a paintbrush to join muralists for some of the public art projects seen around Roanoke now and funded in some cases by the Arts Commission.

The National Endowment for the Arts saw that as well, recently awarding the City \$75,000 in the highly competitive "Our Town" program to support Arts Connect Neighborhoods, a collaborative strategy to engage residents and strengthen neighborhoods through the arts. The City of Roanoke matched the grant with an additional \$75,000.


ArtsConnect launched last year, and is a combined effort of the Roanoke's Arts Commission, the Cultural Endowment, and the Neighborhood Services Offices.

The program's local roster of about 50 professional artists equipped with a range of expertise are well gathered in a print and online catalogue. Roanoke residents interested in creative ways to better their neighborhoods or their own art can choose from a broad range of programs, with ArtsConnect paying the artist and some material costs.



In 2024, Arts Connects provided 70 free arts activities and paid out \$120,000 to local businesses and artists according to their 2024 End-of-Year progress report. They have raised another \$100,000 for the program to continue in 2025. Highlights include Busk Roanoke celebrating local street performers, calls for sculpture-art for the Art Walk at Elmwood Park and in Wasena Park, and programs celebrating the 50th anniversary of Annie Dillard's masterpiece "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek." Dillard attended then-Hollins College.

"These creative placemaking grants support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into local efforts to strengthen and authentically engage communities, center equity, advance artful lives, and lay the groundwork for long-term systems change," wrote NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson when awarding Roanoke the prize. "These organizations play an important role in advancing the creative vitality of our nation and helping to ensure that all people can benefit from arts, culture, and design."

Six years deep as Coordinator for the Roanoke Arts Commission, the part-time city employee is dialed in to doing the full-time job of professional arts liaison. A formidable task with many moving parts of a burgeoning metropolitan cultural environment, Douglas Jackson tackles a daily goal, of serving both the attraction and retention aspects of the job. "Once again, we're here to create every day the place we want to be. That's going to be a place that other people are going to want to be." 



BUSINESS CENTS

By Daniel Colston

Executive Summary:

Many business owners may not even realize the fact that their business can have a marketable value, but overlooking this reality can have very negative implications.

Does your business have enterprise value?

In fact, most well-established business owners will have a majority of their family's net worth tied up in their business, so overlooking how to manage this most valuable asset can be very detrimental.


In my industry as a business broker and Certified Exit Planning Advisor, we coach our clients to always be thinking about their enterprise value. Scott Snider, President of the Exit Planning Institute, says that Exit Planning is not just planning for your eventual exit from your business, but also a good business strategy in general. This is because when you are thinking about your enterprise value, you are thinking of ways to improve the health of your business.

You can improve your business enterprise value by putting efficient systems in place, hiring the right people, increasing sales, decreasing inefficiencies, owning and utilizing your client and customer data efficiently, creating subscription contracts or recurring revenue streams, nurturing referral systems, focusing on your niche and target market, and growing your brand.

If your business can't function without you or at least allow you quarterly vacations with the phone and laptop off, then you don't own a business. You own a job. You can't sell a job, but you can sell a business. If you are interested in creating or growing an asset that has a marketable value, then you need to think of ways to delegate and remove yourself from the day-to-day operations so that an investor would want to buy your business. This requires the business to generate strong cash flows, have a solid team of personnel, a strong base of customers, and an established brand.

When your business is marketable, then you will want to look at ways to increase your enterprise value. This is remarkable because it will not only increase your selling price when you exit but also increase your earnings while you own the business! Sadly, there are many small business owners who build the business around them and never succeed to the next step of growing the business to an enterprise value. By hiring good employees and delegating tasks, these business owners can grow to the next level and some day exit their business for a handsome price.

For those more established business owners who are looking to sell, it's important to have a good idea of what your business is worth and how you can also increase the value of the business. The valuation of your business depends on many factors and requires talking with a professional who can help guide you through the process and garner the best price for your business. This can be

the difference between a 6,7, or even 8-figure exit from your business, and it is worth investing the time to do correctly. In the end you will have invested years of hard work, sweat, tears, money, and time and you want to receive a fair price for your business. For more information about your business's range of value, contact me for a free consultation or read some of my blogs online at upwardfp.com. 

WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS

- putting in efficient systems
- hiring the right people
- increasing sales
- decreasing inefficiencies
- owning / utilizing customer data
- creating subscription contracts / recurring revenue
- nurturing referral systems
- focusing on niche / target market
- growing your brand

FirstBank 
there's power in one®

Empowered BANKING

Our bankers have the power to make Roanoke a better place because when you succeed, we all succeed.

Choose the *One* bank you need. First Bank.

VISIT OUR DOWNTOWN ROANOKE OFFICE:

**310 First Street
Roanoke, Virginia 24011
540.425.7050**





FSWVA

Pam Irvine

Irvine Has Lifelong Mission to Nourish Communities

By Aila Boyd

Pamela Irvine, president and CEO of Feeding Southwest Virginia, has dedicated more than four decades to combating food insecurity in some of Virginia's most underserved areas.

Since its founding in 1981, the organization based in Salem has grown from a modest operation into a regional powerhouse providing critical food support to those in need across 26 counties.

"I've been with Feeding Southwest Virginia since the beginning," Pam Irvine said. "Before that, I operated an emergency food pantry in my community and worked as a food stamp advocate. I saw firsthand how significant the need was and knew something bigger had to be done."

From its inception with just three employees and minimal resources, Feeding Southwest Virginia now boasts 76 employees operating

out of three facilities: the Salem Distribution Center, the Community Solutions Center in Roanoke City, and the Abingdon Distribution Center. The organization's services include meal preparation for children, warehouse distribution, and mobile grocery programs.

"We've grown from serving the immediate Roanoke Valley to covering over 12,000 square miles, predominantly rural communities," Irvine explained. "It's been a challenge, but with thousands of volunteers, we've been able to adapt and expand."

One of the organization's pivotal moments came in 1989 when Irvine led the effort to establish the Abingdon facility, extending



services to 11 additional counties in far Southwest Virginia.

Despite its growth, Feeding Southwest Virginia has faced numerous challenges, including logistical and financial struggles.

“We serve the highest food-insecure areas in Virginia with the least resources,” Irvine said. “For years, we struggled to secure donations, maintain refrigeration and trucks, and reach the individuals who needed us most.”

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the organization in unprecedented ways but

also highlighted its resilience. Feeding Southwest Virginia pivoted quickly to ensure safety while meeting increased demand, distributing food directly to vehicles and expanding its children’s feeding programs.

“One silver lining of the pandemic was the generosity it inspired,” Irvine noted. “People realized how difficult it was to get groceries, and donations increased significantly. It allowed us to purchase food when donations were scarce.”

Another major victory during the pandemic was the removal of a federal restriction

ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY Fraim & Cawley CPAs

TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

We won't just SAVE you money – we'll help you grow your business fast!
Contact us to hear how!

**MAKE MICAH & DAVE
SAVE YOU MONEY**



FC 325 MOUNTAIN AVE SW
ROANOKE, VA 24016
FRAIMCPA.COM
540.314.0345



requiring staff to observe children consuming meals to receive reimbursement. “For years, we advocated for that change,” Irvine said. “The policy change allowed us to grow from six to 26 children’s feeding sites in Southwest Virginia, and we’re now able to feed thousands more.”

Feeding Southwest Virginia’s success depends heavily on partnerships with retailers like Kroger, Food Lion, and Walmart, which donate food and funds. Irvine emphasized

the importance of non-food corporate partners, noting their contributions to operations and volunteer efforts. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has also delivered truckloads of food to Salem from Utah on a number of occasions.

“Our corporate partners play a huge role,” she said. “For example, volunteers from these businesses pack food boxes for low-income seniors, and their financial support helps us keep our trucks on the road.”



