

Valley Business

# FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING  
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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Gadgets  
Galore  
Biomimicry  
Crime  
Scene Cleanup  
Bail Bondsman

## The Juggling Act

of Following Your Dream

FRONTreport on Micro-Business

Lee Ann Minnix,  
Happy Time Balloons

Corporate  
Political  
Contributions



# Karen

*In 1996 Karen Waldron stepped into extremely large shoes taking over ownership and management of Fralin & Waldron, Inc.*

“Since the early 1960's, one of the most important components of Fralin & Waldron successes was always the regional banks they chose as partners in financing. As the banking industry in the Roanoke region changed with multiple mergers we felt there was a disconnect between our lending partners of the past.

“In 2009, Valley Bank came to assist F&W with our single family communities. Kevin Meade with Valley Bank made the transition for F&W a secure and valued partnership.

“In the face of a difficult economic period for the construction industry Valley Bank provided Fralin & Waldron the trust, flexibility and funds needed to continue pushing forward with our new business model and community developments.”



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# WELCOME to the FRONT

The true joy in putting together this monthly business publication has to do, first, with meeting the people who comprise the business community in this region. It is especially gratifying when the cover story we are all working on is about those lone rangers who charge forth on their trusty steeds to battle the daunting world of entrepreneurship at the most basic level. This month's cover story was one of those that sucked us in and held us there with its gripping stories of individuals and couples fighting to realize their dream, battling banks, the government, the economy and sometimes themselves to make that dream happen.

Our story—researched and written by contributor Alison Weaver and Editor Dan Smith—looks through the eyes of more than 20 entrepreneurs and half a dozen people who help them on a daily basis and gives you an idea of what they face on a daily basis in order to be their own boss, something most of them will tell you they enjoy most about their life in one of the worst economies since the Great Depression. We asked them simple, direct questions and let their own enthusiasm take over and we believe their stories, individually and collectively, will tell you something about micro-business you didn't know and probably didn't appreciate enough.



**Tom Field**



**Dan Smith**



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## Valley Business FRONT

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## The Juggling Act

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FRONTreport on Micro-Business



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# JULY



Kathy Bibb



Judi Billups



Janeson Keeley



Pete Krull



Laura Purcell



Dan Smith

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 68.

## Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 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.

The board will be given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "We're journalists," says Editor Dan Smith, "and not business experts. This group of distinguished business professionals—whose range in age, experience, level and specialty is impressive—will give us a solid handle on how business runs and what the primary issues and key players are in this region. My guess is that our coverage of business will be especially useful because of this group of people."

# CONTRIBUTORS



Anne Giles Clelland



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Kathleen Harshberger



Becky Hepler



Gene Marrano



Mallory Metheny



David Perry



Anne Piedmont



Erin Pope



Kathy Surace



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

## 2010 / 11 Members

- Nancy Agee** Carilion (Wellness)  
**Laura Bradford** ClaireV (Retail)  
**Nicholas C. Conte** Woods Rogers (Legal)  
**Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)  
**Cory Donovan** NCTC (Tech/Industry)  
**John Garland** Spectrum (Development)  
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**Ellis Gutshall** Valley Bank (Finance)  
**Nanci Hardwick** Schultz-Creehan (Tech/Industry)  
**George Kegley** Retired (Seniors)  
**John D. Long** Salem Museum (Culture)  
**Nancy May** LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness)  
**Stuart Mease** Rackspace (Tech/Industry)  
**Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)  
**Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)  
**John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

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.

“it’s a bit  
challenging  
juggling  
everything”

— Page 18

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# The Juggling Act

of following your dream

FRONTreport on Micro-Business



## Micro-business: Small companies, big plans >

### Executive Summary:

*The smallest businesses in the region often offer good examples of people following a dream. Sometimes, though, it's a simple matter of running out of choices.*

by Alison Weaver  
and Dan Smith

The work force's reaction to a tempestuous economy is often a cranky acceptance of the status quo, the notion that the worker has no room to maneuver.

For a lot of people, that's true. For the entrepreneur—natural or forced—an economy in the toilet is yet another inducement to jumping off the small business startup bridge without a bungee cord. It's just exactly the kind of activity these people revel in. "An opportunity," they'll beam. "It came up because I was downsized. And now I get to follow my dream."

That's not so much the norm, but with jobs at a minimum, it is becoming increasingly

common. Microenterprise Journal says that in the past 25 years, micro-business has grown by 300 percent, "fueled by waning employee loyalty and growing worker dissatisfaction."

Joyce Waugh, president of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, says micro-business—for our purposes, businesses with four or fewer workers, including the owner—represent a significant portion of the chamber's membership. "About a third (roughly 400) of our members have five or fewer employees," says Waugh. "There are,



Dan Smith

**Joyce Waugh: About a third of chamber members are micro-businesses.**

however, many more out there. They're hard to get a handle on because they may be part time or home-based."

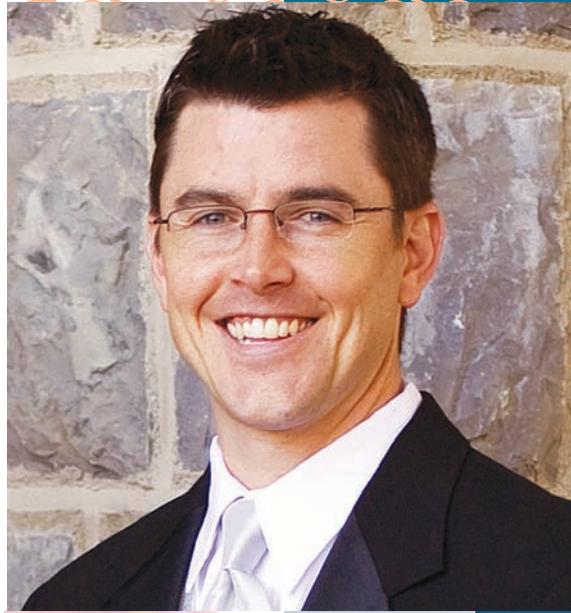
Tom Tanner of the Small Business Development Center in Roanoke, whose book *Entrepreneur Guidebook*, was recently released, says this is an opportune time for some to go into business.

"Two kinds of people are going into business for themselves," he says. "First there are those who can't find a job and want some kind of opportunity. And second, there are the unemployed who have a little money from a 401(k) or some other source and want to own their own business.

"Some of them are consultants with great backgrounds, others have a skill or a very good idea." Most, he says, can't get a bank loan, but "if they make it when the economy is down, they will be stable when it turns around. They're the 'bootstrappers' and they have a good shot at success because of the energy and commitment they bring."

Cory Donovan, director of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, says his organization has "a good chunk of micro-businesses. I'd estimate that number to be about a quarter of the 210 members we have ... There's probably a greater percentage in the general population."

Says Donovan, "Micro-businesses make up

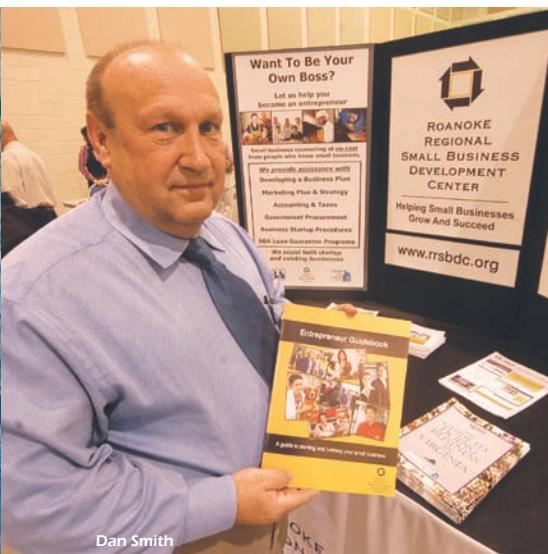


**Cory Donovan: "The majority of new jobs added in our economy come from small companies, which started as micro-businesses."**

a good portion of any local economy and therefore [are] a critical component across the board. I put it in terms of 'economic gardening': these are the seeds of our future prosperity. The majority of new jobs added in our economy come from small companies, which started as micro-businesses. Most new ventures need at least a few years to really figure out and understand their business, which probably played out much differently than they anticipated—what their ideal customer looks like, cash flow, what works and what doesn't, their marketing mix, etc.

"During that time, they face many challenges and are at high risk to go under. During these years, those companies need varied support: financial, advisory and inspirational (to stick with it). Some will fold and for some, the stars will align and they will grow, providing jobs, paying taxes, etc. Some may add a few employees and some may become growth firms that hire 100. But without the micro-businesses, we never get the Meridium, Rackspace, Modea."

We thought we'd take a look at some of the region's smallest—and some of the newest—businesses and present examples of people following their bliss and being their own bosses. It's a troubling time, but for the tiny business person, all times are troubling for the bottom line, so a lot of them concentrate on other things. Like being happy with what they're doing.



Dan Smith

**Tom Tanner with his new book, *Entrepreneur Guidebook*.**



**Rob and Sarah Beth Jones**

## Nary Ordinary Business Services (No B.S.)

<b>Business Owners:</b>	Sarah Beth and Rob Jones
<b>Ages:</b>	Sarah Beth 33, Rob 47
<b>Location:</b>	Floyd
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Variety of business services
<b>Founded:</b>	2011
<b>Financing:</b>	Self-financed
<b>Total employees:</b>	2 (building a network of subcontractors)

Sarah Beth Jones started a personal chef service in 2003 and made the logical segue into IT in 2006. That's when she and husband Rob found him jobless in Greensboro (his IT employer went under), but with a bunch of leftover clients. Jones Computer was born. They moved to Floyd and opened Floyd Information Technologies and Sarah Beth started working PR, while Rob got involved in photography (art and craft photos, restoration and retouching—mostly computer stuff). They picked up a lot of skills along the way.

Says Sarah: "To make a short story long, No B.S. was founded so that we could incorporate marketing, public relations and photographic services into our offering. Floyd is an amazing place in that it has an astounding amount of entrepreneurial spirit, people who are passionate and talented but don't necessarily

have all the tools they need to turn their passion into a thriving business. Our goal is to help businesses in our local community and the surrounding regions fill in the gaps and achieve success, however they define it."

