



Valley Business **FRONT**

THE SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR
CHAMPION IN VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
FREE • ISSUE 96 • SEPTEMBER 2016

vbFRONT.com

FRONTList: **24** Uncommon Businesses

Jessica, mermaid
model at RoanokesPhotographer.com



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WELCOME to the FRONT

Have you ever noticed the reality television shows that attract the most audiences are the ones that are not really based on the reality most of us experience? They're rather un-real, in fact. Spoiled rich celebrities. Exaggerated stereotypical characters from some neck of the woods that are from "anywhere else but here." Competitive scenarios where the contestants are never the neighbors next door we're familiar with.

Reality can be freakish or eyebrow-raising; but it doesn't always have to be an entry for Guinness Book of World Records or Ripley's Believe-it-or-Not to be interesting. Case in point: Roanoke's own Salvage Dogs TV show, following the antics of the Black Dog Salvage architectural treasure shop. See there? It doesn't even sound right to describe the actions of Robert Kulp and Mike Whiteside as "antics"... but it's a reality show—without the often prescribed weirdness.

Thus, we have today's FRONTcover story. A collection of businesses that are a bit off the beaten path. Our compilation included two rules: each profile must be a legitimate business, and it must be local. That first rule eliminated folks like the dude we found who shaves unusual patterns on cats—that's just a hobby.

You might not see too much of the bizarre in our little collection of 24 ventures, but you will see adventuresome individuals who put as much passion and attention in their unique product or service as any mainstream operation. Meet them here; and afterwards, go do your search on YouTube if you need to see the really weird...stuff.

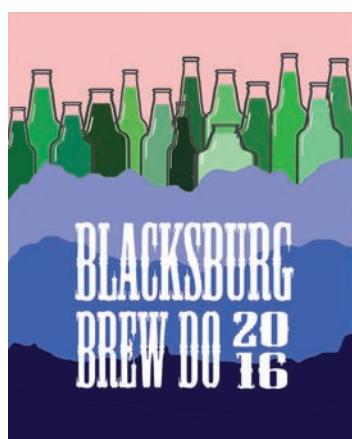


Tom Field



Did you really mean to ask me that?

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making sushi

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Cover photography of Jessica (mermaid) by Mike Wilson.

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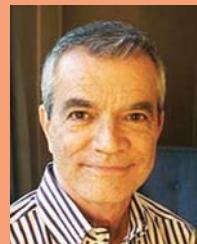
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SEPTEMBER



Dan Dowdy



Tom Field



Ariel Lev



Courtney Malveaux

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 14 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "They can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. 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 Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

CONTRIBUTORS



Keith Finch



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Mike Leigh



Caitlyn Skaggs



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 46.

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Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail)
Nicholas C. Conte Carilion (Legal)
Warner Dalhouse Retired (Seniors)
John Garland Garland Properties (Development)
Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education)
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Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry)
George Kegley Retired (Seniors)
John D. Long National D-Day Memorial (Culture)
Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)
Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education)
Mary Miller IDD (Tech/Industry)
Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

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. 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 calling or e-mailing us 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.

“ We collect substantial evidence that can’t be dismissed as natural

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Most **UNUSUAL**, **BIZARRE**, **UNCOMMON**, **STRANGE** or **UNIQUE** Businesses in Our Region

In San Francisco, there's a company called Throx that sells socks... not in pairs, but in sets of three. That entrepreneur must believe there are enough of us who are tired of trying to solve the mystery of that one matching sock that always seems to disappear in the dryer. Now that's a pretty unique business.

We have our own pickings of unique, uncommon, unusual—or just different—businesses right here in the Roanoke Region, New River Valley, and Southwest Virginia. Here's our list of 24 of them; with a little information on a handful of them—just to get you scratching your head. And after you're done scratching, you can go ahead and try their product or service. Because most of our owner-operators started their uncommon businesses to fill a niche, and to fulfill a passion. They left their more ordinary vocations to serve people with extraordinary wants and needs.

And we're left with a story about the individuality of business—how it comes in all scopes, shapes, colors, and sizes.

FRONTList 24: Uncommon Businesses >

Executive Summary:
*Our most unique
FRONTList compilation
of uncommon businesses
operating in Virginia's
Blue Ridge.*

By Tom Field



all photos: Mike Wilson

Mermaid Photography

Business: Bohemian Robot

Owner: Mike Wilson

Location: Roanoke

Contact: www.roanokesphotographer.com

Okay, so Mike Wilson's photography business isn't just mermaid photography. The Roanoke media guy (former television news anchor and reporter, current radio jockey) and photography business owner/operator engages plenty



Mike Wilson

of commercial gigs under his Bohemian Robot Media Group. But he also ventures into special projects; the most prominent one involving underwater photography sessions. And yes, the mermaid circuit was a major business operation.

Apparently, there are mermaid schools, mermaid clubs, and a significant pool of traveling mermaid circuits splashing their way across the country right now. It's a resurgence of aquatic proportions. Who knew?

"We strive to make our clients' photography to be art first and photos second," Wilson says. He admits he's after the "edgy and eye-catching" and says his underwater material is "not only a work of art for your home, but a story you will tell for years to come."

Wilson first picked up a Kodak instamatic camera when he was six years old. But it was just a few years ago he decided to go into a job that "didn't feel like work."

"Mission accomplished," Wilson says on his decision. "Also, I'm the only boss that never lies to me. I'll kid myself, but never lie."

There have been rumblings that Mike Wilson's upcoming projects could be even more unconventional. (One such production already released involved copious amounts of liquefied chocolate.) Time will tell whether or not the market here will continue to embrace Wilson's uncommon pursuits so that he can keep his head above water—or under it.





Woosik Kim

Drive-Thru Sushi

Business: Woody Sushi

Owner: Woosik Kim

Location: Roanoke

Contact: [Facebook.com/WoodySushi](https://www.facebook.com/WoodySushi)

540-314-1577

What's going to happen to Woody Sushi once word gets out about the quality and deliciousness of the food? Here's a small (no, tiny) building in a parking lot off of US 460 (3410 Orange Ave., Roanoke) where you drive up to the window, and order your selection that is then made-to-order. The business was discovered simply by the fans and patrons of Woosik Kim's "art." There is no advertising and no promotion—currently only a Facebook page and the tiny colorful building itself, beckoning sushi lovers to give this new thing a try.

Woody Sushi is winning over customers one rice roll at a time. One visit, and evidently the biggest challenge of all is overcome: the notion that quality sushi can only be presented in a sit-down restaurant. This is not convenience store or mass-produced sushi. The reviews are so positive in fact, that the information here is provided by a fan, Caitlynn Nolen (who now helps with Kim's Facebook), because the owner speaks hardly any English.

"Woosik Kim just likes making sushi," Nolen says. "He's done it for the past ten years, and says it's the reason he came to the U.S."

Nolen says the only worry right now is that the lines are getting longer as word gets out that the sushi here is really good. If the trending track is any indication, the Roanoke market has already embraced the drive-thru sushi business model. A recent meme posted on Woody Sushi's Facebook page probably sums up the strategy best for most aficionados: "One does not simply say no to sushi."

WOODY
SUSHI





Survival Training

Business: Mountain Shepherd Wilderness Survival School

Owner: Reggie and Dina Bennett

Location: Catawba

Contact: www.MountainShepherd.com

434-238-4094

Mountain Shepherd Wilderness Survival School calls itself a "modern day survival school for modern-day people." Reggie and Dina Bennett run courses and camps for everything from outdoor survival to women's empowerment to urban survival to leadership and team building.

The business, located up on a mountainside at 57 Hemlock Ridge Lane off Rt. 621 between US 460 and VA 311, has been featured in O Magazine, National Geographic, PBS, The History Channel, The New York Times, and FRONT magazine.

The skills taught and the information and awareness given to people of all ages and walks of life who experience the school have been growing right along with the increasing uncertainties of current events throughout the world and domestically.