Feeding America

The organization has also ventured into innovative programs, such as mobile grocery stores, which bring affordable food to remote areas. “These programs are crucial for neighbors who live far from grocery stores,” Irvine said.

For Irvine, the work is deeply personal. “My husband and I started with limited resources,” she shared. “I know what it’s like to budget for groceries with a family. That experience fuels my passion.”


Irvine’s commitment stems from a belief that food is a basic human right and a source of hope. “When you provide food, you’re not just meeting a physical need,” she said. “You’re giving someone the energy to face another day.”

As Feeding Southwest Virginia looks to the future, Irvine remains focused on sustainability and innovation. “We’re shifting from simply giving food to

engaging our community in neighbor-centered conversations,” she said. “Our neighbors are experts in their lived experiences, and their insights help shape our programs.”

Despite the increasing cost of food and a decline in donations, Irvine is optimistic. Feeding Southwest Virginia is exploring ways to strengthen its programs, particularly in rural areas.

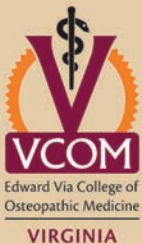
“Transportation is a huge barrier,” Irvine said. “We’re working on solutions, like integrating food pantries into healthcare facilities and launching children’s farmers markets to teach kids about healthy eating.”

For Irvine, the work is about more than numbers. It’s about people. “Every month, we serve 114,000 individuals,” she said. “At the end of the day, knowing that someone isn’t going to bed hungry because of our efforts makes it all worthwhile.” 

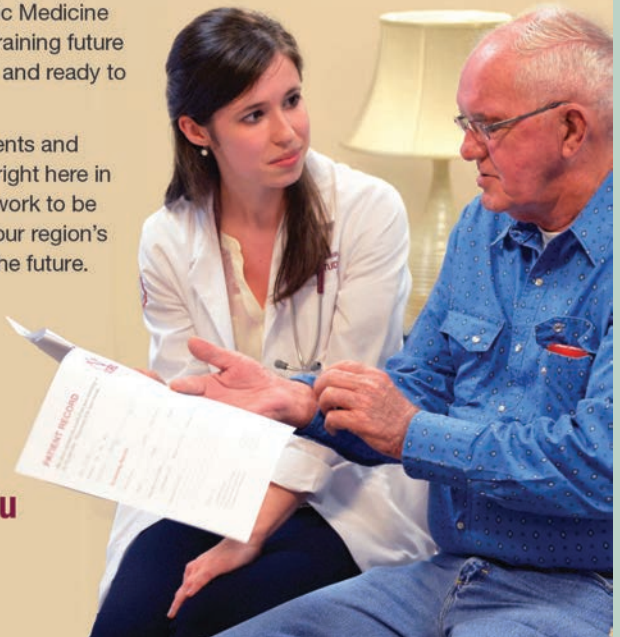
The Medical School making a difference in our community **EVERY DAY**

At the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Blacksburg, Virginia, we are training future physicians who are community-focused and ready to make a difference.

In fact, for more than 20 years, our students and alumni have been improving healthcare right here in southern Appalachia, but there is more work to be done. We are committed to addressing our region’s healthcare challenges both now and in the future.



Learn more
about how we’re
doing that at
www.vcom.edu





Submitted photos



Carter-Cardinal- Mission bikes>

Along with a rebranding came team building for a regional bank with six locations in Roanoke. And with some help from **Cardinal Bicycle**, the **Rescue Mission of Roanoke** now has 21 new bikes that guests at the shelter can use to get around town. The director of marketing and communication for the Rescue Mission, **Lisa Thompson**, says those new bikes will provide more options for shelter guests looking to get to a job or an appointment on a timely basis, as an option to taking the bus: “we were super thrilled about that, they did their team building then they brought the bikes to Roanoke and Cardinal Bike came over and generously donated their time to help finalize these bikes and make sure they are safe.”

Brooks Taylor is the corporate communications officer for **Carter Bank**; he says the Martinsville-based bank formerly known as Carter Bank & Trust takes its commitment to supporting local communities seriously.

“We partnered with the Rescue Mission and wanted to get sure the bikes got to the people that needed them, for transportation to work, or for appointments - for people that might not have it.”

Thompson says the bike donation offer from Carter Bank, which is based in Martinsville, came unexpected. She also says the new bikes will allow Rescue Mission guests to be even more independent, as they look to rebuild their lives. Carter Bank has more than 60 locations throughout Virginia and North Carolina - including six in Roanoke. Tyler Carter is the Community Reinvestment Administrator for a bank founded in Rocky Mount by his grandfather 50 years ago. Carter says the Rescue Mission was one of three non-profits that received new bicycles: “our focus is making sure to give opportunities to people in our communities to prosper. When we pulled together for this brand launch event, we thought of no better way than using that time and manpower at three different locations to benefit our community. Bikes is something that came up and we partnered with three different non-profits throughout our footprint.”



Courtesy photos

Hotel Roanoke's new Salt Spa >

The **Hotel Roanoke** hosted a grand opening for its newly renovated Spa on January 15, along with a part of a \$14 million guest room renovation, "which really brought the guest room product and experience to new level," says Hotel Roanoke and conference general manager **Brian Wells**. Also, part of the renovations included creating a wellness level. The newly renovated spa treatment rooms include a night sky motif on the

ceilings with stars that twinkle. The Spa on the wellness level at Hotel Roanoke offers facials for both men and women, body treatments, therapeutic massages and salt foot soaks. Wells says the spa has four very unique treatment rooms, "including a seven-step hypogenic process that are great for folks that are traveling and want better sleep or might have respiratory issues. On that same level we built a spa, which Hotel Roanoke has been lacking. We've got four fabulous treatment rooms. The team there is doing a fabulous job. It's kind of a fabulous vibe."





SMALL BUSINESS TOOL KIT

By Molly Gutierrez

Executive Summary:

As a small business owner, you're expected to be the energizer bunny of your organization. But what happens when the euphoria of the New Year holiday wears off and you look around to discover that you and your team are running on fumes?

Molly Gutierrez is Operations Coordinator at Building Beloved Communities. molly@buildingbelovedcommunities.com

Kickstarting your best year yet, even on fumes

Here are five practical tools to help you and your team shake off the burn-out blues:

1. **Sacred Break Ritual** - Remember lunch breaks? They're not just urban legends! Institute a "Sacred Break" policy where everyone, including you, steps away from work for at least 30 minutes daily. Encourage team members to actually leave their desks, go outside, and let the sun kiss their faces. Bonus: The sun's rays help produce serotonin to give you a boost of good feels.
2. **Mindful Moment** - When things get wild, take a momentary pause to take a deep breath, feel your feet on the ground, and notice how supported you are by your chair. This quick grounding exercise can help reset your brain and bring you back to the present moment.
3. **Meme Your Team** - Launch a daily humor challenge. Share a funny meme, tell a corny joke, or start a pun war. Laughter releases endorphins, reduces stress, and can help disrupt those grumpy neural pathways we all get stuck in sometimes. Warning: Dad jokes may cause groaning, eye-rolling, and unexpected team bonding.
4. **Purpose Pit Stop** - Had one of those days? Take a pause to reconnect with your company's purpose. Share customer success story with a colleague or discuss how your work positively impacts the community. When we align our daily grind with a greater purpose, suddenly those TPS reports don't seem so soul-crushing.
5. **Reframe Game** - Turn negative situations into opportunities for growth or humor. Missed a deadline? "Congratulations, we've just discovered a new way not to manage our time!" By reframing challenges, we can reduce stress and approach problems more creatively. It's about using a reframe to find the silver lining in the storm clouds and get yourself off the neural superhighway to misery, back to creative solutions.

Implementing these tools isn't just about boosting morale; these are practical tools to build resilience for life. It's about creating a workplace where people actually want to be and can support themselves and each other to thrive. As leaders, when we prioritize well-being and purpose, we're not just building a business – *we're building a community.* 📌

“Launch a daily humor challenge (meme your team).”