They've used logic and good sense all along in structuring their ventures. Sarah says, "We've always explored alternate routes that

help us keep our overhead low so that we can keep our pricing low. Our offices have always been in our home, we meet with clients at coffeeshops and the library, we use a cell phone family plan for our individual and business lines and we focus on low-cost promotions such as public relations and social media marketing. As such, we've always been able to fund our businesses out of pocket with perhaps the occasional charge to a credit card for bigger purchases like computer equipment. We've never had the need to take out a loan, and we've never spent more than \$5,000 to start any of our businesses."

That said, "Our experiences so far have been pretty much entirely positive." And there's this: "After all, people don't move to Floyd for business opportunities and certainly not to get rich. They—we—move to Floyd looking for a different kind of life, so any services that can help people achieve the lives they seek are welcomed warmly here."

Pricing is important, says Sarah. "We've started our pricing at \$75 an hour for all services but advertise quite openly that we are always willing to work on a sliding scale. In that way, those who can afford the full price help finance services for those who need to pay less."

Sarah's precise about goals: "We intend to always stay a micro-business. To us, the point isn't becoming the biggest or richest or best known. [It] is to have the kind of life we want ... Micro-businesses offer so much more flexibility and room for creative approaches."



Richie  
and  
Roni  
Sutton

## Blue Brick Building and Renovations, Inc.

Roni was buying "distressed houses, renovating them in my spare time and selling them." Richie joined her and both earned Class A contractor's licenses "and began accepting renovation and building work from clients outside of working on our own properties."

The business went from easy to difficult. Initially, "Our cash flow was good and we were able to save two wonderful old Roanoke homes." The rehabbed houses in Roanoke and Bedford and won rehabilitation awards. Roni says, "The challenge of finding an older home, renovating it (particularly when we can do so in a historically accurate way) is exciting and fulfilling." They also do commercial renovation.

But there is a downside. "It is extremely difficult to get small business loans. Companies like ours who are cash poor have a difficult, if not impossible, time finding banks who will finance lines of credit or new projects. Our credit is good; our payment history is excellent; and we have fairly substantial real estate equity." But the economy says no. The alternative: "We have had to use personal credit cards to finance our business ventures, which is annoying and exasperating. Our hope is that once the economy picks up again, we will be able to pay off those lines entirely. However, frankly, we would much rather have a relationship with a lender with reasonable interest rates."

They have become a TAP contractor and "we would like to see our work load grow to the point that we are scheduled a few weeks in

<b>Business Owners:</b>	Roni and Richie Sutton
<b>Ages:</b>	45 and 44 respectively
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke City/Bedford County
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Residential and Commercial Renovation and Building
<b>Founded:</b>	2006
<b>Financing:</b>	At first, financing was relatively easy, says Roni. "We worked with a local small bank which would lend us up to 80 percent of the value of a property after renovation to be used toward purchase and rehabilitation." Then the new economy struck. Lending has tightened "to the point that we are no longer able to procure financing and have stopped purchasing homes for now ... We have very little capital for renovation; as a result, the project is moving extremely slowly."
<b>Total employees:</b>	3 (two owners, one employee). A sales manager works on commission.

advance and feel that if the economy continues to improve and we continue to see name recognition, this will happen." They want to grow and when money lending eases, are confident they can.



Phil Sparks and John Draper

Dan Smith

## Sippie's Foods

<b>Business Owner:</b>	John Draper
<b>Age:</b>	65
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Food products (Sippie's Sauce, a flavor enhancement sauce)
<b>Founded:</b>	2009
<b>Financing:</b>	Seed money was provided by friends. Later, equity financing has come from a circle of about 10 friends
<b>Total employees:</b>	2

When John Draper found his grandmother's sauce recipe in an old leather-bound book about 20 years ago, the seed of a business was planted. "Sippie" emerged from the recipe at family gatherings as a bottled product that he and partner Phil Sparks sell.

Draper says the most gratifying experience has been the reaction of people trying Sippie's Sauce: "Once they get it in their mouths, they are extremely surprised." He says 70 percent of the people who try it at tasting events end up buying it.

Getting the product to market proved to be a high hurdle. They couldn't get Sippie bottled

in Virginia and found a bottler in North Carolina. It has been quite a learning experience. "I think we've both received MBAs in the last 12 months," says Sparks, who is president. "You can go to all the seminars, but you don't really know until you experience it."

Sippie is featured at Fresh Market and Kroger locally and in Virginia Beach, which is quite a coup for a new food product. That was a direct result of persistence. Logistics remains a challenge and it determines future markets.

## Silpada Designs Jewelry

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Carla Martin
<b>Age:</b>	38
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Jewelry
<b>Founded:</b>	1997
<b>Financing:</b>	Self-financed
<b>Total employees:</b>	1

Carla Martin's dental career was interrupted by medical problems and her husband lost his Michigan job in 2006. They moved to Blacksburg where she was doing odd jobs and "looking for a job where I could set my own hours." She wanted to pump a little money into a busy family. She wound up

selling jewelry as a franchise representative. The hours were her own, allowing time for family, which is a priority for her.

There was very little up-front investment required, \$199, she says. She earned the equivalent back in jewelry with her first show. "I had a few pieces [of jewelry] I earned from having a show, and have earned most of my show pieces."

So far, says Carla, it's been a hassle-free venture: "The company offers a lifetime guarantee [on the jewelry] and all orders are shipped directly to each customer.



Carla Martin

Michael Miller

Most home shows don't offer those perks." There have been challenges. "I didn't grow up here, so I don't have the circle of friends and family to help me," says Carla. "I have had to solely rely on word of mouth and referrals."

## Buy the numbers >

In the 2010 Small Business Administration report "Saving for Retirement: A Look at Small Business Owners" some interesting facts about micro-business owners emerged. Here are some of the findings (some of the numbers are from 2006) mixed with statistics from other sources:

- Ninety one percent of all U.S. businesses have 10 or fewer employees.
- Micro-biz owners tend to be less educated than owners of larger businesses. A third have just high school.
- They tend to lean more toward being male (62.9 percent), military veterans and single.
- A third of micro-business owners have just a high school education.
- Ownership by women has grown significantly in the past 10 years, while ownership of the smallest businesses by men has shrunk.
- Sixty-four percent of micro-business owners in the study were based at home, compared to 21 percent of the larger businesses.
- Micro-businesses are owned by one person 72 percent of the time, compared to 42 percent in larger businesses.
- Forty two percent of micro-businesses are profitable, while 29 percent of larger businesses are.
- Owners of micro-businesses work 69 hours a week; bigger business owners work 84 hours.
- Sixty-three percent of all U.S. businesses earn less than \$50,000 in annual revenues. (Center for Women's Business Research.)
- There are 22.5 million microbusinesses in the U.S. (25 million total businesses). By 2024, micro-businesses will employ 85 percent of all workers, compared to about half now. (Microenterprise Journal.)
- Seventy-five percent of U.S. businesses have no employees. (Census Bureau)
- In the last 25 years, self-employment has grown by almost 300 percent, fueled by waning employee loyalty and growing worker dissatisfaction. (Microenterprise Journal.)

—Dan Smith



Johna Campbell and Jim Tate

Dan Smith

Becoming established has been time consuming and, Johna says, "This time has been taken at the expense of family time." Now that the company is established, "we can devote more time to our clients. We now have a recognized 'brand' and can compete with

other consultants based on our strengths."

## Cogent Management Resources

<b>Business Owners:</b>	Johna Campbell and Jim Tate
<b>Ages:</b>	No response (Actually, the response was, "Are you kidding?")
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Consulting
<b>Founded:</b>	2009
<b>Financing:</b>	Self-financed
<b>Total employees:</b>	2

This one created itself. Says Johna: "Jim and I shared a client (East West DyeCom) and our paths crossed for several years. On occasion, we bounced ideas off each other and redirected some of the work after discussing the larger picture."

The relationship evolved and "we began to talk about how we could serve our other clients better if we could ... partner on projects." Many meetings later, "the division of duties simply evolved. They worked out the details of the accounting and marketing and "set the business up to be essentially equal partners." That would be "equal" with an asterisk. "I am 51 percent owner, so that Cogent can be established as a female-owned business at some point in the future," says Johna.

## Hartwell Resource Consultants, Hartwell & Associates

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Mitzi Hartwell
<b>Age:</b>	47
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke and Southeast Georgia
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Education
<b>Founded:</b>	1991
<b>Financing:</b>	Contractual agreements
<b>Total employees:</b>	3 (up to 12 consultants when required)

Mitzi is a former star runner at Radford University who coached one year in high school, won a state title and was named Coach of the Year. She's in the Radford Hall of Fame. She doesn't fail at much.

She worked as a hospital recreation specialist at psychiatric facilities (watching depressed people suffer) and developed a program to help them deal with the basics of life. She and a silent partner formed Hartwell and Associates in Georgia in 2010. Their clients include businesses, governments, school systems, educators, corporate leaders, hospitals and others.

Mitzi actually began experimenting with the

philosophy in 1991 and watched it evolve, crafting educational programs for students with behavior problems. She began to branch out, started the company and began a sister company in Roanoke this year. In a program where negatives become positives, everything is an upside, including the business. "I was simply afforded the opportunity to empower children with what I had learned and keep my day job, too," says Mitzi. "My passion is children; specifically those less fortunate."

The move to Roanoke has presented obstacles: "I seem to be challenged to redefine the products in a new location. I have been supported by many like-minded professionals and been able to secure several working agreements with established entities."

## The Traveling Vineyard

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Jeanne Bollendorf
<b>Age:</b>	40
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Direct sales/wine consulting (franchise)
<b>Founded:</b>	2001
<b>Financing:</b>	Self-financed
<b>Total employees:</b>	1

Jean is director of the Historical Society of Western Virginia and wanted a part-time job "to help me earn extra income and learn more about something I enjoy doing." The gig gives her the opportunity to "work as much or as little as I choose [and to meet] a lot of interesting people. I've learned a lot about wine ... I have to work a lot harder and sponsor additional



Mitzi Hartwell and her 14-year-old son Zach.

Dan Smith

consultants in order to make more money."