With course names like Urban Pursuit, Rolling Thunder, Wilderness First Aid, Wild Comforts, GEMS Girls Camp, and Survival 101—there is something for everyone, or at least the ones who don't insist on a 5-star hotel with a candy mint on the pillow.

Before you strap on your snake-proof chaps and paint tribal markings on your face, you can get a sense of the experience by reading the blog on the website.

Certainly unique, but also interesting to note that you might be surprised who has powered through a Mount Shepherd program...including business and community leaders you're more accustom to seeing suited up or sitting behind cushy executive desks.

Vocal Mentoring

Business: True Voice Freedom & Biz Academy

President: Carolan Deacon

Location: Botetourt

Contact: www.carolandeacon.com

540-761-4814

A vocal coach is rather rare in our neck of the woods, but that's not what makes Carolan Deacon's business an uncommon one. She says harnessing the power of your own voice is... well, a secret to business success.

Say what?

That's just it. A powerful voice is clearly understood.

"My business is now in its third successful year," Deacon says. "It's about tapping into the power of your true voice."

True Voice Freedom & Biz Academy works with women in group programs, host concert workshops, and private settings. Deacon calls it "unique and powerful vocal business mentoring." Motivational in tone, Deacon continues: "I do not believe working hard over long periods of time leads to financial abundance or personal fulfillment. I believe the work you are meant to do, unique to you, does not feel like hard work—it feels vital to your well being."

Deacon sings a song that's liberating. "I know what happens when you tap into the power of your own voice...it's a game changer, and I wanted to use that to help women find the financial and creative freedom they desire."

She summarizes her expansion three years ago into the business coaching aspect of her training by admitting that even she seemed to be living "half asleep at a job that no longer fulfills." Thus, her vocal consulting expertise took a new direction—and now we have a service that lifts your business—right from your lips.







Miniature Gaming

Business: Mishap Games

Owner: James Dixon

Location: Roanoke

Contact: www.mishapgames.com

540-342-1460

There's a new game in town. It's a store in Roanoke at 3432 Orange Avenue that stocks miniature games, board games, collectible card games, and role-playing games. What's unusual about Mishap Games, is the business provides a "well appointed and free to use gaming space," says James Dixon.

"The [onsite gaming space] is not a common thing, even in larger cities," Dixon says. "I build terrain boards and create large multiplayer events for four to 30 players. These events expand on the basic miniature games rules by combining specific scenarios with story based elements."

Miniature game rules: are they written in 5-point type on tiny little cards?

The table top experience at Mishap isn't anything like other table top activities. It's not the high action of ping pong or the slow deliberate action of Vegas poker. It's something else, mixed in with a bit of fantasy.

"I have enjoyed the hobby of miniature gaming most of my life," Dixon continues. "I was able to turn that hobby into a business and bring it to Roanoke. These larger multiplayer events are as much fun to plan and run as they are to participate in."

What's next for this unique business is hard to say—maybe tiny corporate sponsors?



FRONTlist: Top 24 Uncommon Businesses

Note: Businesses offering products or services so random, they're just listed in no particular order; we didn't classify, categorize, or prioritize!

Mermaid Photography – Roanoke

Mike Wilson's Bohemian Robot Media Group & Photography specializes in underwater photography. www.roanokesphotographer.com

Doggy Poo Removal – Roanoke

Dogscapes comes on location to scoop up and remove excrement deposited by your pets. www.dogscapesva.com

Drive-Thru Sushi – Roanoke

Woody Sushi is a drive-thru made-to-order sushi pickup service.
[Facebook/Woody Sushi](#)

Gift Card Packaging – Christiansburg

Creative Carding is unique in that it specializes in customizing the packaging for gift cards. www.creativecarding.com

Spa Reviews – Roanoke

Imagine publishing a blog that only reviews spa treatments; that's what Erin Wolfe does. www.enlightenedspareview.com

Murder Mystery Events – Roanoke

Step Into Mystery is a themed murder mystery event service; Sabrina East plans them. [Facebook/Step Into Mystery - Roanoke](#)

Personalized Story Cakes – Roanoke

Jennifer Thomas supplies cakes that are customized and decorated with your personal story. [Facebook/Your Story Cake](#)

Lactation Cookies – Roanoke

Yes, there's a manufacturer of cookies that help nursing mothers, Milkin' Cookies. www.milkin-cookies

Comedy Weddings — Roanoke

Jeremy Meador, professional comedian and ordained minister offers, get this, "comedy wedding ceremonies." [Facebook/ComedianJeremyMeador](#)

Trampoline Park — Salem

The Launching Pad is an indoor trampoline park and recreation center for families ready to bounce. www.launchingpadsalem.com

Earmolds — Salem

The Earmold Company, LTD in Salem makes custom-fit earmolds for musicians, media pros, etc. www.earmoldltd.com

Vocal Business Coaching — Botetourt

Carolan Deacon, a vocal coach, diversified her training to help empower women in business.
www.carolandeacon.com

Getting Dirty — Botetourt

Lisa Moyer and Tim Miller run Muddy Squirrel, essentially an outdoor activities experience provider. www.muddysquirrel.com

Humor Therapy — Roanoke

Kyle Edgell's caricature business now includes a recognized therapeutic scope.
www.kyleedgell.com

Bowties — Roanoke

Visit Perfect Knots in Roanoke's Towers Mall to see the colorful collection of handcrafted bowties. Etsy/PerfectKnotsLLC

Microfarm Apartments — Roanoke

416 Micro Farms is a converted warehouse in downtown Roanoke that includes your own little garden with your 1-bedroom apartment. www.416microfarms.com

Romance Boutique — Roanoke

Fantasies and 52 Weeks of Romance sells sexy toys and products for sexy encounters from its two locations. www.52fantasies.com

Survival Training — Catawba

Mountain Shepherd Wilderness Survival School is—exactly what it sounds like; though there's an urban course, too. www.mountainshepherd.com

Paranormal Investigations — Regional

Star City Paranormal will investigate your unexplained phenomenon.
www.starcityparanormal.org

Exotic Pets — Roanoke

Exotics & Aquatics is a pet store on Roanoke's Williamson Road with rare fish, snakes, lizards, and more. www.exoticsandaquatics.net

Tabletop Game Setups — Roanoke

James Dixon and Mishap Games builds terrain boards and runs multiplayer events.
www.mishapgames.com

Princess Parties — Boones Mill

Dawn Fairy Godmother is a princess party service, held at a farm, complete with twinkles and unicorn. Facebook/DawnFairy.Godmother

Hula and Tahitian Dance — Roanoke

Straight from Hawaii, Maka Prosser runs a Hula / Tahitian Dance Performance group and provides lessons. Facebook/makaprince

Barefoot Massage — Roanoke

Melanie's Barefoot Massage specializes in Ashiatsu, using her feet and body weight for deep tissue massage. Facebook/mbbodyworks





Poop Scooper

Business: Dogscapes

Owner: Michael Sinnott

Location: Roanoke, Salem, Botetourt

Contact: www.DogscapesVA.com

540-797-5792

Dogscapes is a locally owned and operated pooper scooper business. Need we say more? Well, as it turns out, people are quite enthusiastic about Michael Sinnott's service. They would run around in the yard giving everyone high-fives about it (but only after the service has been rendered).

"We offer year around service so our clients can enjoy a healthy, happy environment for their pet and their family," Sinnott says. He goes on to say homeowner associations and apartment complexes are a big part of his business, as well as individual residential and commercial properties.

"The pooper scooper service is a growing industry," Sinnott says, "and it's currently underrepresented in the Roanoke Valley. I love dogs and working outside. I saw a need and decided that I could fill it with professional service."

Being able to simply stroll through your own yard seems like such a natural expectation. Dogscapes is a bit of an uncommon business serving a need that is all too common. That's a doggone solid plan.



all photos: Sonia Maxey

Ghost Buster

Business: Star City Paranormal, LLC

President: Sonia Maxey

Location: Roanoke Valley...and Beyond!