CREATING LEGACIES GROWING COMMUNITIES

Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia has been providing customized services to donors for decades, connecting their generosity with a broad spectrum of important needs and opportunities within our communities. We exist to help people, with or without great wealth, give in ways that have joy and meaning to them. When you come to the Community Foundation with a dream, we offer a variety of flexible charitable solutions to make it come to life and grow forever.

400
PERMANENT
ENDOWMENT FUNDS
and growing!

**\$70
MILLION**
AWARDED
IN GRANTS
to date

YOUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TEAM

Beth Kelly Chief Financial Officer Michelle Eberly Director Grants & Donor Engagement
Carly Oliver Chief Operating Officer Alan Ronk President & CEO Alyssa Rorrer Program Associate
Martinsville Regional Office April Haynes Regional Vice President Martinsville Regional Office



ROANOKE CORPORATE OFFICE
P.O. Box 1159 | Roanoke, VA 24006 | 540.985.0204
MARTINSVILLE REGIONAL OFFICE
P.O. Box 1124 | Martinsville, VA 24114 | 276.656.6223
cfwesternva.org



Courtesy photos

David Dantzer

Having “a lot of fun,” in retirement at the Wag N’ Wash

By Gene Marrano

With a shared love for animals and a passion for helping others, Alyce and David Dantzer are bringing Wag N’ Wash to the Roanoke community, a place where pets and their people will always feel at home.

David and Alyce Dantzler are both “retired,” from careers at Kroger and in the mental health field respectively, but they’re still going – David with Feeding Southwest Virginia in a corporate relations role and Alyce with a local veterinary clinic. Now they’ve recently become business owners as well with Wag N’Wash on Orange Avenue NE in Roanoke. Customers can bring their dogs in for a washing and other grooming; the Dantzlers have hired a staff to operate the store, but David likes to come by after his day is done at FSWVA to help out. Wag N’Wash had a soft opening in November and held a grand opening last month.

The Dantzlers have a long history of fostering and finding homes for rescue dogs, so Wag N’Wash, where customers can also find dog food and accessories, is right in their wheelhouse. David says Alyce is an HR person and helped put together the “quality” staff for Wag N’Wash. “The conversation about this started 4-5 years ago,” says David, who along with Alyce is a 50 percent owner of the new business; a silent partner holds the other half. They are in a brand new space that was never occupied, a “vanilla shell,” that their developer partner built but hadn’t been leased.


“We’re tending to find the people that want the storefront, where they can shop and see their dog getting groomed versus a drop off type thing.” 31 years with Kroger (in a regional manager role at one point) gave him “an itch for retail,” and after 4-5 years of talking about it Wag N’Wash finally came to life. “I’ve had a blast. Kind of a love for dogs combined with a love for retail.” Before he joined Feeding Southwest Virginia in a full time role David Dantzler worked at the Rescue Mission for his “good friend,” Lee Clark, and he still goes in weekly when he can to volunteer.

At the end of the day the target audience for Wag N’Wash is “someone who loves their pets. Someone who likes to spend time with their dogs, spoils them, feed them natural foods, the good stuff. Our line of products are really good, natural, healthy.” The groomers they hired “are truly fantastic. Groomers are hard to find. [It’s] an art form. They’re special, special people.” Dogs are part of the families that have been bringing them in for a wash, nail clipping and maybe a trimming.

“There’s hair everywhere,” after a washing for some of the furrer breeds,” another motivation

to pay for someone else to do it. “The last thing you want is that hair in your 100 year old pipes,” says the Grandin neighborhood resident. The customer that still likes brick and mortar he says can still find a home at Wag N’Wash. “See, touch and feel – not just get a box on their porch,” he notes about the products they sell in the store. “Brick and mortar is not dead.”

Harkening back to his Kroger training, Dantzer says the level of service provided at Wag N’Wash is “unreal. We have a perfect Google rating,” and many are “blown away ... by the friendliness of store.” That’s a good formula for repeat customers. He expected the client base to skew somewhat younger, but calls it “across the board,” age-wise. Before launching Wag N’Wash they did some guerilla marketing at the Vinton Fall Festival, the Go Outside Festival and at an Angels of Assisi adoption event, getting their name out in public. “We really plan to be plugged into the rescues and the local community.”

Several shelters in the area planned recent events at Wag N’Wash and the Dantzlers will help sponsor adoptions, something he says they’ve been doing since their high school sweetheart days, focusing on dogs that have been languishing in local shelters. “When I’m at the store it doesn’t feel like work,” says David Dantzler; its more about the love for neighbors, customers – and dogs. “It’s been a blast. I’m not doing this for retirement – I’m doing this to do something in retirement – if that makes sense. Just a lot of fun.” 





BEST JOB EVER

By Jennifer Leake

Executive Summary:
Employees who LOVE what they do, ENJOY who they work with, and RESPECT who they work for become more engaged, productive, and motivated.



Help your team love their job by building a best job ever culture


Valentine's Day is often associated with love and gratitude, but it doesn't have to be limited to personal relationships. As a business owner, it's the perfect time to reflect on the people who help make your vision a reality: your employees. Your team is the heart of your business; showing them appreciation can impact morale, engagement, and performance.

Five meaningful ways to show love for your team this Valentine's Day and beyond.

- 1. Recognize and Celebrate Contributions** - Regularly expressing gratitude for hard work and dedication is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to show employees they are valued. A simple "thank you" during a meeting, a personalized note acknowledging an achievement, public shout-outs, tokens of appreciation, or team celebrations for reaching milestones can significantly boost morale. Employees who feel seen and appreciated are more motivated and committed to the company's success.
- 2. Invest in Their Growth** - This demonstrates you care about their future, not just their current contributions. Providing training, mentorship, and skill development opportunities that align with their career goals helps employees see you are dedicated to their success. This strengthens your team's capabilities and helps retain top talent, creating a win-win situation for everyone.
- 3. Foster a Positive and Supportive Workplace** - Ensure that your workplace fosters respect and open communication. Encourage employees to share their ideas and concerns without fear of judgment. Creating a safe and welcoming environment builds trust and creativity. Employees who feel heard and valued are likelier to do their best work.
- 4. Build Meaningful Relationships** - Taking time for employees to connect personally enhances working relationships and fosters trust. Know your employees as individuals—their goals, interests, and their challenges. Respect boundaries while showing genuine care and interest in their well-being. Employees who feel truly valued as individuals, not just as workers, increase their loyalty and engagement.
- 5. Celebrate Team Successes** - Recognizing and celebrating shared achievements fosters unity and pride. Share victories with the team to ensure everyone feels included in the company's success. Whether it's a team lunch, an awards ceremony, or a simple congratulatory

email, these gestures remind employees that their contributions matter.

Employees who feel valued and appreciated become more engaged, productive, and motivated. Foster a culture of support, recognition, and connection to build a happier, more loyal workforce.

If reading this article inspires you to find ways to help your employees feel valued, appreciated, and empowered to thrive, schedule a conversation at bit.ly/MeetJL3o. 

“Regularly expressing gratitude for hard work and dedication is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to show employees they are valued.”



Targeted

DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Finding your next customer online...
and showing them your ads on websites they use



Targeted Digital Ads

Geo-Fencing Ads

Facebook Advertising

LEARN MORE

Contact Fredy Wright
540-767-2256



www.wheelerdigital.com



ON TAP FROM THE PUB

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:
*Yet another perspective
on AI (in case you
haven't heard enough).*

Why 'human' matters

Uncle Bobby no longer jumps up from the couch, spilling Cheetos all over the floor, and screaming at the game on television, "You've GOT to be kidding?!!!"

Do you really want to deny him that pleasure?