She's the only rep in this end of the state, but the company is not high-profile. She says, "Although the company has been in business for quite some time and operates nationally, [it has] not saturated the market and created a higher level of brand recognition that other direct sell companies such as Avon, Pampered Chef and Silpada have done."



Jeanne Bollendorf



LaTron Brown

Dan Smith

sense. There were not many opportunities that would allow me to fulfill my vision, so I started Senior Lifestyle Concierge.

“Non-medical home care is a relatively young industry. The hardest part is getting people to understand the services.” An important issue at the moment is “knowing [I] want to expand, but not [being] completely

ready to take on the obligation of additional staff. Educating myself a bit more will help me to overcome this major decision.”

Perhaps as important as anything: “Simply going for it and not giving up.”

## Senior Lifestyle Concierge

<b>Business Owner:</b>	LaTron Brown
<b>Age:</b>	26
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Senior home care and resource organization
<b>Founded:</b>	2009
<b>Financing:</b>	Used severance pay from job where he was downsized
<b>Total employees:</b>	2

LaTron’s grandmother proved to be quite the influence on his professional life. His family nursed her through Alzheimer’s disease, keeping her in her home because, “we wanted to help her maintain a positive lifestyle by doing the things that she enjoyed and giving her the continual care that she deserved.”

At Virginia Tech, he was in pre-med, but became a nursing assistant and graduated with degrees in biology and psychology. He worked as an operations and market analyst for a local post-acute management company, learning about Medicare and Medicaid, how the elderly live and what their needs are. He became something of an expert on seniors.

After two years, his job was downsized. “I knew that I wanted to work with seniors, and I knew that I had a strong business

## Ghent Hill

<b>Business Owners:</b>	Tom and Cory Dorothy
<b>Ages:</b>	Tom, 40; Cory 48
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Custom finishing and furniture, antique restoration
<b>Founded:</b>	2001
<b>Financing:</b>	Mostly self financed; some bank loans
<b>Total employees:</b>	4

Tom was an apprentice in furniture and antiques restoration whose dream of owning his own business was realized in 2001. He initially rented 500 square feet and has grown to 8,000 square feet.

It’s almost a natural high: “Getting to be creative every day is truly satisfying,” he says. “Knowing that we are building and restoring heirlooms that will last for generations makes all the long hours worth it. Unfortunately art and commerce don’t always mix.”

There are a lot of challenges but “the

[depressed] economy has been our biggest ...

In a down economy, reputation can keep you afloat but you have to come up with creative ways to stay viable. We have been fortunate to be involved with some of the best and most challenging opportunities, both residential and commercial. Tapping

into specialized commercial projects has been a natural progression of the custom build and finishing aspect of Ghent Hill."

Tom is looking into a geographic expansion in order to increase the customer base.



Tom and Cory Dorathy

it is pretty intimidating and has given me a few more gray hairs. But over the past three years I have been able to watch my hard work pay off as Unbridled Change has grown to a full-time, year-round organization that has served over 500 children, teens and families in the Roanoke Valley area."

## Unbridled Change

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Michelle Holling-Brooks
<b>Age:</b>	33
<b>Location:</b>	Boones Mill
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Equine therapy (non-profit)
<b>Founded:</b>	2008
<b>Financing:</b>	Two donors and a bank loan
<b>Total employees:</b>	1 fulltime, 3 part-time therapists

Michelle wanted to "be able to offer all types of equine-assisted activities and therapies under one organization" and the result was Unbridled Change. She forms partnerships to "help at-risk populations with our horses through hands-on activities to create lasting change and true healing."

A solid business plan and some financial backing gave her a good base and the business has turned into "a life-changing experience. While I had been working under the umbrella of other organizations there is always that sense of a safety net. When you start your own business it is all up to you; you either make it or you don't. In some ways

The organization, which mostly works with people who can't afford its services, relies "heavily on donations, grants, and support from the public to meet our budget. Fundraising is my biggest challenge."

Her plan is to grow to three full-time employees and three part-time therapists.



Michelle Holling-Brooks and friend



Lee Ann Minnix

Greg Vaughn Photography

## Happy Time Balloons

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Lee Ann Minnix
<b>Age:</b>	51
<b>Location:</b>	Botetourt County
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Balloon decorating service/singing telegrams/ice cream truck catering
<b>Founded:</b>	1981
<b>Financing:</b>	Bank loan
<b>Total employees:</b>	1 (and an occasional part-timer)

Lee Ann was 21, new to Roanoke and looking for a gig. Mirthful Messengers, a singing telegram business was for sale, and she wrangled a loan from Salem Bank & Trust (try that today) and was off. She changed the name to Giggle Grammmms Singing Telegrams and in 1984 she added a balloon decorating service, Happy Time Balloons. In 2003, she added an ice cream truck catering business.

She's "now celebrating 30 years as an entertainer and balloon artist. I've fulfilled my dream of being self-employed and successful." Demand is down for singing telegrams (eliminating the need for nine employees), but "my three businesses balance out nicely. Decorating slows down in the summer months, providing me time" to run the ice cream truck.

As if she doesn't have enough going on, this serial entrepreneur now has become the Declutter Counselor, helping the elderly open up their homes and downsize. She'll even set up a yard sale.

## Events by Sherri

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Sherri Box
<b>Age:</b>	55
<b>Location:</b>	Christiansburg
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Event planning and coordination
<b>Founded:</b>	2009
<b>Financing:</b>	Personal investment
<b>Total employees:</b>	1 (occasionally has help with specific events)

Sherri coordinated the wedding of her son's best friend in 2009, loved it and a career was born. "After I started Events by Sherri, the idea of small rentals came up because of the needs of my clients; no one locally provided the smaller rentals such as glassware if you want to do your own centerpieces, charger plates, lanterns, galvanized buckets, cupcake towers, etc."

It's been a natural, she says. "I enjoy all the organizing, all those little details that have to come together and then that great feeling when I see everything happen just the way it was planned ... It's a bit challenging juggling

everything and is hard building the business while still working full-time as PR and marketing manager. But you just have to be willing to be totally flexible. You have to also think very quickly on your feet and be able to figure out things on the fly."

## Controllers Etc.

<b>Business Owner:</b>	Susan Morris Culbertson
<b>Age:</b>	53
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke
<b>Type of Business:</b>	Corporate accounting/consulting
<b>Founded:</b>	1995
<b>Financing:</b>	Credit card
<b>Total employees:</b>	1

When Susan found herself downsized, she considered it to be "freed up for new opportunities. I wanted more control over my career than I saw in the traditional office setting."

She'd been having difficulty finding "highly skilled, executive-level temporary assistance. I realized I could best offer my administrative and accounting experience as a service to other companies ... Just getting in the door was a major challenge in the beginning. Once there, establishing myself in a position of trust quickly was important to my success." Much of her business now is emergency work, making it difficult to schedule into the future."



**Sherri Box**

She works Monday-Thursday and has the option of not working at all.

She finds that "having the resources and the discipline to provide my own benefits [is a] drawback of entrepreneurship. The work "is certainly not for everyone ... but the value provided to the clients and the satisfaction received in return is worth every minute." 



**Dan Smith**

**Susan Culbertson**

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## Protocol, pomp & circumstance >

The recent marriage of Prince William to Ms. Catherine Middleton dazzled two billion people including many on this side of the pond. Since Prince William is not yet the heir apparent to the throne (that's his father, Prince Charles) the wedding was not a full state occasion. Nevertheless, it was full of pomp, pageantry and protocol. No doubts about it, the British know how to do that.

We can put on a good show in this country, too. Think of the presidential inaugurations and presidential funerals you have watched on television. Like the Royal wedding, these events are full of pageantry and the protocol of these occasions is planned out to the last detail.

The word "protocol" comes from two Greek words "protos" meaning the first and "kola", meaning glue. They refer to an official document glued to a paper, thus giving it authenticity. Sort of like our Notary Public seal. Protocol is a prescribed set of procedures detailing rules for official documents and ceremonies that involve governments and their representatives. Whenever there are heads of state present, proper protocol is crucial. Wars have been started because of a real or perceived lack of protocol.

In business today, we often use the word protocol instead of etiquette because it sounds more businesslike. Its meaning is actually the more formal of the two words, but it sounds less stuffy.

We have other ceremonies that are full of pomp and protocol. Commencements in colleges and universities uphold a tradition that goes back to the famous medieval universities of Paris and Bologna.

In medieval times people wore flowing robes, with materials and colors representing wealth, rank, professions and trades. Those dazzling robes are the ancestors of the gowns worn in academia today. Part of the thrill of a commencement is when the president, trustees, administration, faculty and degree candidates process in their colorful academic regalia to stirring music.

Each color on the hood signifies an academic discipline. Some examples:

- Blue-violet, architecture
- Crimson, communication or journalism
- Light blue, education
- White, English
- Orange, engineering
- Apricot, nursing
- Dark blue, philosophy or political science
- Scarlet, theology

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge will undoubtedly visit the U.S. in the future. When that happens, we'll pull out all the bells and whistles. And it would be a *faux pas* to address Prince William's bride as Kate or Princess Catherine. She is Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge. Why? That's the protocol. 

## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

### Executive Summary:

*The business meaning of "protocol" is an important distinction.*

## Adrift in global waters >

**Dear Getting a Grip:** Great, our company has decided to "Go global." Instead of trying to find new customers and suppliers, say, in the states south or north of us, no, management in all its wisdom has decided we'll seek them 10,000 miles away. Top management, of course, will stay home and oh-so wisely steer the mother ship, but will send middle managers—of which I am an oh-so lucky one—out into the world in dinghies to "Get global" and "Build global relationships."

Let me count the ways this won't work: 1) I speak one language, English, and some say since I'm from the South I actually don't. 2) Of the 49 states in the U.S. I could drive to, I've been to three—the one I'm in, and, you guessed it, the ones north and south of us. 3) I'm okay with an adventure or two but I'm a pretty traditional guy with responsibilities, i.e. who will open jars for the wife and play Wii with the kids while I'm 30,000 feet in the air?

**Dear Oh-so Lucky:** Over 2,000 years ago, even Socrates knew we each had to "Go global": "I am neither an Athenian, nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world." Philosophically, allegiance to the greater good for all the people of the world makes sense. Theoretically, doing business with all of them makes sense, too. Implementation is the issue and every objection you raise is a legitimate one.