Contact: www.starcityparanormal.org

540-793-4193

Perhaps our most uncommon business in this year's FRONTLIST, our region has its own paranormal investigation service. Star City Paranormal is described as a non-profit group centered around investigations... home investigations, public location investigations, house blessings and cleansings, and the like.



What's also interesting is that this group isn't offended if you take their reason for existence in a less than serious light.

"We also help with the Gallows [haunted house recreational experience]," says Sonia Maxey, "and we want to give back to the community—that's a big part of what we're about."

But if you are having difficulties with the paranormal, here's a group you can turn to. The answer to "who you gonna call."

"We're here to help the community," Maxey says. "We have educational classes and give lectures; and yes, we're responding to an interest that has exploded," she explains when asked why the group members got into the business.

"We collect substantial evidence that can't be dismissed as natural."

Star City Paranormal is comprised of investigators equipped with instruments and measuring, recording and detection devices to reveal unexplained activity so clients can identify sources and plan responses accordingly. The website includes examples of investigations, samplings, a schedule of events, and of course, the contacts (who you don't have to summon with a Ouija board or séance... just call 'em or email).

Sonia Maxey





Therapeutic Humorist

Business: Kyle Edgell & Creative Associates

President: Kyle Edgell

Location: Roanoke

Contact: www.kyleedgell.com

540-529-7099

An illustrious institution. That's Kyle Edgell, as anyone who has attended any festival or event in the area knows about this caricature artist who appears everywhere. She's been doing caricatures—in a place that's not exactly known as a amusement park destination—for decades now. She has turned what most people could only do as a hobby into a viable business; and just recently, she's added a new twist. And it's not just entertainment.

"As a caricature artist and entertainer, I experienced first-hand how humor can contribute physiologically,



psychologically, and socially to the health, relationships, and prosperity of our community. On further study through the Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor, I discovered a dedicated culture of pioneers from all fields... medical, education, science, and yes, clowns."

Edgell says research clearly shows "the high value of integrating humor into wellness programs, lifestyles, and in business to keep communities thriving."

Yes, Kyle Edgell is an official Therapeutic Humorist.

"Just as there are coaches who motivate us to eat right, exercise properly, win in sports, and help us build our businesses—it only makes sense that there would be a need to jump start our creativity and resilience with how to 'see funny' and build a positive and optimistic future."

A business that's no joke—but okay to laugh at. How interesting and unique.



Bowtie Boutique

Business: Perfect Knots, LLC

Owners: Ian and Nikki Parsons

Location: Roanoke

Contact: www.etsy.com/shop/PerfectKnotsLLC

540-355-7592

There's a bowtie shop at Towers Mall in Roanoke. How specific is that? Ian and Nikki Parsons operate Perfect Knots, and yes, the shop offers neck ties, too—but it's the bow ties that get all the attention. The shop's primary business is conducted online through Etsy (billed at "the world's most vibrant handmade marketplace") but the couple's brick-and-mortar retail store at the mall provides a neat visit where you can touch the product in person and check out how dapper it makes you look.

During Ian's final semester at community college, he had a portfolio assignment where he had to come up with a logo, branding, and packaging for men's clothing accessories. He turned that into a legitimate business plan and was off and running.

"I've always loved bow ties," Parsons says. "[With this business] I am able to share my passion with the world by offering a product using my art and color combinations."

Shoppers are greeted with bow ties that feature eye-catching colors and patterns, as well as school colors that are certain to elicit attention and conversation.

"Perfect Knots is sure to help you bring your style together," Parsons pitches. You could drop by and tie one on at this most specific business.

Nikki Parsons





Ian Parsons

Our Bizarre Blue Ridge Region

The Roanoke Region, New River Valley, and Southwest Virginia is not Las Vegas. Most natives, short time and long time residents, and people who relocate here know our neck of the woods as a place of pretty quaint, solid, and rather peaceful small town living. But that's not to say you don't catch glimpses of the unusual here and there. The ice cream boat at Smith Mountain Lake. The mobile dog wash service rolling around town. The stilt walker troupe who show up at FloydFest. The podiatrist who collects feet from cadavers so he truly understands the workings of his specialty body part.

As we transform into a market that is increasingly served by entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, parentpreneurs, independent contractors, freelancers, venture-based app developers, and the gig-economy, it's no wonder some adventurous souls move into the unconventional realm.

We're not exactly entering The Twilight Zone... yet. But where there's a need—no matter how unusual—somebody can find a way to meet it. 



Suspenders are back >

Lately I see renewed interest in wearing suspenders, especially among younger men. This reflects fashion trends – but also wardrobe frustrations.

I've had separate conversations with men in their thirties—solidly entrenched in their careers and needing a dependable wardrobe—expressing interest in suspenders for very different reasons. One has a prominent stomach and fights gravity constantly to keep his pants at his waist. Another has a slim waist and his shirttail continually comes untucked.

For bigger guys with a prominent belly, the trouser waistband falls at the bottom of the stomach, so the belt must be cinched tightly. Suspenders are more comfortable than a tight belt, prevent the pants from sagging, and maintain a neater and more streamlined appearance. As a bonus, suspenders make the wearer appear taller and slimmer.

For men with a slim waist, belts can allow the waistband to slip down. Suspenders keep the trousers at the waist and the shirt tucked in all day.

If you're considering suspenders you'll be surprised at the selection available to you. Suspenders come in five types: business dress, fashion (or casual), black tie, work suspenders, and undergarment. Each type meets the work or social needs for men's clothing.

Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Are suspenders making a comeback? For many, the answer is yes.

Work suspenders are wider and of durable materials like leather or cotton. Business dress and black tie models are medium-width and of dressier fabrics like silk, grosgrain, oxford cloth, jacquard, etc. Fashion suspenders are narrower and often of unusual fabrics and prints. Men who wear untucked shirts without a belt find narrow undergarment suspenders useful to hold trousers in place.

Suspenders are attached to the trousers by clips or buttons. Buttons are sewn inside or outside the waistband – or clip-on buttons can be attached to the waistband temporarily. Button styles are dressier looking than clip-ons.

The dominant styles of suspenders today are Y-shaped and X-shaped. The X is slightly more secure for serious work and the Y is dressier for appearance, but both are correct.

Suspender widths can vary from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 2 inches. They also come in lengths from 42" to 54" for men from five feet tall to 6'5" tall.

Whether you choose a belt or suspenders, one important rule holds true: Never wear a belt with suspenders. The only exception: while doing manual labor requiring you to hang tools from your belt. Suspenders and a belt are overkill. 

For help, more info or comments: Kathy@peacockimage.com

Personal questions >

When I conduct dining skills seminars for professionals, along with instructions on holding silverware, what to do with the napkin, or how to properly butter a roll, I include advice on conversation at the table. You know: avoid sensitive topics like religion and politics (oh, boy!), and I usually mention that it's best to avoid personal questions. I am often met with a blank stare and asked, "What's a personal question?"

Social media guarantees that almost nothing is sacred. Just about every detail of our personal lives — births, marriages, deaths, and everything in between — are advertised universally. It seems that no detail is too small or intimate to be broadcast far and wide.

What then is a personal question? Well, what about: "How come you're not married?" "When are you going to have a baby?" "How much did you pay for your house [or your car, or your clothes]?" "How much money do you earn?" Or "How did he/she die?" And what about "Why are you taking the day off from work?" "You've gained a lot of weight, haven't you?" "You look tired. Are you sick?" "Why are you getting a divorce?"

I'll allow that some people don't mind answering intrusive questions. However, there are many of us who become very uncomfortable when friends, co-workers or even "kind" relatives probe us with insensitive or just plain rude questions.

How do we respond to inappropriate questions? Probably our first reaction is to feel affronted, if only internally. Here we might want to remember that it is easy to exhibit good manners when everything is going well. It's harder when the situation is awkward or we're offended or even angry. That's when our automatic (practiced!) manners should kick in. Then our own kind but firm boundaries calmly can be set.