Here's the thing. We already possess the technology to eliminate human officials from sports. With powerful optics (including high-res imaging, lasers, sonar, and more), on-field/court and player-wearable devices, we can finally determine with near-100% accuracy whether the rules of the game are being followed.

We can even program degrees of tolerances, so that the game isn't slowed down—with some allowances or forgiveness on minor offenses or when a fault has no bearing on the actual play. (The holding charge, in football, for example, is often overlooked.)

We would know for certain whether the ball or player is in or out of bounds. We would no longer argue whether it was truly passing interference or not. There would be no need for reviews of a score; the scanners would confirm the legitimacy in real time.

Think how the game would change. Wow! We all know of memorable games that were decided on a bad call or the momentum changed enough to affect the outcome, because the refs called it "too tight" or "too loose." Officiating live-action sports is hardly an exact science. My guess is that the two most inconsistent calls in all of sports are: 1) pass interference in pro football; and 2) nearly every possible foul in college basketball.

Technology could solve that problem.

But wait. As nice as accuracy and fairness and perfection seems, do we really want—or need it?

What would happen to the crowds watching the match at the pub? How would we talk about infamous games and playoffs and championships and brackets without questionable calls? And most importantly, why would Uncle Bobby even bother to watch anymore?

In sports, music, art, food preparation, and nearly every sector in our daily lives, a little imperfection goes a long way. And since this is a business journal, allow me to share one more relevant perspective:

Have you employed AI or technology in areas, simply in the name of efficiency or because we're all convinced it's the future, it's what leaders and competitors do, and it's for the best?

Maybe you have no choice. Or, maybe, you can reconsider the value of automated, augmented, and artificial processes for areas like... oh, let's say customer relations, voicemail trees, auto-responders, and the like.

Uncle Bobby is no longer screaming at the humans; he's screaming at the machines.

And that won't matter.

What's in a name? Virginia's Blue Ridge rebranding takes root

About 12 years ago the agency funded by local governments and tasked with drawing visitors to the area for conventions and vacations changed its name - a rebranding - that has led other organizations to follow suit. Last month United Way of Roanoke Valley became United Way of Virginia's Blue Ridge. Before that the local YMCA incorporated the Virginia's Blue Ridge name; the long-running Roanoke Star travel soccer program became the Virginia's Blue Ridge Star soccer club (VBR Star). Landon Howard is the President of VBR; when he came aboard it was the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitor's Bureau. That changed about 12 years ago, when it became Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

Howard says the "Roanoke Valley," moniker for what was formerly the RVCVB name did not bring enough attention to other attractions that might draw people here: "when people go on vacation, they go to the mountains, they go to the beach, or they go to the big city. There's not too many places you go to 'valley' on vacation."

It seems to have worked, with an increasing number of visitors almost every year. A bed tax on hotel rooms helps fund Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, which is supported by a number of local governments; in return VBR handles a lot of the regional marketing and outreach they don't have to.

You see the tag line Virginia's Blue Ridge now being used in various ads as well. Howard, President of Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge says the rebranding is a better way to describe the entire region, not just the center of the valley: "make sure you're tying it in to your topography and the offerings you provide people - that not only want to visit, but the people you may be targeting for workforce and economic development."

What's in a name - a brand? A lot says Howard: "if you look at what we have to offer, whether it be the lakes, the mountains, we've got an incredible amount of offerings that are just as rich as can be, and that's why people come here." He also mentions the variety of arts and culture in the region.

The girls and women's cycling team headquartered here and training for the Olympics and other competitions is VBR Twenty24 - also supported in part by Virginia's Blue Ridge. At least one local radio station (WFIR) now uses the Virginia's Blue Ridge tag at the top of the hour station ID. Look for more incorporation of that tag in the years to come. "We're just tickled to death that everybody is getting on board," says Howard. 🏔️

NOTE: Valley Business FRONT added Virginia's Blue Ridge to its subtitle beginning with the January 2015 edition.



THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

By Gene Marrano

Executive Summary:
*A new handle adopted
by the former RVCVB
has spread to other
organizations.*



Crooked_Shoreline

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.

Summer of the Blockbuster

In the summer of 1982, within an 8-week span, eight science fiction films were released, from the top-grossing *E.T. The Extraterrestrial* from Steven Spielberg to *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, which saved that franchise, to *Conan the Barbarian*, Arnold Schwarzenegger's breakout role. Oh yeah, there was also *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *Poltergeist*, *The Thing*, the ahead-of-its-time *Tron* and *The Road Warrior*, a sequel to *Mad Max*.

Following on the heels of *Jaws*, *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* in the mid to late 70's, the summer of 1982 represented the true

dawning of the age of the summer blockbuster and a shift to science fiction from campy b-movies to big-budget films that drew large audiences and changed how Hollywood planned its programming to reach the masses. Author Chris Nashawaty's book, *The Future Was Now: Madmen, Mavericks And The Epic Sci-Fi Summer of 1982* (Flatiron Books, 2024) will bring back memories for many and for others will point to the origins of the summer science fiction blockbusters that still rule the day now. A great read.

—Gene Marrano

Shore was comforting

Crooked Shoreline, in the Daleville stretch of Botetourt County, still has that new restaurant feel, even though it's been operating for a year now. I always get seafood here—but the menu has plenty of "turf" with its "surf" (and I see the hamburgers, wings, and even the pizzas are popular choices). The raw oysters have been surprisingly delightful; and I'm a sucker for fish-n-chips, which they do right. My latest outing was on a most frigid night—and there's something about the oysters, followed by fish-n-chips, accompanied by a draft Sam Adams Cold Snap that confirmed



Green Goat



RBT Nutcracker

my venture in near single digit temps was absolutely worth braving the elements. County schools might have been closed due to the weather—but hospitality and good eats were fully open for business at the Crooked.

—Tom Field

Goat fare

Goats—at least the ones I see regularly—seem to be eating all the time. All. The. Time. I don't think that characteristic has anything to do with this restaurant, but I feel like the goats would fit in well here. Especially Sunday mornings. In any case, the appropriately named The Green Goat restaurant in Roanoke around Wasena Park knows how to feed well its livestock...err... patrons. The regular fare is good; and then, I happened to stumble (very un-goat-like) upon their Sunday brunch. Holy mother of gruff! For a super fair price, you get an omelet station chef, and fixin's like you only see in the deepest of South. The country ham alone—right there on that there buffet where you grab what you like—is worth the trip. Again, the pub food at all other times is spot on—but this Sunday brunch is in a bramble pasture all of its own. All I have to say is, watch out for overindulging. We humans

aren't designed to eat... All. The. Time.

—Tom Field

RBT's Nutcracker about the dance

I love Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker – the music, the story and the actual dancing. Two ballet companies staged public Nutcracker performances in December, the Southwest Virginia Ballet's youth-oriented version at the Berglund Center we wrote about last month, which is a feast for the eyes on the big stage, with plenty of local residents appearing in the opening party parents' scene. The **Roanoke Ballet Theatre** version happened a week later at Jefferson Center, and it too is a feast for the eyes, in that case centered on the dancing. More than 20 professional dancers, some from outside the area, were on stage for that Nutcracker, and much of it to this untrained ballet eye was breathtaking.

—Gene Marrano

The reviewers: **Gene Marrano** is a news reporter and also editor of FRONT; **Tom Field** is a creative director and also publishes FRONT.



MemberOne's \$145k donations >

Member One (a division of Virginia Credit Union) contributed \$145,000 to local charitable causes for 2024, including: Carilion Clinic Foundation (\$25k); HumanKind (\$20k); New River Community Action (\$20k); Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia (\$10k); Feeding Southwest Virginia (\$10k); Beans and Rice (\$5k); West End Center for Youth (\$5k); LEAP (\$5k); and Lynchburg Grows (\$5k). Through member cardholders, Member One also supported National Center for Healthy Veterans; Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center; Neighbors Helping Neighbors of Amherst County; Roanoke Valley Speech and Hearing Center; and Tunnels to Towers Foundation.