Just how are companies to "Go global!?" What does "going global" really mean? What are the goals of "going global," what steps will be taken to achieve them, how will people be prepared to take them, and what are the criteria by which the success of individual and corporate efforts will be measured? How will we know when we've "Gone global"?

**Getting a Grip:** A directive to "Be global" is as paralyzing as one to "Be good." How do we know what we do next is right? Until your company asks and answers hard questions about why it wants to be a global company and what value it offers the world, it's adrift. Stay out of that dinghy, Oh-so Lucky, and keep playing Wii. 

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to [grip@handshake20.com](mailto:grip@handshake20.com).



## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

### Executive Summary:

Let's get some definitions and some clear answers before we go sailing off into the sunset.

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## Khaki: The most versatile color >

# Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

### Executive Summary:

*The Brits invented khaki as desert wear for soldiers. They'd be amazed at what's happened to it since the 19th Century.*

Khaki trousers are the basic uniform of most men for business and casual dress. Originally, khakis were created in Punjab, India as the brainchild of Sir Harry Lumsden a British commanding officer in 1846. In an effort to disguise the soil picked up by the white uniforms of his troops, he had the uniforms dyed with a mixture of coffee, curry powder, and mulberry juice. The resulting color was called khaki, meaning dust-colored or earth-colored. Two years later, the Brits used them in Afghanistan.

The new style flourished and eventually became a fashion icon.

Today some versions of khakis are far more casual than others, especially cotton khakis with the tight, blue jeans-style seam at the bottom hem. So, when are cotton khakis appropriate and when are the dressier wool or fancier material khakis best?

When we hear the word "khaki" (the British pronounce it "kaw-ki") something different comes to mind for each of us. Khakis can be pleated, flat front, cuffed and un-cuffed. Originally sewn of durable cotton, they now come in a variety of fabrics from stiff, bulky 100 percent cotton to softer cottons, cotton polyester blends, wool, and even newer fabric blends that are quite dressy and formal. Their colors come in a range of such as stone, taupe, light brown, and dark brown. "Khaki" refers to color more than fiber composition these days.

Khakis are perfect when jeans are too casual. The stiffer the fabric, the more casual the khaki trousers appear. The more fluidly the fabric drapes, the dressier the khaki

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trouser. Also, lighter colors are more casual while darker khakis are dressier. When the khakis have a hem at the cuff that is top-stitched, they look more casual and when the hem is finished with a traditional hidden row of stitching they look more formal.

Cotton khakis are often worn with a dress shirt, necktie, and jacket but are never appropriate on very formal occasions. Cotton khakis do not exude power, but rather style. Reserve the cotton khakis with a navy blazer for casual occasions where you want to feel comfortable but look slightly dressed up.

Wear the cotton and polyester blend khakis for a slightly dressier occasion, such as a workday or after hours networking, to project a professional image. Bring out the dressier wool or wool blend khakis for business casual occasions where you want to project an aura of elegance and power. The fabric and styling of the dressier khaki will create an unassailable sense of self-confidence. 



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## Can shareholders trump the Supremes >

### Executive Summary:

*Court's decision allowing massive, unaccountable corporate contributions to political campaigns can be tempered by responsive and responsible shareholders.*

By Pete Krull

Corporations can now spend unlimited funds to influence elections. That was the decision handed down by the Supreme Court back in January of 2010 and while this is not a new revelation, there are many people who have never heard of what is called the "Citizens United" decision.

Basically, what the decision says is that corporate entities (either for or not-for-profits, including unions) can make unlimited and under certain circumstances, anonymous, contributions to independent entities which can then broadcast political advertisements. In effect, it gives a corporation carte blanche to spend money, as much money as it wants on political ads.

John Bogle, the legendary investor and founder of the Vanguard Group, published an Op-Ed in the New York Times recently taking issue with the decision. Ordinarily a free-market devotee, Bogle urged shareholders to take up their proxies and fight. He said "Shareholders – not self-interested corporate managers – should, and can, decide policies on corporate political contributions."

In fact, Bogle goes so far as to propose that a "corporation shall make no political contribution without the approval of the holders of at least 75 percent of shares outstanding." A mighty big number, perhaps big enough to exclude participating companies from political contributions at all.

In a report on campaign finance in the 2010 midterm elections, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio says, "Anonymous spending denies investors the means to evaluate their companies' spending practices, and the

risks they may face on account of those practices. Investors must act to urge corporate transparency and Congress must act to give voters transparency." The report goes on to say that in the 2010 election cycle, groups that accumulated anonymous donations spent more than \$130 million on campaigns.

Two major corporations got in trouble with both their customers and shareholders in 2010 over the issue. Retailers Target and Best Buy gave \$150,000 and \$100,000 respectively to MN Forward, a political group that endorsed and paid for ads for a divisive gubernatorial candidate.

In both cases, customers boycotted the stores and a flash-mob-like video was even recorded in a Target store, which then spread like wildfire on YouTube. The companies had corporate resolutions filed seeking both greater transparency and the establishment of management policies outlining political contribution rules—which they both implemented.

Conversely, a recent article in Inside Investor Relations lauded Norfolk Southern for its recently beefed up political disclosure policy after receiving a shareholder proposal from the New York City Pension Funds. It said, "The shipping and transportation company will not only disclose its political contributions, but will also state on its Web site when the company disagrees with political efforts supported by trade associations to which it belongs."

Just this month, a coalition of socially responsible investment managers sent a letter to President Obama, supporting an executive order that would require full disclosure of campaign contributions by business entities that seek federal government contracts. No action has been taken as of this writing.

Right or wrong, corporate political contributions are now a part of the business-political landscape. As Bogle says, since the Supreme Court had its say, now it's up to shareholders to have theirs. Read your annual proxy notices, do your research and vote accordingly. And if you use mutual funds, you can request voting records from the manager. 



**Roger Roberts: "I'm not going to take any chances of getting shot."**

Gene Marrano

## Going the bail >

### Executive Summary:

*Roger Roberts' job is to make sure the accused shows up for trial. He bets a lot of money they will.*

### By Gene Marrano

73-year-old Roger Roberts has the sort of colorful resume you'd expect of a bail bondsman. Roberts, who operates his firm out the obligatory small, cluttered office on Campbell Avenue in Roanoke, is a former professional featherweight boxer and once

booked shows for Lakeside Amusement Park in Salem, which his family owned.

When the park was sold, Roberts went in to the bail bonding business, a service he says helps taxpayers and the Commonwealth by keeping the accused out of jail while they await trial. When a person is arraigned on charges by a magistrate or judge and a bail is set, the defendant has the opportunity to remain free while awaiting trial. He must pay 10 percent of the secured bond assigned to a bail bondsman like Roberts.

"We're getting paid by the defendant, not by taxpayers," says Roberts, who has been slowed by Parkinson's in recent years. (His son and a girlfriend help him with the legwork

these days.) Providing the defendant doesn't skip town, failing to appear at a trial or hearing, Roberts gets to keep the money he has collected. If they fail to appear, Roberts and company attempt to track them down.

He arrests rogue defendants—handcuffing them and reading them their rights—although Roberts does not carry a gun. The courts he works with allow a grace period for the return of a defendant who has skipped. If they don't appear within a certain period of time (150 days in most cases) Roberts must fork over full amount of the bond set by the courts.

He estimates that 1-2 percent of all the people he has bailed out have skipped,

failing to appear. Most are still in town and many can be coaxed out of hiding with the help of family members.

He often works with local law enforcement agencies to help track down defendants. Since bonds are often co-signed for by family members, there is pressure to appear as promised. Roberts calls himself “streetwise,” a trait he says most bail bondsmen share.

The financial risks can be great: Roberts, who works in the Roanoke-New River region (about 30 counties) but out of the area as well, once had to return a \$75,000 bond to a federal court in Florida when his client—who later turned himself in—initially failed to appear.

Roberts tried to track him down (“I thought I was going to get killed”) and was forced

to sell his home when the federal court demanded he pay up. He initially moved into a trailer in order to pay off that debt. Roberts no longer bonds defendants in federal cases because of that early incident, preferring to work with misdemeanor and felony defendants from other courts.

Roberts says the tradition of bail bondsmen goes back to the 1600s in England, when jails were overcrowded with people awaiting trials. “It costs \$70 a day to keep defendants in jail,” he says. Roberts estimates that there are about 1,000 bondsmen statewide, “too many,” he says.

He’s not to be confused with TV’s “Dog the Bounty Hunter,” he says. “I can’t run like I used to [and] I’m not going to take any chances of getting shot.” 

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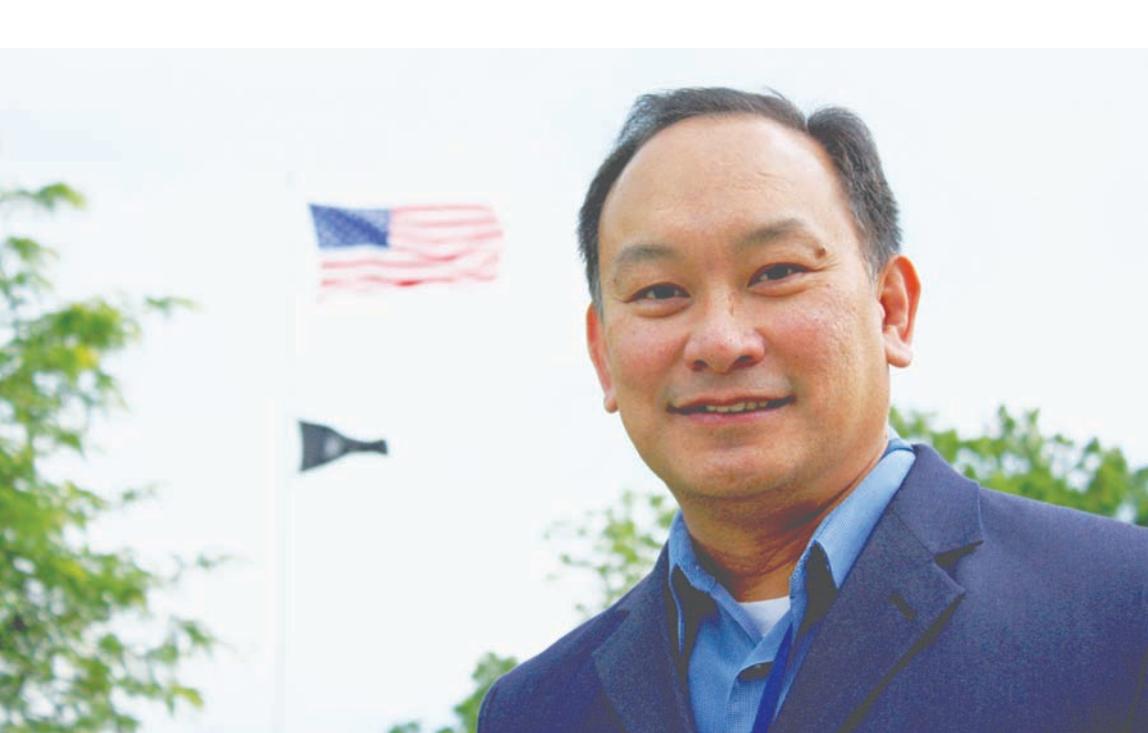
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Dr. Miguel LaPuz

David Perry

## An emphasis in patient care >

### Executive Summary:

*New head of VA hospital in Salem sees a 'driving force' to change 'for the better.'*

### By David Perry

Just a few years ago, Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities were the subject of scandals and controversy. Today the VA is ranked by many experts as one of the best health care systems in the world.