To all of the above questions, one could reply - ***with a smile*** — "I'm sorry, that's personal." or "Did you really mean to ask me that?" Remember a kind tone is important here. ***How*** you say it is just as important as ***what*** you say. My favorite response, though, is to pause for several beats, smile, and say "Excuse me, what did you ask?" When the question is repeated, I laugh happily, and say "That's what I thought you asked!" and pleasantly change the subject!

The renowned etiquette expert, Emily Post, wrote "*Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.*" 



Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:
Attend enough social gatherings, and sooner than later you're apt to be confronted with a personal question; there are ways to diffuse such intrusions.



The biggest change you'll never notice >

Executive Summary:

A personal review of Hotel Roanoke's designation within the Hilton group's prestigious Curio collection.

By Tom Field

Six months. That's how long it has been since the press conference and big announcement that Hotel Roanoke, a Hilton property, had become part of the company's Curio collection. There are only about two dozen such hotel/resorts in the world that belong to Curio, and The Grand Lady of the Star City is the only one in Virginia.

FRONT published the release, but rather than deliver all the details and carry on the excitement cited in the nifty packet PR Manager Michael Quonce handed me—or interview GM Gary Walton (who just retired), I thought it might be prudent to hold off a bit. After all, every other media outlet reported the announcement as well; and I had two other compelling reasons to wait. First, I would make a reservation and stay as a guest myself under the new brand, which would provide an easy comparison to the many times I've stayed at Hotel Roanoke over the decades. (That's right, a local can stay in a hotel, too... and not just in conjunction with reunions, weddings, and events.) Second, I would be booking at least two group events in back-to-back months, not to mention other appointments and meetings.

Might as well review the big change in the best way possible: right on the frontlines. Surely, any change would be noticeable with such intricate workings within the very guts of operations.

A Black Flag

I'm already Hotel Roanoke's biggest fan, so I was well equipped to observe the changes. Yes, the "missing cookie" was an obvious change, and the one everyone seems to cite. (Under the previous management brand, cookies were handed out to guests as they are at other properties; apparently

the most popular distinction for many.)

I noticed my room card was black and printed with Curio. I saw the Curio name on a bit of signage, though understated. And I saw the black flag—the most prominent testament that there's some classy distinction going on here—mostly visible from the pub when sitting outside, as everyone else checking in and out and hustling and bustling about hardly takes a second to look up.

But what about my guest room? What about the conference and banquet facilities? What about the pub, the dining room, the lobby?

There's nothing new to see here, folks. The truth is, the facility was top notch and remains top notch, with no significant changes. It's why I do business here and choose to send my guests here.

However...

There is a most subtle, almost undetectable change in the people—the staff working the "new" Hotel Roanoke.

A Golden Attitude

If you didn't associate with the staff at Hotel Roanoke on a regular basis, you wouldn't notice any change from pre-Curio to post-Curio. You might just see a level of service that should be expected.

But there is a change in the air you can feel from working with people who have been at the hotel for years. Much of it can be summarized by the sentiments expressed by Lauren Walker, catering director.

"It's hip and trendy," Walker says, talking about Curio. "We have more flexibility now," as the hotel is not restricted to all of the same contracts as required by corporate standardization. For example, Hotel Roanoke can now feature local foods. Walker uses the "boutique" word to describe the model. "No two hotels under Curio are alike."

The staff and soul of the property seem to have more freedom.

I'll take that over a missing cookie. □





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Young Professionals

By Ariel Lev

Executive Summary:

A tech development event benefitting non profits and a new round for visionaries hit Roanoke this fall.

Coming to a room near you >

Over the past couple of years, I've witnessed some incredible moments in our community. Some of them were within the four walls of the CoLab surrounded by 40 software developers, some of them were among 5 close friends at a local haunt, some of them were seated with 300 people in an auditorium, and some of them happened when 1 person collided with 1 person, randomly.

They were all different events, but the common factor in all of these is that they involved people together in a room for a common purpose. Because the fall is around the corner and because CoLab is about to enter its busiest season, I thought I'd give the readers of Valley Business FRONT a preview of what's to come and how these events are, by their nature, community building.

There's a new nonprofit organization in town. Noke Codes is a tech focused organization that provides platforms connecting and educating Roanoke and its citizens with innovative opportunities. You may have heard the name before; Noke Codes hosted Roanoke's first civic hackathon back in 2015. This year, the hackathon has grown in scope and size and will be hosted on September 24th at the Science Museum of Western Virginia.

The magic of Noke Codes is that it fills a room with talented software, web and app developers who have paired with local nonprofit organizations. These teams work on technology solutions for problems that plague the non-profits, all for free, all overnight. Not only is the product important; the relationships that are made between the volunteers and each other, the volunteers and the nonprofits, and the nonprofits with each other are crucial to further collaboration and growth.

On the heels of Noke Codes, another event is taking place. This one is larger in size, touching more than 300 innovators, activists and visionaries. The 6th annual CityWorks (X)po, beginning October 6th, is opening its doors in a new location and with a sharp focus on individuals who make an impact in their community. Speakers and attendees will collaborate over three days as they experience all facets of "Big Ideas for Better Places."

Both events take time, effort and money to plan. But something very real and very evident that I've learned is that those ingredients are just the start. The human element is the most important part of these events, and without the incredible individuals who fill these rooms, no progress is made toward the goal of community development. These events haven't happened yet, but I want to take a moment to thank those who will be in these and other rooms, to those who will spend their time and energy collaborating and creating with others.

Roanoke's future won't be the same without them. 

Email management >

Email does nothing to improve your profitability. Most of us spend too much time handling email that could better be spent on high-payoff activities (see last month's article.) If you truly want to reduce your email time, follow these suggestions:

- Reduce the email you receive. Take yourself off distribution lists. Unsubscribe from newsletters or other information that provides no value. If you still want to receive these items, set up your email program to automatically route them to a different folder.
- Avoid the "Reply All" function. I once worked for a company that had the IT department remove the Reply All button from everyone's Outlook program. It forced everyone to be very deliberate when deciding who needed to receive the email. It's okay to drop recipients from a reply.
- Stop using email to coordinate. Email works best when communicating short amounts of information or asking simple questions. If you need to coordinate anything (schedules, documents, etc.), pick up the phone or coordinate face-to-face.
- Keep your messages short. I'm guilty of this sometimes, but I'm reminded of it every time I have to read someone else's long email. Be succinct. Be decisive and to the point.
- Keep each email to a single topic or question. Have you ever sent an email asking three separate questions, and only one question was answered? It's not the other person's fault. It's easy to answer one question and forget the others before hitting send. If you have more than one question or topic, send a separate short email for each one.
- Be intentional. Turn off notifications and close your email program. Schedule specific blocks of time for email and let others know what time you check it. A client of mine put a note in her signature that she only checked email at 8:00 a.m. and



Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:
Control your email—
don't let it control you.

Shark Bite

Grant Management

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3:00 p.m. This will greatly improve your productivity by reducing distractions.

“ ”

Keep your inbox empty. Develop the habit to empty it at the end of each day. Searching through a cluttered inbox saps time and energy. Handle your email inbox like you handle your mailbox at home.

- Handle each email only once. Follow the four D's (Delete, Do, Delegate, Defer). If no action is needed, delete it or file it. Will the action or response be only a couple minutes? Then do it. Can you forward it to someone else to handle the task? If you can delegate it, do so right away. Finally, if the action is something only you can complete and it will take more than a couple minutes, defer it and deal with it only after you have processed your email. File it and schedule time on your calendar to handle it.
- Keep your inbox empty. Develop the habit to empty it at the end of each day. Searching through a cluttered inbox saps time and energy. Handle your email inbox like you handle your mailbox at home.

Finally, teach these guidelines to your co-workers and staff. Develop these habits in your entire team and watch your productivity soar! 

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Looking good >

Executive Summary:

Invision eye care in Christiansburg and Salem is recognized for its exceptional practice; an aesthetic environment was a significant contribution.

By Caitlyn Scaggs

When a local business "wins big" it is also a win for the community. Local eye care center Invision, with locations in Christiansburg and Salem, recently received a national award that is a big-win for the local art community and demonstrates the power of supporting local business.