NRVRC building >

The **New River Valley Regional Commission** has purchased the 10,762 square foot former bank branch from Atlantic Union Bank for \$2,000,000. Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer handled the sale negotiations on behalf of the seller.



No more S'mores? >

We knew that headline would get your attention. No worries, our **Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council** have announced their annual Girl Scout Cookie sales (late January through the end of March); but yes, it's true—the S'mores cookie flavor will be retired (AFTER this season... shew!). Support this highly anticipated program (it encourages entrepreneurialism like we celebrate here at the FRONT); and enjoy your Thin Mints, Samoas, Tagalongs, Do-si-dos, and more. A cookie-finder-by-zip-code app is at www.gsvsc.org/en/cookies.html.



VBR adds to Sports Council >

Virginia's Blue Ridge (VBR) Sports Council has announced its newest member, **Nicola Cranmer**, General Manager of the UCI Virginia's Blue Ridge **TWENTY28 Pro Cycling Team**. Virginia's Blue Ridge Sports Council aims to position the region as a premier destination for sports tourism activity that's welcoming to athletes, teams, and families. Its mission emphasizes leveraging the area's exceptional location, climate, and facilities to create opportunities for sports events that inspire community engagement and economic impact.



Submitted

CVC Scholarships >

Clean Valley Council recently presented Ann Davey Masters Environmental Excellence Scholarships for the first time to two Virginia Western Community College students. **Lily Kroese** and **Dalton Fehlberg** each accepted a \$500 scholarship for outstanding academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to excellence. The late Ann Davey Masters was an environmental advocate and a long-time CVC executive director, serving in that role from 1996-2009. "During her tenure, Ann Masters spearheaded environmental initiatives that improved the quality of life in the Roanoke Valley," said Plaster.

The scholarships were awarded during CVC's annual Earth Summit in November. Students enrolled in VWCC's integrated environmental science or agriculture associates of science degrees are eligible for the scholarship. Fehlberg is enrolled in the Integrated Environmental Studies Specialization and is interested in pursuing a career in environmental resources management. Kroese is enrolled in the Agriculture Specialization and is interested in a career in animal sciences.



Moving~Consignment~Auctions~Real Estate

CROWNING TOUCH

6704 WILLIAMSON RD ROANOKE
CrowningTouchUSA.com

The Specialists
for Seniors

540-982-5800



FOX

RADIO 910

Roanoke
and 104.3 FM



Floyd County Chamber of Commerce

Springhouse wins 2024 NPO >

Springhouse, a nonprofit school, received the "Nonprofit of the Year" award from the **Floyd County Chamber of Commerce** at its Annual Dinner held in November. The award recognizes Springhouse "for its significant impact on the community through its innovative approach to education, which emphasizes building beloved community by fostering unity and respecting diversity." Springhouse Executive Director **Jenny Finn** and Development Director **Carolyn Reilly** (pictured L-R) accepted the award. Since its founding in 2014, Springhouse "has focused on providing holistic, vitality-centered learning opportunities for students of all ages while also engaging the community to create meaningful educational experiences."



Fork changes >

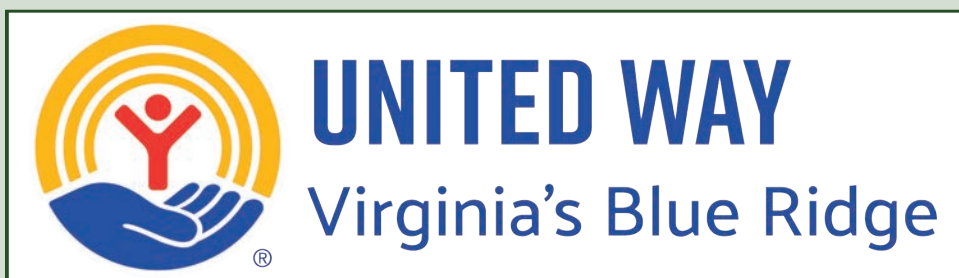
20 years after establishing the now-iconic **Fork in the Alley** restaurant in South Roanoke, co-owners Dr. David Trinkle and his wife Ann, are passing control to a new generation of owners. **Andrew Ross** and **Nic Miller**, friends since their childhoods in South Roanoke, have purchased the Trinkles' brick-oven pub. Ross, a graduate of Roanoke's Patrick Henry High School, is co-founder of The Whale, a craft beer collective with five locations across the Carolinas, including Asheville, Greenville and Charleston. The Whale has become a favorite among craft beer enthusiasts; in 2024, it was voted the No. 2 beer bar in the world by the readers of Craft Beer and Brewing Magazine.

Miller graduated from North Cross High School in 2007 before attending the University of Mississippi. During his college years in Oxford, he developed a passion for the restaurant industry, working under James Beard Award-winning chef John Currence at City Grocery. That experience ignited his love for great food and exceptional service. The Trinkles will continue to own the property on which Fork in the Alley operates and they will continue operating their Fork in the Market restaurant in downtown Roanoke.



MGCC nurse grads >

Mountain Gateway Community College celebrated the Pinning Ceremony for the Practical Nursing program on December 20th. "We are thrilled to honor our newest graduates as they officially enter the nursing profession. This milestone marks their dedication and commitment to healthcare," says MGCC. *Pictured Front L-R: Taylor Ratliff, Hayley Pugh, Casey Brewster. Back L-R: Kirstan Connor, Thomas Bayly, Heath (Robert) Howard, Renee' Feamster.*



From Valley to Ridge >

A New Year, and a new name for United Way of Roanoke Valley – it's now **United Way of Virginia's Blue Ridge**. United Way's **Kianna Price Marshall**, Vice President of Advancement, says, "it's been 50 years since United Way changed its name. A volunteer committee made some wonderful suggestions." President and CEO **Abby Hamilton** says, "the name Virginia's Blue Ridge ... is who we are, for people to see themselves within our name. It talks about the quality of life, the assets that we have [in the region.]"



Whitewater Park announced >

Described as the first of its kind in Virginia, **Wasena Park** and adjacent areas along the Roanoke River Greenway will soon become home to an in-river whitewater park. Almost 6 million dollars in American Rescue Plan Act funds and the recent signing of an agreement with a contractor means construction should begin early this year with completion in late 2026. The whitewater park will allow kayakers and other "floaters" to traverse a series of rapids - nothing too challenging - that **Katie Slusher** with Roanoke City Parks and Recreation says enhances what's already there in the Roanoke River: "really emphasize the drop in the river that's already there, concentrating the flow a little bit so that it's runnable at the lower flows and creates a wave feature that you can surf on more consistently than what the natural flow does." The in-river whitewater park will span from Vic Thomas park near Memorial Avenue (with an ADA-accessible put in there) to the low water bridge spanning the Roanoke River near the Green Goat restaurant.



Gene Marrano

Arts Reach new home >

A neighborhood non-profit dedicated to bringing the arts to more people - with a focus on underserved communities in Roanoke - is hoping they will take advantage of its new home just off Williamson Road NW. **Community Arts Reach** is just off Williamson on Frontier Rd. Founder **Bernadette Lark** says there's plenty of rental space for local art activities: "we are pleased that it's in northwest [Roanoke], where we are able to serve a lot of our families in the northwest and surrounding areas."

There is a large room with a stage ideal for concerts or a play, and smaller rooms available for art workshops, rehearsal space and other special events. See the Community Arts Reach Facebook for more on the non-profit; Lark is a vocalist herself and sang during the Arts Reach nativity play staged there in December, and during an earlier Jazz Night concert. Community Arts Reach is always intended to be an arts reach hub for artists, anyone who has those types of visions – culinary, visual, language arts, sharing in any community arts or activity that engages other people in a constructive, positive way."