Dr. Miguel LaPuz, the new director of the Salem VA Medical Center, didn't come to the Roanoke Valley to upset any apple carts. He's here to maintain what he sees as an already high-quality system.

"When you Google 'best medical care anywhere' you get the VA," says LaPuz. He cites electronic medical records and patient performance outcomes among the reasons for the VA's high marks.

"We have an emphasis in patient care," he says. "That will remain the primary goal." LaPuz says that patient-centered care is "embedded in the VA culture."

One reason the VA is able to provide high-quality care, says LaPuz, is that "we're able to follow our patients longitudinally," or over time. Keeping services under one roof also allows the VA to stay in touch with medical specialists or other caregivers that a patient to which a veteran may be referred. Says LaPuz, "We have the full spectrum of health care."

"We provide you with a home team" of doctors, nurses and specialists, LaPuz says. "There's a consistency of providers."

Access to services is also important to LaPuz. The VA had already opened several community-based outpatient clinics or "CBOCs" in Tazewell, Wytheville, Lynchburg and Danville, before LaPuz' arrival and one will open this fall in Staunton. All are designed to serve veterans in their communities rather than force them to come to Salem for care.

Another VA initiative that LaPuz will implement is the notion of a "patient-aligned care team." LaPuz says its purpose "is to meet all the requirements of the veteran within the context of primary care."

In most health care scenarios, "there's already a problem by the time you're coming to us," he says. In the patient-aligned care team approach, "we're hoping that we can

maintain your health." The emphasis is on lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or losing weight. LaPuz hopes the approach will lessen the number of hospital admissions and decrease visits to the ER.

LaPuz describes his management style as "consensus" and emphasizes that he'll do what's best for the medical center, even if it's not always what his leadership team wants. "It's not the majority rules, it's what will be good for the organization," he says.

He acknowledges that improving veterans' health care can be difficult within the federal government, especially at a time when budget deficits are receiving a hard look in Congress.

"This is a federal agency, so there is bureaucracy involved, but the department believes in change," says LaPuz. "There is a driving force in the agency to change it for the better."

"We don't have a say in what we're going to be given [by Congress]," he says. "Our task is to make it work for our veterans."

LaPuz hopes that the good work of the Salem VA center will receive as much attention as the negatives have in the past, and adds that the organization is going to use its Web site better and employ tools like Facebook to help spread the good news. Still, he concedes that government is always going to be

## In Brief

**Names:** Dr. Miguel LaPuz  
**Age:** 53  
**Company:** Salem VA Medical Center  
**Type of Business:** Health care  
**Location:** Salem  
**Titles:** Director  
**Background:** Miguel LaPuz is a native of the Phillipines, turned Buckeye. He spent 13 years in Ohio working for the Veteran's Administration after medical school at the University of the Philippines and stints in New York City and Lexington, Ky. Most recently, he was interim director and chief of staff at the VA facility in Salisbury, N.C., before making the move to Salem in April. The father of one and grandfather to a three-year old picked a good spot. The Good Doctor enjoys both kayaking and skiing, which southwest Virginia offers within easy reach.

viewed skeptically by many in the public and in the media.

Sometimes "you hear only the problems. That's just the nature of the business." 

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Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

## netFRONT

### How many gadgets do you need? >

**Executive Summary:**

*That depends on how connected to your job—or to the world—you want to be all the time.*

**By Janeson Keeley**

Thirty years ago, the majority of computers were owned by businesses, and phones were wired to the wall. Now, if you are a business professional who is “on the clock” when you are out of the office, chances are you are going to need more functionality than a phone and a desktop computer can provide.

Yes, you can buy a cell phone that only sends and receives calls, but smartphones—iPhones, Androids, and Blackberries—also allow you to surf the Internet, send and receive email and run applications.

However, many people find that smartphones aren’t practical for writing lengthy e-mails or working on documents. The next step up can be either a pad computer, such as an iPad or Xoom, or a netbook. While they have similar sized screens (7 to 10 inches), Wifi capabilities, and optional network phone service connectivity, neither has a built-in CD/DVD drive, so, as with smartphones, applications must be downloaded.

The next step up is the notebook (or laptop) computer, which has most of the functionality of a desktop computer but is more portable, with screen sizes varying from 12 to 17 inches.

How do you decide which devices you need?

My beloved spouse, Buffy Lyon, a Web applications programmer and self-proclaimed geek, says, “I’ve been known to use three [devices] at once: running an IDE or CAD



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program on the notebook, using the iPad to look stuff up, and using the iPhone as a calculator. Personally, I find that the iPad does two-thirds of what the phone does and two-thirds of what the notebook does, making it my first choice most of the time."

Kimberly Christian, sales manager with Venco Business Solutions, reports, "I'm really not able to completely work unless I have access to my laptop and all of my data, though during the day as I'm out and about for meetings it is much easier to take my iPad along instead of my large laptop."

Raquel Rothe, CRT-NPS, sleep technologist and owner/operations manager for Sleep EZ Diagnostic Center Inc., owns a laptop, a netbook, an iPad, and a Droid X smartphone. "I can honestly say that I rarely use anything except my iPad. I can remote into my facility

to any computer/camera so I have to have access via internet, and the iPad makes it so much faster and easier to do so. I can honestly say between the iPad and Android I can run my business 24/7 if the need be."

Suzanne Ashley, a SendOutCards representative, has a laptop and a smartphone and is planning to get a pad soon. "Most of what I do for work is Internet-based," she says. "I think I will be able to use it [the pad] for most of my needs while being on the go. I truly believe we are becoming more mobile ... and I want to be able to help others wherever we are. Our phones and tablets allow us to do so."

(BTW, I wrote this column on my laptop at the car repair shop—with my iPad next to me to check e-mail and my phone to make calls. Buffy's not the only technonerd in our house.) 



## Great work deserves recognition.

Spectrum Design recognizes and congratulates Dr. Lorraine Lange of Roanoke County Public Schools on being named Virginia's Superintendent of the Year.

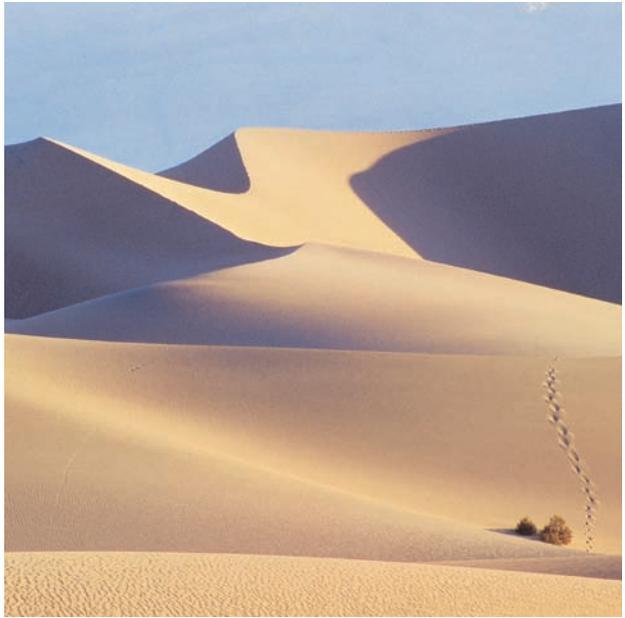
Equally, our firm thanks Dr. Lange, the Roanoke County School Board and staff for recognizing the building that Cave Spring Middle School will become, and we look forward to producing this great work together.

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## The next big thing in design? >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Biomimicry is becoming a virtual movement in architecture and in this region Clark Nexsen is taking the lead.*

**By Gene Marrano**

*Biomimicry: an emerging discipline that consciously studies nature's best ideas and imitates these designs and processes to solve human problems. The term was coined by Janine Benyus in 1997 with the release of her book, Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature.*

Biomimicry as it relates to architecture is being looked at as the next step beyond LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design). One of the few practitioners at this point is Lisa L. Schmidtke, an architect and Certified Biomimicry Professional for Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering, a Norfolk-based firm with an office in Roanoke.