The recognition came as part of "The America's Finest Optical Retailers Contest" hosted by INVISION Magazine (a coincidence of a name—no affiliation). In this nation-wide

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search three optical practices were chosen as top winners and an additional nine, to include Invision, were distinguished as Honorable Mentions. The ultimate goal of the contest was to identify the best examples of independent eye care practices and retailers in North America. As INVISION Magazine's executive editor, Ralf Kircher, explained, "Winning stores often have amazing product lineups and are impressive to look at. But a store wouldn't really fit our 'cool' criteria if it weren't for such aspects as innovative marketing, creative retail environment and a unique work culture."

Optical practices were judged by a panel of optical retail experts on six categories: story, exterior appearance, interior appearance, advertising and marketing, store website and overall individuality. A large component of Invision's recognition as "America's Finest" is thanks to the key role the local art community plays in Invision's story. Invision believes that eyewear must strike the perfect balance between form and function. It must serve a very practical purpose but also do so in an aesthetically appealing way. That critical aspect of the Invision brand is



reflected in the art that adorns the interior and exterior of the building.

If you visit the Christiansburg office you will find the intentional incorporation of local art into the décor. Before entering the store you won't be able to miss the larger-than-life sculptures of iconic eyewear adorning the exterior. They were crafted by local Roanoke artist Dave Wertz, who also has his work featured in prominent locations like Center in The Square in Roanoke. Upon entering the lobby your eye will be drawn to paintings created by Floyd-based artist Jeanine O'Neill. They feature funky and ornate eye

wear in bright and compelling colors. Dr. Scott Mann with Invision said, "This award not only honors our practice but also the local artists that help tell our story through the meaningful pieces they have created on our behalf. It is also a credit to our staff who have embraced a unique work culture of creative eyewear and five star service to our patients. "

This award affirms that supporting local businesses and the local art community can help create a powerful narrative for a business, one that just might garner national attention. 



Don't take your grant for granted >

Our client operated a one-woman fabrication studio. She met a scientific researcher who was studying the mating habits of spotted snipe in the Amazon basin. The researcher used some Federal grant money to hire our client to manufacture automatic cameras to take pictures of the snipe in their natural habitat. But things didn't go so well.

"They're going to sue me!" said our client, as she handed over a copy of the letter she'd received from the attorney for the research institution:

"Your client promised to deliver twenty custom-built motion-activated wildlife cameras for use in the Amazon rainforest. The cameras that your client delivered did not meet the required specifications and failed to function properly. We hereby demand the immediate refund of the entire \$15,000 paid to your client. If we do not receive this amount within ten days then we will file suit in General District Court."

"It's just not true," our client said. "I built a prototype that exactly met the original specifications. But then he wanted to keep adding things."

"What did he want?" I asked.

"First he wanted me to add infrared, so he could take pictures at night," she said. "Then he was upset that the autofocus didn't work at night, so I had to rewrite the autofocus software. Then it turned out that the new circuitry drew so much power that we had to add a bigger solar panel. The changes just kept coming and coming."

"So did he pay you more, for all that extra work?" I asked.

"That's just it," she said. "Eventually I asked for more money for the extra work, but he said no. He bickered about it for weeks. And then suddenly he said it was time for his scheduled trip to the Amazon, and he just came into my studio and scooped up all the cameras. I'm not surprised that they didn't all work properly. Some of them were only half-updated with the new features. And we never had a chance to test the new design fully, either."

"It sounds to me like there was some miscommunication," I said. "A lot of contract disputes happen like that. You should have a decent defense."

"But I don't have the money to pay to defend a lawsuit," she said. "And I don't have \$15,000 to pay them back,

Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary:
If you make a false statement or submit a false document in connection with your Federal grant or contract, then from that point on you're living in a glass house, and so you shouldn't throw stones.

either. He should know that. He had to jump through hoops in order to be able to front me the money I needed to buy materials."

"Really? How did that work?" I said.

"First he said that he couldn't pay me in advance for materials, since his grant only allowed him to pay for items that he'd actually received," she said. "But eventually he told the grant people that I'd already finished the cameras, and that's how he got the money for me to start work."

"So he told the Feds that you'd finished the cameras, when you hadn't even started them yet?" I said.

"Yes," she said.

"Well, that's a False Claims Act case!" I said.

"What's that?" she said.

"Any time someone makes a false statement in order to

“ ”

Any time someone makes a false statement in order to receive a payment from the Federal Government, it's called a 'false claim.' The False Claims Act allows anyone who knows about the false claim to bring a lawsuit against the person who made it.



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receive a payment from the Federal Government, it's called a 'false claim,'" I said. "The False Claims Act allows anyone who knows about the false claim to bring a lawsuit against the person who made it. The person who made the false claim has to pay back three times the amount of the payment. The person who brings the lawsuit gets to keep from 15% to 30% of that money. (The Federal Government keeps the rest.)"

"But how would we prove that he lied?" she said.

"It's simple," I said. "All documents relating to Federal grants are available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act. If he faked an invoice from you stating that the cameras were already completed, then we could get a copy."

"But I don't want to sue anyone," she said.

"If you're just worried about this claim for \$15,000, then you probably won't have to bring a lawsuit yourself," I said. "Many research institutions are utterly dependent on Federal grants. If a researcher is found to have submitted a false claim, it can be grounds for permanent debarment from Federal grant awards. It's like a death sentence for a researcher. To hear someone even whisper 'false claim' can be terrifying."

So I made a Freedom of Information Act request for the invoice. And after I got the invoice, I made a phone call to the attorney for the research institution.

"We can't accept a penny less than the full \$15,000," he said.

"Before you say anything, let me make a suggestion," I said. "Could you please take a good, hard look at the invoice submitted in support of the payment to my client? And then could you please consider it very carefully in light of the Federal False Claims Act?"

"False Claims Act?" he said. "Why?"

"That's all I have to say right now," I said. "After you've done that, you can call me back, if you want."

Funny, though — it's been years now, and that attorney never did call me back. 

Note: facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer when defending a contract dispute, negotiating a settlement, evaluating a False Claims Act claim, etc.



The person who made the false claim has to pay back three times the amount of the payment. The person who brings the lawsuit gets to keep from 15% to 30% of that money.



If a researcher is found to have submitted a false claim, it can be grounds for permanent debarment from Federal grant awards. It's like a death sentence for a researcher.



Forward to school >

It's September, and by now all the little—and not so little—kiddies are back to school. Some of our school districts had students returning earlier than ever in the month of August. Yuck on that (notwithstanding the parents who REALLY needed their lovely youngsters to get out of the house after quite enough summer weeks moping and flopping around the couch, thank you).

This year, was by far, the one that showed me the most "first day back to school" photos on Facebook than any year previously—and I'm sure the postings will populate even more next year. I have to say, I enjoyed all the posts. Of all the feeds I get, little Johnny and Sally smiling at me with the cute backpacks or yellow bus in background, was a delightful treat and simply marvelous divergence from the usual dribble and not always positive current event of the day. What's interesting now on our social media feeds, is we get even more of the postings from associates and acquaintances who aren't family or close relations. We're now getting glimpses into the personal lives of people who, well, really aren't all that personal.

That's ok. I still like the back to school posts. Family. Friends. Staff. Clients. Suppliers. The proud father I bumped into at the last business function. Images of kids heading off to school convey a kind of hope; a sense of proper momentum—and a tradition worth celebrating that would be lost if the end of summer wasn't significant or kids attended school year-round.

Now... where the sharp looking kids of ours are heading after the picture is snapped—that's another story.

The state of education—or at least our state of education—has proponents and opponents. We have a lot on our plates when deciding what our best approach should be. Most of the commentary we hear is negative. Standardized testing and SOLs are bad. Common core is propaganda. Public schools are failing. Charter schools are unfair. No child left behind and other campaigns aren't sustainable. In fact, if anyone comes up with a systematic solution to an education platform that is specifically designed to serve the community or overcome a current obstacle, you can bet it will be opposed immediately upon implementation if not shut down before it ever starts.