Tom Field

Big breakfast ordered >

The Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting—a breakfast at Salem Civic Center—on Jan. 17 to a record attendance of over 200. Speakers **Paul Carney** (Carter Bank) who talked about AI and **Collin McLaughlin** (new CEO of LewisGale) provided his introduction in the business spotlight, before the Chamber introduced outgoing president **Allan Lawrence** (Salem Red Sox), incoming president **April Pratt Woodward** (LewisGale) and new board members, committees and ambassadors, sponsors, and staff. Executive director **Amanda Livingston** also cited 2024 achievements, which included 77 new members and 64 events, and the Chamber's memorable 90th anniversary.

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

FINANCIAL FRONT



Burks

Karen Burks has been promoted to assistant vice president and branch manager of the Smith Mountain Lake Office at Bank of Botetourt. Burks has over 30 years of experience in the financial industry and lives in Bedford after relocating from Princeton, WV. She previously owned and operated Sugar & Slice Bakery Café at Smith Mountain Lake and supports entrepreneurship and the community.

Cindy Bower has been promoted to vice president, loan officer, and portfolio manager at Bank of Botetourt, Troutville location. She is a Virginia Bankers Association School of Bank Management



Bower

graduate and brings over 40 years of experience in the financial industry, including more than 25 years at Bank of Botetourt.



Feltis

Sheila Feltis has been promoted to assistant vice president, branch operations, and retail officer at Bank of Botetourt's Troutville office. She brings over 35 years of financial industry experience with 24 years at Bank of Botetourt. She and her husband, John, also own a fresh squeezed lemonade business.

EDUCATIONAL FRONT

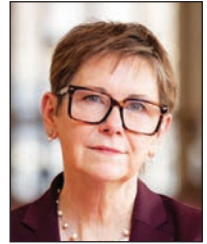
Frank Aylward, an associate professor of biological sciences at Virginia Tech, was named the 2024 Virginia Scientist of the Year in life sciences by the Virginia Academy of Science. Aylward researches "giant viruses" in nature and how they emerge, cause disease in their hosts, and shape the ecosystem.



Walker

Brenda Walker has been tapped for the newly created role of strategic volunteer initiatives executive director at Virginia Tech. The position within the Advancement Division is intended to strengthen the work of volunteers and focus on aligning alumni advisory boards across

the university. Walker brings 27 years of experience from Penn State, where she advanced from assistant director in the Office of Donor Relations and Special Events through multiple roles, eventually becoming the first director of the Office of Volunteer Programs.



Taylor

Monecia Taylor, who has served as a senior leader in ascending roles within Virginia Tech's Advancement Division since 2016, has been named vice president for advancement for the university. Taylor's new role includes overseeing division-wide fundraising, long-term planning, and coordination of Advancement's senior leadership team of directors and program managers.





Jessee

Travis Jessee has been selected as Virginia Tech's assistant vice president for design and construction within the Division of Facilities. Jessee joined his alma mater professionally in 2016 as a capital project manager. Prior to Virginia Tech, he progressed through professional architecture roles at Thompson & Litton for over a decade.

LEGAL FRONT

Roanoke-based law firm Gentry Locke has announced that attorneys **Benjamin Law** and **John Danyluk** have been promoted to partnership. Law is a member of the firm's Commercial practice group, where

Have a career announcement?

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



Danyluk

he advises clients on matters concerning commercial transactions and corporate governance. Danyluk is a member of the firm's White Collar Defense, Investigations & Compliance practice group, where he represents both corporate and individual clients through all phases of the criminal process.

NON-PROFIT FRONT

John Carlin, anchor

on WSL-10 television news, has accepted the position of vice president for institutional advancement for downtown Roanoke's Center in the Square. He will be responsible for fundraising; and will also continue to anchor the 5—6pm newscasts.

The Harrison Museum of African American Culture's Board of Directors announced the appointment of **E.B. Smith** as its new executive director. Smith is an arts administrator and cultural leader who brings over two decades of experience in theatre, education and organizational development to this role. He is also an actor who portrayed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in a play at Mill

Mountain Theatre last year. As the museum prepares to celebrate its 40th anniversary alongside a relocation to Melrose Plaza, the institution is planning for expanded community impact and engagement.

MUNICIPAL FRONT

David Radford has been selected as the chairman for Roanoke County Board of Supervisors for 2025. He served as Windsor Hills District representative since 2018 and was the board chairman in 2020 and vice chairman in 2021. Phil North (Hollins District) has been selected as vice-chairman.

Compiled by Gene Marrano and Tom Field.

FOCUS ON MOMENTS THAT MATTER.



Bank of Botetourt

Forbes 2024

BEST-IN-STATE
BANKS

POWERED BY STATISTA

BANKOFBOTETOURT.COM

CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Balentine is a Roanoke entrepreneur, founder, and owner of Crowning Touch Senior Moving Services as well as its transport, consignment, auction, and real estate portfolio. The business caters to the high growth senior citizen demographic and has been serving our regional market since 1996. [linda@crowningtouchusa.com]

Aila Boyd serves as the editor of "The Fincastle Herald" and "The Vinton Messenger" and coordinates social media for the Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce. She holds an MFA in writing from Lindenwood University.

Daniel Colston, CFP®, CEPA runs a tax and investing firm in Roanoke, Upward Financial Planning, specializing in helping business owners and retirees. [daniel@upwardfp.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. [cooperjpp91@gmail.com]

Carrie Cousins is the Director of Digital Marketing at LeadPoint Digital in Roanoke. For 15+ years, she has helped businesses tell their stories and get better results online with practical digital marketing strategies. She also an active leader in AAF, serving on the local and district boards, and is an adjunct professor at Virginia Tech.

Dan Dowdy is the business development director for Valley Business FRONT and owner of The

Proofing Prof proofreading services (proofingprof.net). 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]

Hart Fowler is an independent journalist with commissions by the Washington Post, Blue Ridge Outdoors, 100 days in Appalachia and others. He is also publisher of 16 Blocks, a non-profit print and digital arts and culture magazine. [hart.fowler@gmail.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]

Molly Gutierrez is Operations Coordinator at Building Beloved Communities. [molly@buildingbelovedcommunities.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).

Shatenita Horton serves as the Senior Vice President of Retail Banking at Freedom First Credit Union. As a member of Senior Management, Shatenita directs the sales and service efforts through creation, coordination and management of company-wide Retail, Private, and Business Banking programs. She hails from Columbia, Missouri and has lived in Roanoke for the past 3 years. [shorton@freedomfirst.com]

Jennifer Leake is a seasoned Certified Management Consultant (CMC®) with over 30 years of business and consulting experience. She is a certified trusted advisor in the areas of employee assessments, engagement, and emotional intelligence. She offers ideas and best practices to help you hire the right people, engage employees, and lead effectively to enhance workplace performance and drive overall business success. [Jennifer@AssessmentPros.com]

Gene Marrano is FRONT editor and an award-winning anchor and reporter for WFIR Newstalk radio. "Best one on one interview" award from Associated Press of the Virginias for his interview with former Roanoke County Chief of Police Howard Hall. [gmarrano@cox.net]

Mary Ann L. Miller is vice president of business banking and community

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

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.

Nicholas Vaassen is a graphic design specialist with over 27 years experience. His design projects include logos, magazines, web design, signs, newsletters, postcards, business cards, and any other marketing materials you can think of. [nicholasvaassen@gmail.com]

Lauren Webb has worked in education since earning her bachelor's degree in education from Radford University, first as a public school teacher, and now in administrative-academic support at Roanoke College. [laurenfieldwebb@gmail.com]

““

I thought the Smart Road was cool. — Page 20

FRONT NETWORK

The first adult medical day care in Virginia

Quality Daytime Care



ADULT CARE CENTER
OF ROANOKE VALLEY

"Keeping families together."
540-981-2350
accrv.org
2321 Roanoke Blvd | Salem



Christine A. Smith, CDFA®
Financial Advisor

Smith & Associates
A financial advisory practice of
Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC
540.777.6764
Blacksburg, Roanoke, Daleville Locations
ameripriseadvisors.com/christine.a.smith
CA Insurance #0F69689

Ameriprise
Financial

Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Member FINRA and SIPC.