A veteran architect/designer, Schmidtke is one of fewer than two-dozen people in the world who have earned a master's-

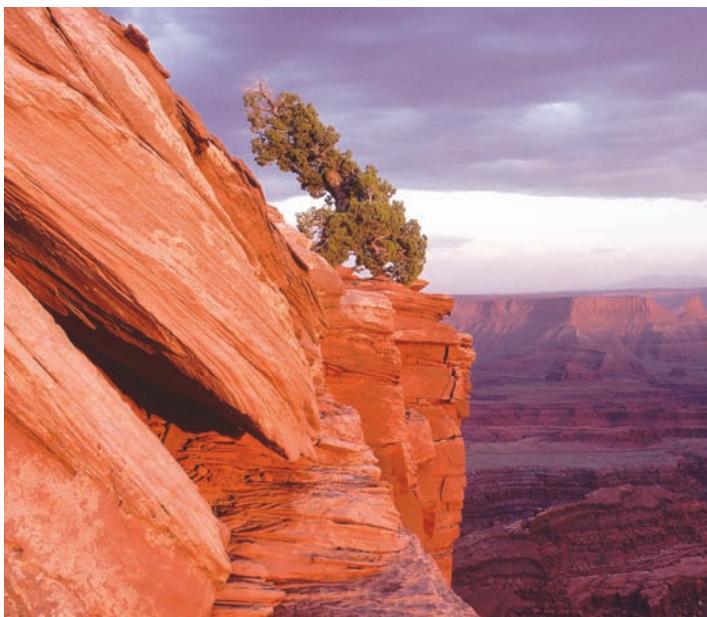
level certificate from the Biomimicry Institute, she says. She is spreading the work to the 500 or so professionals employed by Clark Nexsen.

A concept still in its infancy, biomimicry takes going green, to a new level. Schmidtke was able to learn from Janine Benyus, who literally wrote the book. Schmidtke first learned about biomimicry at a 2003 industry retreat where Benyus was a featured speaker.

Examples: a shopping center in Zimbabwe with a passive cooling system inspired by thermal control found in termite mounds; a London office building with a ventilation system modeled after sea sponges; an English train station with a facade that imitates the scales on a pangolin (a type of anteater).

There are self-shading designs that mimic a cactus and water harvesting techniques copied from the Namibian desert beetle. Polar bear hairs and sunflowers have also provided energy-efficient design inspiration. Schmidtke says she was trained in biology just enough "to ask the right questions," when studying for her masters in biomimicry.

Schmidtke's role with biomimicry at Clark Nexsen involves "a lot of training so far. Part two is creating the in-house tools for



Lisa L. Schmidtke

us to start applying it to projects. We're starting to get to the point where we can [view] projects through a different lens." Some other parts of the world have made more progress than the U.S. in biomimicry design but the entire field is still in its infancy. She calls it "a tool to come up with sustainable [nature-based] solutions."

Schmidtke says the methodology can work on existing buildings although it is easier with new construction. Commercial and residential projects are candidates for biomimicry: "anything that gets designed," she says. Biomimicry can be applied to industrial design and manufacturing.

In architecture it can work hand-in-glove with LEED and other energy efficient standards, and doesn't necessarily mean spending more money on design. "It's a logical process," she insists. "On the bigger picture, as an industry I think we're going to be stretched past LEED [towards] net-zero carbon and net-zero water."

"We're not there yet," says Schmidtke, "My job is to start incorporating it into our business. We're just starting to get on to some biomimicry projects here. Its a bigger picture than just a building [design]." 

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The team at Teamlink: (from left) Doug Veit , Bill and Sam Linkenhofer, and Greg Hounshell.

## A positive outlook in a tough place >

### Executive Summary:

*The real estate market may be dismal, but this New River Valley team doesn't seem to recognize that reality.*

### By Rachael Garrity

Finding good news in the U.S. real estate market these days might seem to require a Pollyanna perspective, but a New River Valley team of professionals has done just that—with no blonde curls and Mary Jane shoes anywhere in evidence.

Putting together diverse, but complementary, professional backgrounds and a strong connection to Southwest Virginia, TeamLink members Bill and Sam Linkenhofer, Doug Veit and Greg Hounshell have crafted an approach that is paying dividends despite

what remains of a troubled market.

"I've just finished the best first quarter—January, February and March—in my 15 years in this business," Sam reports. Concentrating on land sales in the Blacksburg area, including surrounding counties, he grins when he recalls that for one recent transaction he put the sign up at 4 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon, and had sold the property by 5 p.m. that day. He believes he's seeing an upturn in the number of young people now ready to take advantage of a buyer's market.

Greg reports the same success—best ever—for his first quarter, but quickly adds that he is pretty sure the market overall has not yet "bottomed out." Concentrating on the market in and around Wythe County, where he lives, he sees a real strength in the referrals that become possible from a strong link to the Blacksburg area. "That's for us as Realtors," he says, "but it also is great for my customers, who get much wider exposure for potential sales."

Clearly there is more than a geographic connection at work. The team is just that—a “team.” The members’ diverse professional backgrounds are a huge plus, made even more robust by shared history that really had little to do with real estate and a lot to do with mutual respect.

Sam entered Virginia Tech with a USDA appointment in 1986. Shortly thereafter, Greg was working with him as a summer hire. Having graduated with a degree in civil engineering, Greg moved to Richmond with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Then, in 2006, he and his wife decided that they wanted to rear their children among family and friends in Wythe County. Meanwhile, Sam had begun working in real estate development, and focusing on both residential and commercial markets.

Bill, Sam’s son, also went to VT, graduated with a degree in accounting, worked for a CPA firm and then in manufacturing, before deciding to join his father seven years ago this summer. That was the same year that Greg, another VT graduate with a degree in property management and professional experience in various states, decided to move back to Blacksburg. He says it’s “the place to be.”

Part of Gregg’s experience and training is in technology, so he is in charge of building Web sites, creating virtual tours, and in other ways capturing the power

of electronic communication. A look at those Web sites ([www.teamlinkhome.com](http://www.teamlinkhome.com), [www.wythecountyrealestate.com](http://www.wythecountyrealestate.com) and [www.riverhillsva.com](http://www.riverhillsva.com)) is full testimony to the fact that his is a valuable talent.

“I don’t know anything about how to make that happen,” Sam admits, “but I sure know I need it.”

“Absolutely,” Bill agrees. “Still, it’s up to all of us to work on the face-to-face, when it comes to developing new customers.” He is aware that his experience as a small business owner comes into play when he deals with the numbers side of the business.

Bill and Greg concur, too, on the fact that what was once a burgeoning market in this area—“kiddy condos” that parents purchased for Tech students—has taken a huge hit since banks have tightened funding on complexes that are not majority owner-occupied.

As a team, these are men analyzing what works, applying the right skills in the right places and relying on strong community ties to build a business that the economy jerked right out from under them two years ago. There may be no blonde curls here, but there’s certainly no lack of positive outlook, shared excitement and downright get-it-done mentality. 

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Long view of kiln

all photos: David Perry

## Work Spaces

### It's a dirty business >

#### Executive Summary:

*Old Virginia Brick in Salem uses one of the basics of the Earth as its raw material in creating a kind of art.*

#### By David Perry

"Dirt," Phillip Meekins says. "When I say dirt, that's what I mean—dirt."

Meekins is the plant manager at Old Virginia Brick's Salem plant on West Main Street, where they make labor-intensive, molded bricks of nearly any size, shape and color. The bricks are formed in molds, not extruded by machine, so that each brick is unique, and none is perfectly square.

"We make a brick out of dirt," says Meekins. "We color a brick with dirt. We haul dirt

from mines in the mountains around here. We buy it in bags and dump it in the middle of this place and make bricks out of it. So dirt is a huge issue."

And it is. Sprinklers wet down massive, 20-foot tall mounds of dirt to keep the dust from blowing all over Salem. Dump trucks haul in dirt and dump it onto conveyor belts. The floors of the factory are dirty. The walkways are muddy. Meekins' office is dirty, and Meekins is even a little dusty.

"Dust flies around," says Meekins, a 25-year veteran of the brick business. "So we have spent a half a million dollars on dust equipment to keep the floors clean but also keep it out of the air. Being able to keep the guys ventilated away from dust is really key."

Heat is an issue too: "Our kiln burns at 2,000 degrees," Meekins says. "In the wintertime, you can hug that kiln and not get any heat off of it. In the summertime, you can be across the street and feel the heat off of it."

To prove his point, he pulls out some insulation that plugs up an access hole in the giant kiln, revealing a fiercely hot orange glow within the oven. To keep his employees safe, Meekins has his own ice machine on the property.



Piles of wet dirt



Kiln

"I keep all kinds of water coolers," he says. "You have to keep them hydrated."

Old Virginia Brick has operated on the same site in Salem since its founding in 1890, except for the World War II years. Meekins says that business is slow these days, but the plant still employs 60 and turns out 1-2 million bricks a month. He says at the height of the recent building boom, the plant produced 30 million bricks in one year.

Like many manufacturers, Old Virginia Brick has protocols in place to ensure that workers don't injure themselves on the company's equipment.

"OSHA really stepped up their stuff 20 years ago in terms of guarding equipment," says Meekins, referring to the metal gates that separate arms and legs from the machinery.

"You can build all the guards you want, but if a guy takes a guard off a machine and continues to run it ... so you have to educate your people," he says. "We show them videos."

Meekins adds, "There's lots of times we have to get inside our equipment to service it. That's why we have a very strict lockout policy that's enforced."

"We try our best to take a step beyond what OSHA requirements are." 



Worker wearing dust mask



Finished bricks



Serv-Pro's Alphonso Gutierrez (from left), Dena Grove and Britten Fisher show what a crime scene cleanup looks like.

Dan Smith

## Cleaning up the mess of crime >

### Executive Summary:

*Crimes often leave potentially lethal messes that require a professional's hand in cleanup.*

### By Becky Hepler

Competent as she is, Martha Stewart is not the go-to gal for getting brains off the wall or other bio-hazardous cleaning.

This niche market, sometimes called "trauma cleaning" other times called "crime scene cleanup," is the purview of people clad in Tyvek suits. They are outfitted with respirators and extremely heavy-duty gloves, and are armed with a strong stomach and compassionate soul. The fact is, under certain circumstances, bodily remains are considered hazardous because of blood-borne pathogens and always, they can lead to odor and mold issues that last for years. Proper cleanup is essential.

As the names attest, these professionals are called in after tragic circumstances, such as a homicide, suicide or an unattended death. The police also call them in to clean up the toxic wastes of meth labs that are discovered.

Given this region's relatively low crime rate, you would think it would not be much of a business opportunity. "I'd starve if all I did was crime scene cleanup," says Quinn Mongan, owner of the Serv-Pro franchise for the Roanoke and New River Valleys.