No one agrees on how we should educate our kids.

The old way doesn't work anymore; the new way won't solve our issues; and the current way just isn't working.

What are parents going to do? What are educators going to do when any change is a bad idea?

I think our only hope is renegades. People willing to buck the system. An old school teacher who adheres to his old coursework methodology, because it's proven that the kids in his class actually

continued on Page 47

By Tom Field

Executive Summary:

It's that time of year... heading off to school is a sweet and memorable tradition even as we consider how to change it all.

OSHA's New Weapon: Public Shaming >

If you own or operate a high-hazard workplace, recording injuries and illnesses of workers is nothing new. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") requires it. Now the agency has introduced another dimension to an otherwise routine task: public shaming.

OSHA often publicizes its enforcement actions, calling out companies cited for the heftiest fines on its website, electronic newsletter and news releases. The agency handpicks its biggest targets and publicizes citations, but rarely walks the story back when a judge finds the employer was never at fault.

Smaller targets usually escape notice. Less catastrophic incidents and less-recognizable corporate names rarely made news, allowing cooler heads to correct workplace hazards outside the media glare. Most data OSHA collects are released in aggregate, allowing most companies to address particular concerns in quieter corners.

Those days are done.

OSHA made a big bang when it directed companies to report their records electronically, and decided to make them publicly available on the Internet. Now, unions, members of the press, industry competitors and anyone else with a company in their sights can access the injury and illness data of any employer at any time.

OSHA is seeking to "nudge" employers by outing their injuries in the public limelight. Over 30,000 covered employers with 250 or more employees must start making this information by July 1, 2017. Nearly a half million smaller businesses with at least twenty employees must do so by July 1, 2018. The result? About three million incidents reported in over a million workplaces will soon become public information.

Labor organizations like AFL-CIO like the move, as it would help them identify employers with high injury rates. On the other hand, business groups point out that OSHA lacks statutory authority to compel submission of the data or to make it publicly available. Further, they object to the tactic of "shaming employers," which could have the unintended effect of discouraging some employers from reporting incidents.

Of course, not every injury is an OSHA violation. Sometimes an employer does everything right and someone gets hurt due to their own misconduct. Sometimes, the injury is caused by someone else, like a visitor or a patient. And sometimes people die at work due to natural causes. Without taking the time to investigate and assess whether a safety or health violation occurred, members of the public or the press

continued on Page 47



Guest Commentary

**By Courtney M.
Malveaux, Esq.**

Executive Summary:
OSHA publishing selective workplace injury citations could be misapplied.

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“ There is something for everyone, or at least the ones who don't insist on a hotel with a candy mint on the pillow — Page 14

Field / On Tap

from Page 44

learn and retain the material. (Yes, that is still a renegade in today's school.) A new idea school teacher who throws away the textbook and supervises project-based curriculums, where kids have to absorb the knowledge to complete tasks to satisfactory results.

An education system built on a model that resembles real life is not such a bad idea. Teachers who perform well should be rewarded. Schools that produce higher rankings and outcomes should be acknowledged. And parents should be free to select whatever educational service they desire for their children—including the unconventional or options that aren't regulated by state rule.

Has anyone else noticed the schools and systems that are getting the positive reviews and are producing the best outcomes are the schools that are different from the rest? They're taking chances. They're assuming risks. They're trying approaches that have never been tried before. They're bringing back old principles. They're backing up a forward-thinking educator. They're changing because they know they have to change.

It's kind of funny how those processes replicate successes in the business world.

Someone should take a nice picture of that and post it on Facebook. 



An education system built on a model that resembles real life is not such a bad idea. Teachers who perform well should be rewarded. Schools that produce higher rankings and outcomes should be acknowledged. And parents should be free to select whatever educational service they desire for their children

Guest Commentary

from Page 45

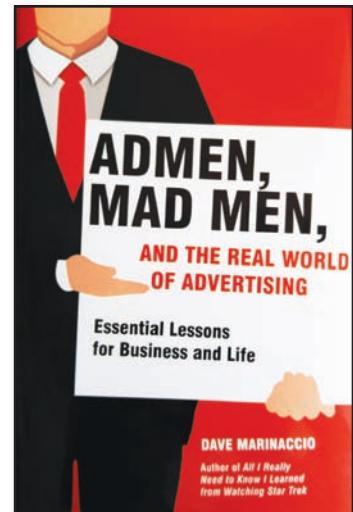
may brand an employer as unsafe before the agency can do its diligence.

The Chamber of Commerce fears that unions will use the records in "mischaracterizing employers in organizing and corporate campaigns, and trial lawyers bringing frivolous lawsuits. Organized labor – who asked for this regulation – will exaggerate minor incidents to create the impression of an unsafe workplace. Trial lawyers will leverage these files against employers to extract settlements." Safety organizations also expressed concern that the rule will cause companies to focus on data on injuries and fatalities, rather than studying leading indicators on how to avoid injuries and illnesses.

As a Labor Commissioner, I avoided needless publicity over workplace incidents. Trotting employers out before getting the whole story can demoralize potential partners, and now it is leading to more litigation. Stay tuned. 

Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to news@vbFRONT.com



Agency on street level

Dave Marinaccio is a principal and cofounder of LMO Advertising, up the road from us in Arlington, VA. He's written his perception of the advertising business in *Admen, Mad Men* (Arcade; 2015), which is about the fastest read of three page chapters I've come across regarding this industry. There's a bit of a difference in this career exploration from many of the others I've read; mostly, here's a guy who doesn't take his job too seriously. If you want a glamorized version of the advertising business, or even a certain colorized iteration, read other books or memoirs—or even catch reruns of Bewitched, or Bosom Buddies, or Thirtysomething, or, of course, Mad Men (all shows which Marinaccio mentions). But if you want the kind of perspective that's just like overhearing a real working stiff chatting with coworkers by the water cooler—the kind of inside banter you'd hear from an old guy who's been in the trenches long enough to cut through the BS — this is your story.

A favorite observation: "Clients get the advertising they deserve." Marinaccio, responsible for the Beach Boys Good Vibrations Sunkist television commercials, is unique among most of the thoughts shared by ad men biographies in that he elevates clients' participation in the process (including their preponderance of bad ideas) rather than clinging to one's "principles" to the detriment of serving the account. As he puts it, "Working on a crappy account

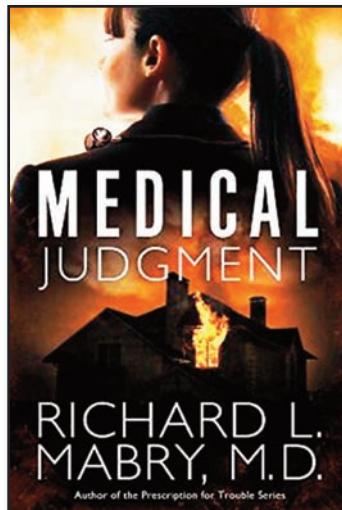
is better than walking the streets looking for a job." Pragmatism overrules everything else in this account. That's why I doubt he would have written the same book in his younger years.

—Tom Field

Twisted trust issues

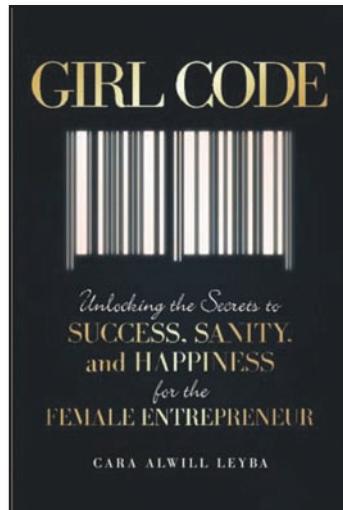
Richard Mabry's *Medical Judgment* (Abingdon; 2016) is a must-read Christian medical thriller. Sarah Gordon's life is threatened soon after her husband and young daughter are killed in a car accident. Her garage catches on fire. Other strange things happen, targeting Sarah's life. Her husband's friend Kyle Andrews and Bill Larson, a detective, help solve the mystery, but also try to win her heart. Who can she trust? Is one of them behind the attempts on her life? Sarah is used to taking charge in the ER, but when it comes to her personal life, it's not so easy. Can she uncover who is out to kill her before it's too late?