BERRYFIELD
MARKETING & MEDIA
do tell.

TOM FIELD
PRESIDENT
PO BOX 1041
SALEM VA 24153
540 389 9945
540 798 9945 (M)
TFIELD@BERRYFIELD.COM
BERRYFIELD.COM



Electrical Excellence
~ Since 1946 ~

www.davishelliot.com
(800) 755-6702

Davis H. Elliot Company, Inc.
Full Service Electrical Contractor

“Roanoke arts and culture infrastructure [boasts] three times the average to similarly sized regions in jobs [and] local government revenue. — Page 24

Put your Business
Card in the FRONT
for only \$149!

Email ads@vbFRONT.com or call 540-389-9945

Blacksburg company receives another grant

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, one of the institutes that make up the National Institutes of Health, has awarded \$347,608 to **Biotherapeutics, Inc.**, located in Blacksburg, for lung disease research as it relates to asthma. According to the American Lung Association, more than twenty-five million Americans live with asthma. This funding is supported by the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants program. Goals of the program include stimulating technological innovation, using small business to meet Federal research and development needs, and promoting private sector commercialization of innovations. In August and September of 2024, Biotherapeutics, Inc. (profiled in the November 2024 issue of Valley Business Front) received multiple grants for a sum of more than \$640,000.

DOE awards VT

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a \$7,500,000 grant to **Virginia Tech**, to support a consortium of academic institutions, research laboratories, federal and state natural resource offices, and consultancies to evaluate critical minerals for potential future extraction in the Appalachian Mountain region. Virginia Tech is home to a **Department of Mining and Minerals Engineering**, which trains graduates in the extraction and production of critical

minerals and energy resources, to fuel future technological innovations.

Dublin joins NRVRC

Dublin Town Council unanimously has passed a resolution of membership joining the **New River Valley Regional Commission**, marking 100% of local governments in the region being members of the agency – now 14 local governments (nine towns, four counties and one city), along with three institutions of higher education. The Regional Commission will support the town of Dublin on several technical assistance projects.

Governor Youngkin board appointments

Aerospace Advisory Council: Tombo Jones of Christiansburg, Director, Virginia Tech's Mid Atlantic Aviation Partnership, an FAA Designated UAS Test Site; Small Grains Board: Alicia Pence of Salem, Director of Quality Assurance, Mennel Milling Company.

Special events funding

More than \$812,139 in matching grant funds were awarded to 81 special events and festivals as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)'s Special Events & Festivals Sponsorship Program (SEF). The funding program is designed to leverage local marketing and event production dollars with matching state funds to increase

overnight visitation, improve the visitor experience, and increase traveler spending at Virginia special events and festivals. Among the awards: **Roanoke Outside Foundation** (\$2500), **Xavier Tramine Creative Consulting LLC** (\$2500), **City of Salem** (\$20,000), **Across-the-Way Productions/ FloydFest** (\$20,000), **Floyd Center for the Arts** (\$2,731), **Beaver Dam Sunflower Festival, LLC** (\$20,000), **Sinkland Farms/Pumpkin Festival** (\$20,000), and **Roanoke Parks and Recreation/ Go Outside Festival** (\$14,500).

Broadband money available

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has approved Virginia's list of over 133,000 eligible locations that will receive high-speed internet access through the Commonwealth's \$1.48 billion **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment** (BEAD) allocation to connect all Virginians to high-speed, affordable reliable internet. The BEAD program is a \$42.45 billion nationwide program to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, affordability and adoption programs. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will administer the Commonwealth's \$1.48 billion BEAD allocation to build upon the work of the Virginia Telecommunication

Initiative (VATI). DHCD has launched the application for BEAD funding. Applications will be accepted until March 1, from eligible locations.

Funds for NRV Amtrak station planning

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has awarded the New River Valley Regional Commission a \$252,500 grant. The funding will support preliminary construction planning and reports for the development of a passenger rail station in Christiansburg. In August, Norfolk Southern reached an agreement with Virginia Passenger Rail Authority to extend **Amtrak service to the New River Valley**. The New River Valley Regional Commission will manage the development of a Preliminary Architectural Report, an Environmental Review Record, a Proforma analysis, and Final Design/Bidding/ Construction documents for the new passenger rail station.

RBTC notes 2024 highlights

RBTC finished the year with 215 total member organizations. Three of our niche communities picked up a lot of steam this year: **Blacks in Technology** (BIT), **Women in Technology** (WoTech), and **ChangeMakerZ**. BIT grew to more than 100 members, who supported each other's growth and networking across 40 events throughout the year. WoTech saw similar success, with over 100 members

coming together across 20 events, including the beloved WoTech Summer Camp leadership conference. In addition to supporting current tech professionals, RBTC implemented the ChangeMakerZ program to develop new leaders for the region. The new talent-focused program attracted enrollment from 14 young professionals and participation from 11 local tech companies.

Development on hold for now

ABoone Real Estate has withdrawn its request - for now - to rezone 15 acres of the **Poages Mill** property off Bent Mountain Road/ US 221 it had planned to turn into more than 150 townhouses, single family homes and retail spaces. ABoone president **Alexander Boone** says they are not walking away from the "Poages Mill Village" project but may tweak it after hearing concerns from some local residents about the commercial and retail spaces that were part of the proposal. "What we're proposing is in

100% compliance with the comprehensive plan that Roanoke County adopted earlier this year." He says his goal is to provide more affordable housing options, hence the focus on townhomes rather than detached single family houses.

RAM House feeling the strain

The numbers and to some extent the demographics are changing for **Roanoke Area Ministries - RAM House**, which serves as a day shelter for the homeless. RAM's executive director is asking the public for its support. The Roanoke Rescue Mission overnight shelter is now transporting up to 40 people a day over to RAM House - that's new, and it's a good thing to get those people off the streets says RAM House executive director **Melissa Woodson**, who also says they are seeing more elderly women at the day shelter on Campbell Avenue: "those are people we weren't seeing before because they couldn't get here.

Have an announcement about your business?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Now, thanks to the Rescue Mission they're where they need to be." That has put a strain on resources at RAM House: "we're seeing 540 additional clients this year so far than we saw in 2023." Woodson is asking the public for donations to support its current operations on Campbell Avenue - while still raising capital campaign funds for its late 2025 move to much larger quarters on Elm Avenue.

Harrison Museum at Melrose Plaza

The **Harrison Museum of African American Culture**, now located at Center on the Square, plans a move to Melrose Plaza late this year. In the meantime, they've just announced the hiring of **E.B. Smith** as the new executive director.

Smith says he is excited for the Harrison's future in its new home. "I'm extremely excited for what it can mean for the museum and the community [in northwest Roanoke]. We have an opportunity at Melrose Plaza to be really housed within a community that we're really committed to serving."