And yet, go to the phone book and there are many choices. Most are national firms with regional offices with supplies and personnel to handle the area. The other model is a central dispatch office with traveling crews who go from one biohazard scene to the next.

Serv-Pro is one of the few totally local firms in this region that handle this kind of cleanup. Jerry Turner is president of Advance Bio-Treatment, which started in the South but now has a presence in 20 states. He says his crews can get to the scene within two to three hours after

being contacted. "It's important to be able to get on scene and start cleaning quickly," he says.

Making this business unlike simple maid service is the amount of regulation surrounding the processes. OSHA demands training for workers so they can safely handle the biohazards. The EPA and state departments of health stipulate that the disposal of the wastes must be done in a way that won't spread disease.

There's a great deal of protective equipment in addition to the tools needed. These expensive services, however, are covered in a homeowner's insurance policy,



Quinn Mongan of Serv-Pro: "I'd starve if all I did was crime scene cleanup."

Dan Smith

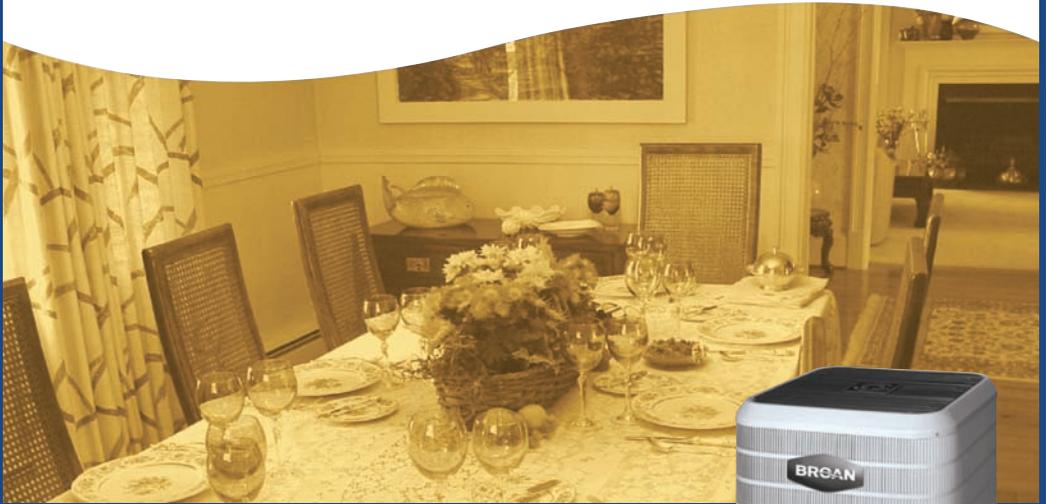


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and thus is born the competition and sometimes cutthroat practices.

"The regulations are not the problem," says Turner. "They are there for a reason and that's to protect the people. The problem is that not everyone follows the regulations. We sometimes find ourselves called in to clean up after these people."

Marco Micola, who works for Trauma Technicians, another national firm, says his company once had a complaint filed with the Better Business Bureau against it generated by a competitor trying to get an advantage.

So if crime is not the driving force for these businesses, at least in this area, what is? "Unattended deaths are more

common than you would think," says Micola. "With the downturn in the economy, it seems suicides are up."

Mongan finds the more common issue in this area to be hoarders, people so unable to throw away anything, that they become trapped in their homes, unable to move. Sometimes it's the hoarder who calls, other times, it is the people who inherit the house after the hoarder dies.

Mongan says the situation can become a biohazard. "We were cleaning out a house one time and about halfway down, we found three dog carcasses buried in the stuff," he says. "We had to immediately get out the suits and the respirators." 

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**Kathy Guy (sitting) and Miriam Frazier of GAMUT**

Dan Smith

## Gypsies, misfits and creatives >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Miriam Frazier and Kathy Guy have been running GAMUT, a theater company, for many years. Sometimes there's an audience. Always there's enthusiasm.*

**By Erin Pope**

You'll never catch Miriam Frazier, 45, or Kathy Guy, 60, reciting a soliloquy. The co-directors of the Gypsies and Misfits Unknown Theater (GAMUT) company far

prefer the modern wordplay of Shepard and Mamet to The Bard and his iambs. The longtime friends and veterans of the stage, are intent on providing local thespians and audiences with an alternative to more traditional productions.

Both have theater degrees—from Drew University and Hollins University, respectively—and each prefers to direct others, rather than tread the boards. “People should pay me not to act,” drily says Guy.

Frazier has performed in quite a few productions, and her talent receives a hearty endorsement from Guy, but says the director's hat is the one that fits

most comfortably. “I always wanted to teach theater,” Frazier says. “And I wanted to be a rock and roll lighting designer,” counters Guy.

Guy and Frazier know most local thespians aren't brimming with glamorous silver screen aspirations. They act primarily because they're propelled by a love for the theater and a yen to perform. The company makes money through grants, donations, and underwriting, and the ladies give their actors gas stipends.

Miriam acknowledges that GAMUT isn't “trying to be a full-time theater. We only put on three shows a year, and we all have day jobs, and full lives.” The women emphasize how they've been lucky to

accrue a circle of actors and crewmembers who are enthusiastic—and realistic—about acting. As a labor of love.

“Theater is just another business,” says Guy. “There’s a certain way things should be run. We find people who won’t waste a single second of rehearsal time.”

GAMUT lures players who wish to flex their range on a nurturing yet wholly professional stage. “Actors might not have any money, but the best ones all have heart,” says Frazier. “We’re giving them the chance to do Mamet, and they’re not getting that anywhere else in town.”

Miriam says she and Kathy are neurotic when it comes to their productions, but they strive to give their actors the necessary freedom required in connecting to their roles. “Being part of a play involves seeing yourself as a part of a unit,” says Kathy. “You have to trust everyone on stage, and have a mutual understanding of the play and where it’s going.”

Miriam clearly remembers a potentially nightmarish situation involving an actor who inadvertently skipped seven pages in the script during opening night, and Kathy tells a story of a power outage during another GAMUT performance at the Jefferson Center. The cast of each

show managed to seamlessly continue without faltering. “A good ensemble can fool anyone,” Miriam says.

Part of what Miriam and Kathy treasure about directing GAMUT is interpreting their own scripts. Miriam mentions an upcoming production of Harold Pinter’s one-act “The Lover,” opening on July 7, and says it’s a play she’s wanted to direct “for ages.” (Call 540-521-6049 for info.)

She mentions how HartMitchell\ Dance has offered its assistance with choreography, and hopes the play’s sultry subject matter might draw a younger audience. Both women wonder if theatergoing is perceived by most people as a geriatric, pedestrian pastime.

Kathy, who is considerably more hip than most folks half her age, refers to GAMUT’s low ticket prices, in-house cash bar, and shows that are likely to generate conversation as factors that can attract un-stodgy theater patrons.

“There’s no pretention. We’re meaningfully minimalistic,” says Miriam. Adds Kathy, “There’s not a lot of flash or trash in a GAMUT show, but we’d never stage anything that we don’t absolutely love. It has to be from the heart. There has to be that energy to drive it forward.” 

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Student gives truck a workout on the Salem Civic Center course

## Truck U: VWCC's new course >

### Executive Summary:

*It's a "short term, fast-track way for people who have had trouble finding a career job" to get on the road in a hurry, behind the wheel of a semi.*

### By Gene Marrano

Virginia Western Community College's Workforce Development Services works closely with local businesses to design custom training programs, addressing the skills that employers need. They also keep their ears to the ground, crafting courses that can help those looking for a better job. Such is the case with a new, three-week truck driver training program that was introduced earlier this year.

Contracting with a California-based outfit, Serrato Corporation, VWCC offers the \$3,700 program, which includes classroom

sessions and hands-on training on a course that winds around the Salem Civic Center. The goal: get students ready to take their Commercial Driver's License test. The CDL-A license they can earn allows them to drive 18-wheelers.

This is the latest of several recent attempts Virginia Western has undertaken in offering an over-the-road (OTR), non-credit course. Semones says the course is competitive with the fees charged by private companies for the same training.

Workforce Development specialist Dan Semones says the goal of his department in general is to offer a "short term, fast-track way for people who have had trouble finding a career job, to move into something more than just flipping hamburgers or a menial production line job. It's a career path."

Eight students can move through the trucking course at any one time. Applicants must have a CDL learner's permit, a Department of Transportation physical and a recent drug test in order to qualify. "They can't be in the program unless they do that," says Semones.



**Students inspect truck before driving.**

Serrato also provides the truck, if necessary, when graduates take their road test.

About 35 of the first 40 students (three were women) passed their DMV written and road tests the first time around; Serrato works with those who failed before a retest. About 15 have landed trucking jobs, which often start in the \$40,000-50,000 salary range.

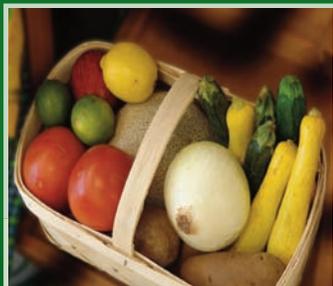
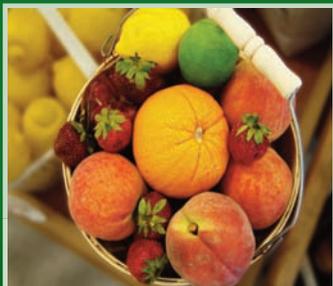
"The college became more of a lead agency for work force in the community," says Semones. His department has been

in contact with more than 200 local companies since the beginning of the year, discussing custom training (credit and non-credit) that it could offer. Workforce Development courses have involved everything from management training to computer skills and welding techniques for Freight Car America employees.

An advisory committee comprised of local business people helps program coordinator Leah K. Coffman keep in tune with workforce needs in the area. 

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**Roddy Moore of the Blue Ridge Institute: "It's up to us to preserve, record and document traditions."**

Dan Smith

## Preserving a piece of Appalachia >

### **Executive Summary:**

*The Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College documents our history and Roddy Moore takes that seriously.*

### **By Mallory Metheny**

In this region we work hard to keep memories and traditions alive. Roddy Moore, the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum director of 37 years, is chief among those preserving our history, our memories, our heritage. He helps us understand the folklore of the past and present.