This story emphasizes the view that no matter what you are going through, God will be by your side. As Sarah struggles with her faith after everything is taken from her, can she find her way back to God and the things He has for her? Will one of the men win her heart as they follow the clues? If you love Christian medical thrillers, you will love this story. I turned pages as fast as I could trying to figure out the twists and turns. Can't wait to read more by this author! The life struggles intermingled with faith

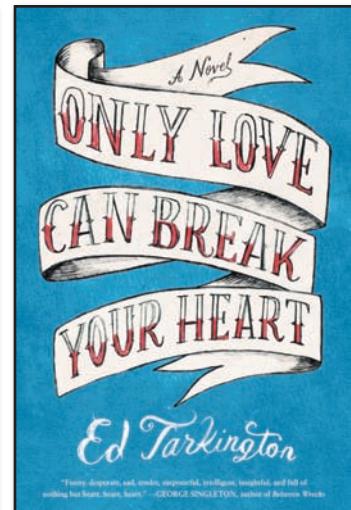


RICHARD L.
MABRY, M.D.

Author of the Prescription for Trouble Series



CARA ALWILL LEYBA



"Funny, poignant, sad, snarky, inspirational, intelligent, thoughtful, and full of melting hot heart, heart, heart." —GEORGE SINGLETARY, author of Between Weeks

struggles brought the characters to life and drew me in to the story.

—Sally Shupe

Chic leader

Girl Code (Passionista; 2015) by Cara Alwill Leyba was recently named one of the top nine books every female entrepreneur should read by Inc. magazine, and is currently the #1 best-selling book in the Women in Business category on Amazon, leading ahead of Lean-In, #GIRLBOSS, and Thrive.

Her glamorous approach to self-help has attracted thousands of women to attend her workshops, buy her books, read her blog, and follow her on social platforms. Her story includes advice such as these four ideas: don't hate "her" success; interrupt envy with gratitude; edit your energy; and write a success mantra.

As a social influencers, Cara reaches her following of over 80,000 fans across all her media platforms and inspires them daily with lifestyle tips, mindset advice, and business strategies — and she does it all with a chic and fashionable flair.

—Alix Abbamonte

Flashback

Only Love Can Break Your Heart by Ed Tarkington (Alonquin; 2016) is a book I

couldn't resist. The setting: where I grew up. The time frame: when I grew up. The characters: from the same "town." The music, scenes, school and daily routines: ditto. So, in full disclosure, the novel could have been poorly written with a disjointed plot and tons of errors and I would have still gotten what I needed from a purely nostalgic point of view.

Fortunately, our author and our first person narrator delivers a pretty solid read, despite the treats of my recognizing every single nuance and geographic and cultural reference. There were a few tiny little bumps where the central character's age didn't seem to realistically line up with the action at hand and a couple of prop mentions that weren't exactly prevalent at that time (i.e. zero-turn mowers and Saucony shoes); but all in all, I found an excellent balance between the sentimental and practical developments. The extended wrap up at the end most editors would find unnecessary, but again, given my ties to the all too familiar places, people, and events of Central and Southwest Virginia late 1970's, I devoured the whole thing. Both moody and well-paced, a good story even if you aren't from small town Virginia.

—Tom Field

(The reviewers: Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; Sally Shupe lives in Newport, works at Virginia Tech, and is a freelance editor; Alix Abbamonte is a publicist with KGPR, Ink in Duxbury, MA.)



Courtesy of Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.

Colorful sidewalk >

Art in the Market

was held in downtown Blacksburg on July 16; featuring the judged show, music, activities and a sidewalk exposition of everything from abstract acrylics, collages, flowers, wood and metalwork, still life and photography.



Courtesy of Feeding America Southwest VA

Wally's gift >

Walmart in Salem presented an \$8,000 check to Feeding America Southwest Virginia as part of the "Fight Hunger Spark Change" national campaign.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Courtesy of The Market Gallery

Don't slip >

The Market Gallery in downtown Roanoke held its ArtByNight event on Sep. 2 and show on Naturalism through Sept. 24, featuring works from Max Mitchell (banana, above), Judith Arkell, and Ross Arkell.



Courtesy of UW Montgomery, Radford, Floyd



Packing big >

Stuff the Bus, a school supply drive in late July by United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd collected over 9,600 items to serve 537 children in the New River Valley; local businesses collected donations from area residents.

Recognition >

Roanoke County Sheriff's Office's Deputy Phillip Ferguson (left) delivers a plaque on Aug. 1 to Sgt. Warren Mitchell at the Dallas Police Department in honor of the fallen police and DART officers Patrick Zamarripa, Michael Krol, Brent Thompson, Sgt. Michael Smith, and Sr. Cpl. Lorne Ahrens, who were killed in the line of duty on July 7.



Roanoke County Sheriff's Office



YP panel >

PRSA Blue Ridge held its lunch program on Communicating to Young Professionals on Aug. 11 at the Roanoke Higher Education Center with information on recruiting and retaining talent and the eXperience YP conference.

FRONT 'N ABOUT



Caitlyn Scaggs



Street life >

Steppin' Out, Blacksburg's annual street festival was held August 5–6; vendors included Blacksburg Bagel's "boiled, baked, and cedar planked" goods, fused glass from River Hill Glass, and a sword swallower, among the music, arts, entertainment, and food.



Virginia Tech

Ethnic tastes >

Virginia Tech food trucks have arrived for fall semester, including The Grillfield (Latino, pork tortas, beef tortillas) and Periodic Table (Asian, peanut pork rice, lemongrass chicken), managed by the college's dining services unit.



Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

Baltimore bound >

Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and its Technology Council traveled to Baltimore, MD in mid-August to exchange ideas and learn best practices for entrepreneurial incubators and accelerators; 15 business, education and government leaders met with various stakeholders in the tech, business, economic development and education sectors.

FRONT'N ABOUT



FRONT

International ideas >

VT KnowledgeWorks held its seventh annual Global Partnership Event in mid-August, including the Entrepreneurial Challenge conceptual pitch sessions at the Inn at Virginia Tech on Aug. 18; featuring 14 teams from nations such as Egypt (brain scanning biometric identification system); Italy (emergency alert app for deaf people); and Chile (crane accident prevention system). USA's team, Park and Diamond, won the grand prize with its portable safety cycling helmet.

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

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Adkins

Vance Adkins has been promoted to chief financial officer at HomeTown Bankshares.



Bays



Cottrill



Henson

Dustin Bays has been promoted to vice president of accounting and analytics at the Troutville office; **Trevania Cottrill** has been promoted to retail banking officers at the Lexington office; and **Angela Henson** has been promoted to title

services officer at the Lexington office of Bank of Botetourt.



Jones

Lora Jones has been promoted to vice president / controller at National Bankshares.

Bridgett Kidd has joined as senior credit analyst at Bank of Fincastle.



Wade

Marcus Wade of Bank of Botetourt has graduated from the Virginia Bankers School of Bank Management at the University of Virginia.

Susan Larkin has been hired as vice president of community banking at Freedom First Credit Union.



Claytor

the 24th World HRD Congress.

have joined as sales associates; and **Cris Emerson** has rejoined as an agent at Long & Foster Real Estate Roanoke office.



Bowlby



Sibley

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT

Charles "Wick" Moorman, retired CEO of Norfolk Southern, will assume as president and CEO of Amtrak.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Campbell



Willis



Emerson

WELLNESS FRONT

Katherine Clayton of Delta Dental of Virginia has been named one of the 100 Most Influential Global HR Professionals at

Conrad Campbell and **Rory Willis**

RETAIL/SERVICE FRONT

Charles Garner has been named business office manager at Oakey's Funeral Service and Crematory.

EDUCATION FRONT

Taylor

Monecia Taylor has joined as associate vice president for principal gifts at Virginia Tech Advancement Division.