Main Street mobilization

The **City of Roanoke** has joined the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's **Mobilizing Main Street** program for 2025-26. Roanoke's Director of Economic Development says Main Street will enable the city to "accelerate revitalization in designated communities." The Virginia Main Street program has worked in many smaller cities and

Notable Transactions

sponsored by covenantreal.com

- **Fork in the Alley** Brick Oven Pub restaurant in Roanoke was sold for an undisclosed amount to restaurateurs Andrew Ross and Nic Miller
- **Sweetbay Capital** acquired 100-unit, 3-property garden style apartment portfolio in Roanoke (Ellsworth St; Old Vinton Mill Rd; 8th St) for \$8.2 million
- Property at **2727 Franklin Road** in Roanoke sold for \$2.8 million as an investment
- **New River Valley Regional Commission** purchased 10,762 sq-ft former Atlantic Union Bank building at 2950 Market Street in Christiansburg for \$2 million
- Property at **4502 Starkey Road** (45,756 sq-ft) sold with land value at \$2 million
- **Valley Court** lease to Didlake of 6,800 sq-ft at 3601 Thirlane Rd in Roanoke near airport

SOURCES: commercial real estate firms; municipal records; FRONTnews feeds

towns over the years to revitalize aging downtowns - in Fincastle, Buchanan and Clifton Forge for example. Gainsboro, the West End, 11th Street Northwest - all have some mixed use development with retail businesses and residents in the mix. If all goes well with the Mobilizing Virginia Main Street two-year venture, Roanoke could pursue the Advanced Virginia Main Street designation - and Main Street America accredited status.

Spa for visitors and locals

A new **Spa at Hotel Roanoke** has opened to include wellness treatments and services for guests as well as memberships and packages for Roanoke residents (see FRONT'n About, this issue).

Money for study around Roanoke's Amtrak station

On the heels of that "Main Street" state grant, the **City of Roanoke** will also receive some federal funding that will be used to focus on

possible re-development opportunities surrounding the **downtown Amtrak Station**. The US Department of Transportation has awarded the city \$770,000 over a three year period, which Roanoke Director of Economic Development **Marc Nelson** says will be used to hire a consultant to look at opportunities within a half-mile radius of the Amtrak station: "you draw a half mile radius around that station and see if there are publicly owned pieces of land or buildings that are being underutilized."

Bonsack station

Roanoke County has opened its new \$8 million, 12,500-sq-ft Fire and Rescue Station in the Bonsack area on property purchased from Parkway Church on the Mountain.

New streaming service

The City of Roanoke plans to create a new **in-river whitewater park** around Wasena Park. The estimated \$6

million project (federally funded) begins soon and should be completed by late 2026 (see FRONT'n About, this issue).

Transport delayed

The proposed change for the **Virginia Museum of Transportation** in Roanoke to become a state agency (like the Natural History Museum in Martinsville, Fine Arts and Science museums in Richmond) has been delayed and not included in the current budget. Funding is allocated in the 2024—2026 biennial budget, but not as a dedicated state agency. VMT reported about \$850,000 in revenue for 2023; stakeholders say the 100+ year-old building needs upgrades.

Rocky Mount's Main Street

The Community Partnership has joined Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's "Mobilizing Main Street Program" that will be used to develop and designate the **Town of Rocky Mount** to Main Street

America status. Work plans, design, market analysis, and grant management are all components of the program to enhance local business and downtown and community vitality.

New marketing/strategy firm

Connect 936—a boutique marketing, branding, and business strategy agency—has opened to serve the Roanoke and New River Valley markets. Founder Caitlyn Scaggs is a Blacksburg native whose experience includes spokesperson for Radford University, launcher of Blue Mobius Marketing, and positions with New Hope Girls anti-trafficking nonprofit and a motivational segment on WDBJ 7 television.

Tiny larger

Tiny Cargo—a local biotech firm producing pharmaceuticals from cow milk exosomes to treat the side effects of radiation—has secured a new 10,800-saure-foot manufacturing facility with the purchase

1983 ••• 2025 ••• tomorrow



Is your business ready for

The Entré Experience?

Our number one goal is, and always will be,
Outstanding Customer Satisfaction!

CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE A
FREE COMMERCIAL SITE SURVEY

NETWORKING • VoIP PHONES • CLOUD • BACKUP • SECURITY

www.entre-roanoke.com | (540) 989-6000

ENTRÉ

by Roanoke Valley Development Corp. and Greater Roanoke Valley Development Foundation of a renovated warehouse. The real estate deal was managed by the Roanoke Regional Partnership; Tiny Cargo was founded by Robert Gourdie in the Virginia Tech Carilion Fralin Biomedical Research Institute.

But will garages still put them on crooked?

Virginia drivers have a new state inspection sticker that includes advanced security features such as a holographic state seal, dogwood bloom graphics,

and two QR codes. Vehicles expiring in 2025 will get a green sticker; and following years will be blue, red, yellow.

Nuevos alimento

Familia Argentina Restaurant has opened on Campbell Avenue (near Williamson Rd) in downtown Roanoke. Argentina cuisine includes items such as empanadas, chorizo sausage, potato pie, milanesa bread.

Hydroponics course

Virginia Western Community College has launched a new

hydroponics course that will provide students with a comprehensive introduction to hydroponic farming and innovative method of plant growing without soil, using nutrient-rich water. The course is eight sessions, Wednesday evenings, and costs \$295.

Charged up

Microporous battery-separator production company planning to invest over a billion dollars in a 2,000 employee megasite manufacturing facility in Pittsylvania County was awarded \$100 million from the US Department of Energy (for building

the polyethylene lithium-ion plant at Berry Hill industrial park that could be fully operating in 2026).

Luna lapse

Luna Innovations was de-listed on the Nasdaq Stock Market exchange, the SEC citing multiple delinquent filing reports. The Roanoke-based fiberoptic tech company remains in business; but the stock cannot be publicly traded.

Compiled by Gene Marrano and Tom Field

WFIR
NEWS TALK RADIO
107.3 FM
960 AM
94.5 FM

AWARD-WINNING ★★★★★
LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE

REACHING LISTENERS WHO:

- OWN THEIR OWN HOME (84%)
- HAVE AN INCOME \$50K+ (64%)
- HAVE INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS (80%)
- HOME/OUTDOOR IMPROVEMENT (82%)
- USE/NEED AUTO SERVICE/REPAIRS (86%)



WFIRNEWS.COM

CONTACT CINDY ROLLISON TO LEARN MORE: 540.345.1511

SOURCE: NIELSEN TAPSCAN, SCARBOROUGH R1 2024: JAN23-DEC23, ROANOKE-LYNCHBURG METRO, 18+

ADVERTISER INDEX

Adult Care Center of Roanoke Valley ... 57	Entre Computer Center 60
Ameriprise Financial / Christine Smith 57	F&S Building Innovations..... 3
Bank of Botetourt..... 54-55	FirstBank..... 27
Berryfield 57	Fraim Crawley & Co CPA 29
Carilion Clinic..... 5	Freedom First Credit Union 2
Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia 35	Lead Point Digital 22
Covenant Real Estate Services 59	Member One Federal Credit Union 23
Crowning Touch 47	Ridge View Bank BC
Davis H. Elliot Company 57	VCOM 31
	Virginia Business Systems 63
	Wheeler Broadcasting..... 39 & 61

“ ”

We're seeing organic growth... at the Taubman [Museum of Art]... and the new [upcoming] music venue in the First National Bank building.

— Page 25



Get Your FRONT

PRINT MAGAZINES

- **By Mail** \$36/year (save 25%)
vbFRONT.com (Distribution)
- **Free Sample Issues While Supplies Last**
16 W Church Ave “Crafteria” (downtown Roanoke)
coffee shops • clinics • chambers/tourism • libraries

ONLINE

vbFRONT.com





Virginia Business Systems

Fast Forward
Office Technology

Helping Virginia Businesses grow
through technology and superior service

Our Services

Printers and Multi-Function Copiers
Commercial and Industrial Printers
VoIP Phone Systems
Interactive White Boards
Document Management Solutions
Managed IT Services
Managed Print Services



KONICA MINOLTA



EPSON®



Lexmark

Roanoke | New River Valley
Lynchburg | Charlottesville
Richmond | Hampton Roads
Shenandoah Valley

800-887-1683

www.VAbusinesssystems.com

65+
Years

A reliable financial partner by your side.

That's how
Carrie's changing
business banking.

Smith Mountain Lake
Salem
Roanoke



**Carrie McConnell,
President**



LEARN HOW: 540.314.9650 | RidgeViewBank.bank