Seago

Eugene Seago was recognized for expertise in accounting at the 2016 Service Recognition Program at Virginia Tech.

Travis Mountain has received the 2016 R.O. Herman Dissertation Award and the AARP Public Policy Institute



Mountain

Financial Services and Older Consumer Award for his work in family and consumer finances.



Carstensen

Laurence Carstensen Jr. has received the 2016 Distinguished Mentor Award from the National Council for Geographic Education.



Matthiessen

Alison Matthiessen has been named communications director for Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

received the Entrepreneurs of the Year honor.

Jay Briggs, Travis Kendrick and Jillian Hannah have joined the New Education Team at Mill Mountain Theatre's Conservatory.

John Lewis, son of founder Peter Lewis, has assumed presidency of Apple Ridge Farm.

Matthew Churchill, Linda Edwards, and Craig Parrent have joined the board of directors at Goodwill Industries of the Valleys.

Justin Reid has been appointed director of African American Programs at Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

Compiled by Tom Field

FRONT Notes



Virginia Tech

VT's Daniel Crawford of Molecular Sciences Software Institute

Heavy data

Virginia Tech is building a national team of scientists to develop software and data solutions for molecular and chemical computational modeling to address diverse issues from diseases to climate change, a near \$20 million investment.

Going once...

Entrusted Auctions in Radford has acquired **Farmer Auctions**; the Farmer Auctions in

Salem will remain in business.

Gobbling up money

Virginia Tech has passed a record \$100 million milestone in fundraising by July of 2016, surpassing previous annual records.

Transport clearances

Virginia **Department of Motor Vehicles** offices in eight locations (including Roanoke) now offers registration for the federal

Transportation Security Administration "PreCheck" program for expedited airport security screening and Transportation Worker Identification Credentials.

Mountain dew

Five Mile Mountain moonshine distillery has opened in Floyd County.

Specialized tech

Roanoke-Blacksburg chapter of **Armed Forces Communications**

and Electronics Association has formed and is planned for launch at the end of September; the group covers the technology sector working with the military or government.

Virginia 80's style

Virginia Film Office has announced the production of the feature film "Permanent" (a comedy set in 1983 in Virginia) to star major actors Patricia Arquette and Rainn Wilson; location shoots in Central Virginia this

Read the FRONT online **vbFRONT.com**

Also get more stories and pictures at morefront.blogspot.com

fall, screenplay written by Abingdon-born, UVA-grad Colette Burson.

Play and stay

Spartan Development LLC is working with InterContinental Hotels on a planned development for a Staybridge hotel and restaurant at the Salem Civic Center, James E. Taliaferro Sports and Entertainment Complex in Salem.

Beer at the bridge

Great Valley Farm Brewery will be opening a new brewery and winery in Rockbridge County at Natural Bridge.

Dash display

New River Valley Regional Commission has launched an NRV Data Dashboard at www.nrvrc.org/databashboard to display regional demographic,

economic, transportation, education, and community health statistics, for use by citizenry, local governments, grant writers, non-profit organizations, and other economic developers or stakeholders.

Growth oriented

ALCOVA Mortgage in Roanoke, with more than 40 offices in ten states, was recognized in Inc. 5000's Fastest-Growing Private

Companies in America.

Flight path

Averett University and Piedmont Airlines have partnered to begin offering a cadet aviation program for piloting careers with American Airlines.

Another reality show from Roanoke

The **Ice family** of Roanoke (Bobby, Alicia,

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.

Bo Jr., Cap) is featured on *Baby Bodybuilders* on the TLC network; the gig resulting from discovery of YouTube videos of son Bo's pushups.

and pubs the first week of August as the product distribution officially commenced.

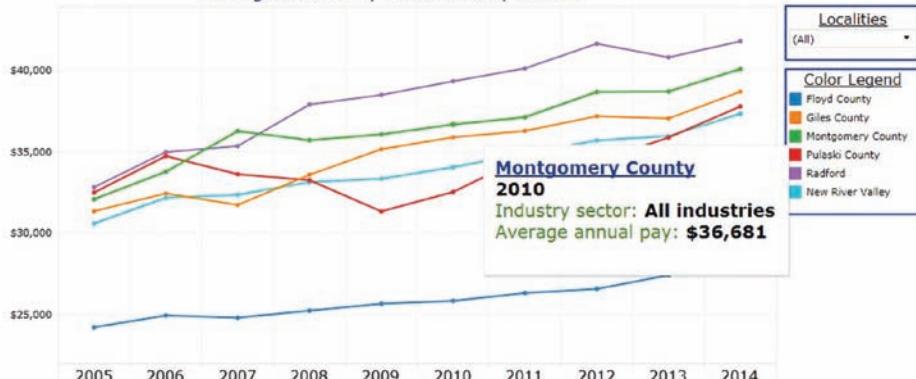
Reduced admission

Danville Science Center has joined the Museums for All program, enabling reduced visitor rates for low-income families; \$2 per adult / \$1 per child with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Summer slump

Virginia Employment Commission reports a rise in unemployment in all eleven metropolitan statistical areas in June; from Northern Virginia

Average Annual Pay for All Industry Sectors



screen capture

One of the interactive data views from NRVRC

FRONT Notes

at the lowest rate of 3.2 percent to Bristol at 5.4 percent.	complex for the 3,000-member Roanoke Star soccer club.	personal items; only small clutch bags under 6.5-inches and special exceptions for medical purposes will be allowed.	primarily an "Adventure Plan" that focuses on recreational outdoor activities and reviewable at www.ExplorePark.org/AdventurePlan
<i>Sunny disposition</i>	<i>New bank office</i>	<i>New bank HQ</i>	<i>Slush fun</i>
Solar Connexion in Blacksburg has been ranked in the Top 500 Solar Contractors - North America list by Solar Power World.	Bank of Botetourt will be opening a new retail office to join its loan production office in Salem on College Avenue this fall.	First National Bank is building a new Lynchburg headquarters on Odd Fellows Road.	Sunset Slush , a drink treat some have said is between shaved ice and the texture of ice cream, has opened near Roanoke College on Main Street in Salem.
<i>More grass to kick on</i>	<i>Clearly enforced</i>	<i>Adventures and exploration</i>	<i>Si, a comer!</i>
Valley AFC in Roanoke has purchased a 30-acre site at Roanoke River and 13th Street for development of six soccer fields and a planned \$7 million	Virginia Tech is introducing a clear bag policy for home football games; approved clear plastic or vinyl bags not exceeding 12-inches are permitted for attendees'	Roanoke County's Explore Park has released its newest plan for management and development over the next 20 years;	Tuco's Taqueria Garaje , specializing in tacos and tequila, is scheduled for

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ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT LOCAL CHARITIES

opening this fall at 416 Micro Farms in downtown Roanoke.

Breakfast in Grandin

Scratch Biscuit Company has opened at 1820 Memorial Ave. in Roanoke.

Bristol engineering

Bluefield College has announced its intention to consider expanding

its engineering and technology programs to the former Virginia Intermont College campus in Bristol.

Crooked brings it straight in

The Crooked Road, Southwest Virginia's 333-mile cultural music heritage trail and designation, generates approximately \$9 million annually and supports 131 jobs according to

an economic study by Virginia Tech.

Big beer growing, too

MillerCoors brewing in Rockingham County is expanding with a \$60 million investment, adding about 27 new jobs.

No TV needed in dorm

Cox Business and **Hollins University** have

released a Contour on Campus program offering live-streaming content for mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, which allows students to watch TV; the first such application by Cox in Virginia, and one of the first for the company nationwide.

Compiled by Tom Field

Additional FRONT Notes posted online at moreFRONT.blogspot.com.

Read extended versions of items listed above, plus photos and many more current listings each day on the **moreFRONT** blog, also available by link at **vbFRONT.com**.

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Bank of Botetourt Taking Care of You

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“ Most of us spend too much time handling email — Page 35

“ Suspenders and a belt are overkill — Page 28



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