Moore was born in Roanoke, and grew up in 1950s in Welch, W. Va., in the coal fields. The old Eagle Scout says, "I got interested

in [historic] objects when I was 14. The scout master was into muzzle-loading guns and history. That led me into it ... and different aspects of history, Native American Culture and things like that ... My main area [of folklore interest] is in material culture." That would "interpreting history through objects man has made."

This interest in objects led him to another love: car culture. Moore says, "My father had a restored model T and I started taking it apart. He took it back from me and sold it. My first car was a 1940 Mercury convertible and we built that, so I built hot rods ... in high school." His passion for hot rods went beyond high school they are still apart of his life.

College was important in Welch, and an unusually large proportion of his rural high schoolmates attended. Many of his friends were the first in their families to be born in America. Moore earned his bachelor's degree in history at Virginia Tech in 1966

and another history-related degree later in New York.

He went to work at Ferrum College's BRI as a consultant in 1974, shortly after it opened. The institute's goal is to research, document and preserve the folk culture of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Says Moore, "By doing that you meet all types of people throughout the region. The real treasure is meeting and getting to work with people."

Chief among BRI's programs are the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, started by Moore shortly after taking the job; the museum exhibitions, the Blue Ridge Farm Museum; the heritage archive; BRI's century of mountain music recordings, which have been nominated for several Grammy Awards; and its Internet resources.

The BRI's current exhibit is the history of the dulcimer, exploring the instrument's diverse role in the folk music in Virginia, something BRI has specialized in over the years. "The Virginia Dulcimer: 200 Years of Bowing, Strumming, & Picking," showcases over 50 dulcimers from the late 18th Century to today.

In the past it has had exhibits on central themes of the region and on some of the more interesting diversions like moonshining and stock car racing.

Most of the BRI's exhibits are loaned, Moore

says, "I hate to go into a museum exhibit and see something I've seen," says Moore, "so most of our exhibits are owned privately ... We've never owned more than five percent of the material [presented at the BRI. It comes from] other museums and private collections. The idea is to present material that hasn't been seen before."

BRI is in an expansion mode this summer. It has won two federal grants and is pushing the front of the building out, so it can have a permanent exhibit gallery of about 1,200 square feet and another rotating gallery the same size. The exhibits will change once a year. BRI will expand its activity area for school groups and plans to increase its archive and a storage work area.

The institute is used for research by people from all over the world. The online exhibits and the archives get a lot of use.

The Blue Ridge Folk Life Festival is held every year on the fourth Saturday in October. "It deals with rural life and culture" that has been handed down within a family and within a community, says Moore. He is fascinated by "how these things have stayed within the community ... That's what we present, traditions that are still living and ongoing, everything from food, to recreation."

The purist in Moore says, "It's up to us to preserve, record and document traditions. But it's not up to us to manipulate them." 



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# At VTC, here's how it works >

## My View

By **Dan Smith**  
Editor

BLOG: [ [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com) ]

**Excutive Summary:** *Ed Murphy's notion of a medical dream team to research the diseases that ruin our lives is showing signs of life as he leaves his medical school.*

This is what Warren Bickel had in mind when he joined the staff at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. That mouthful of a name tells you a lot about the motivation: bringing together scientific and medical disciplines to examine health issues in a new-ish way.

Warren's area of expertise is addiction and he has been studying it for a good while. The interest came about because of his father's smoking, which killed him, and watching friends in college come close to ruining their lives with drugs.

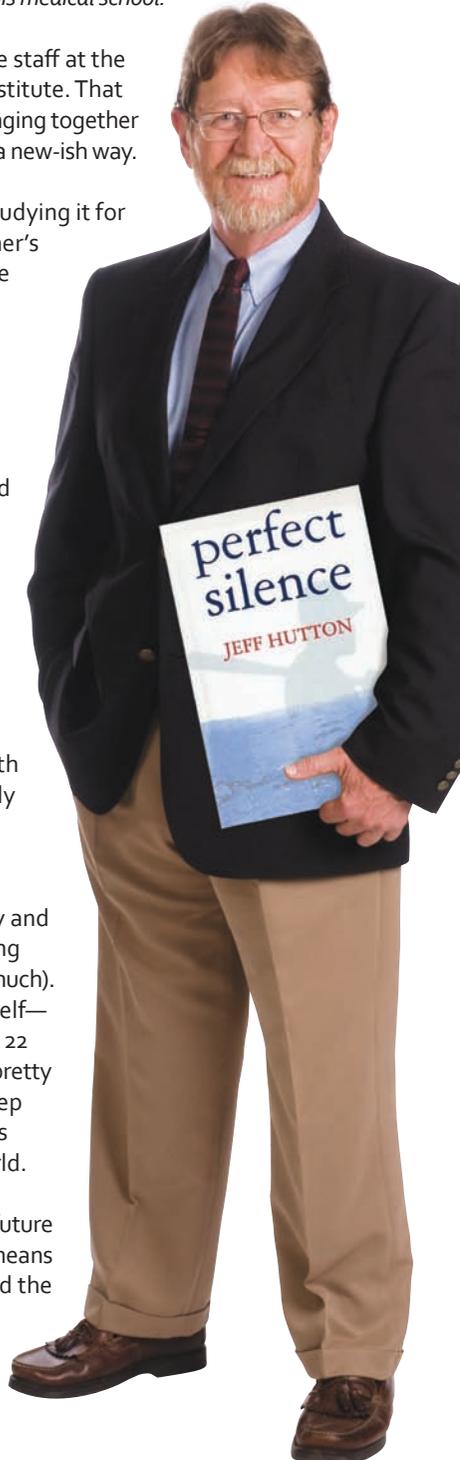
Before now, though, Warren, a PhD psychologist, had worked in a traditional setting with not much stimulation from other areas of science and, frankly, not a lot of thought about it until faced with the emergence of VTC. He's seeing how this concept of surrounding scientists and medical professionals with people in varying technological disciplines can create a larger whole and lead to discoveries not imagined before this brand of teamwork was brought forth by Ed Murphy, who is exiting Carilion as CEO with this remarkable school in place.

Warren now has access to some of the top people in the country in computing, technology, physical science and a broad range of skills one might not normally associate with the study of druggies and drunks. Their influence is already being felt in the scope of Warren's research and in the broadening landscape of the possible.

I heard Warren give a presentation to local media recently and was immediately hooked, since I'm one of those recovering drunks he's so interested in (17 years sober, thank you very much). I've spent decades watching the addicted—including myself—fail time after time in their efforts to get clean. It took me 22 years to get one year of sobriety. Warren believes he has a pretty good idea why it's so difficult and it's not the simple 12-step program explanation: "Because you're a drunk and drunks drink." There's a little more to it than that in Warren's world.

His theory is that normal people project their lives into the future a bit more than 4 ½ years. Addicts project nine days. That means one acts responsibly because there's a lot of life ahead and the other says, "Screw it, I'm dying anyway" and acts in ways that are anything but rational. Warren calls this discovery a "clear factor driving the behavior" of the addicted.

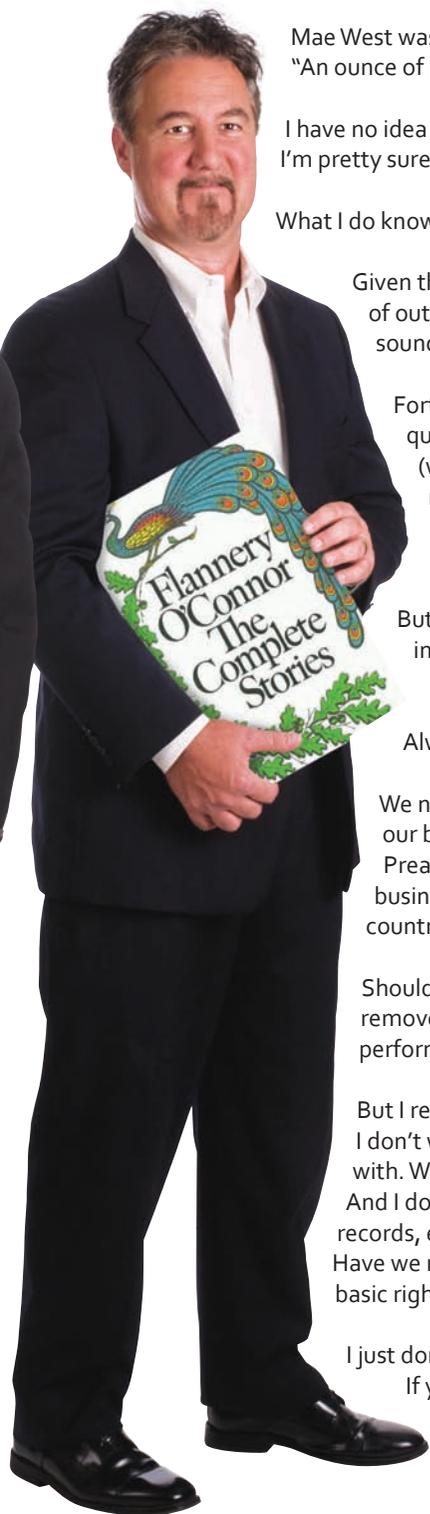
continued on Page 50



It's the productivity,  
stupid >

By Tom Field  
Publisher

## On Tap from the Pub



Mae West was reported to have said,  
"An ounce of performance is worth pounds of promises."

I have no idea what's she's talking about.  
I'm pretty sure it had to do with the stock market.

What I do know is that results are what matter.

Given the choice, I want to be associated with an individual of outstanding moral character. Strong in principles, ethically sound, full of integrity and honesty. And hard working.

Fortunately, many of my associates possess most of these qualities. Also fortunate, is that I don't live in Connecticut (what's with New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport being recently listed as top crime-ridden, most dangerous places in the U.S.?). Good people around you—and a good place to live: there's a lot to be said about that.

But given the choice between that honest, hard-working individual and a less than reputable character who outperforms everyone around him, I have to defer to the latter individual. That deference is always against my nature. Always. And yet... I defer.

We need performers. Swinging bats at home plate. Scribbling our books. Constructing our buildings. Operating on our bodies. Preaching from our pulpits. Teaching our children. Running our businesses. Governing our communities. Representing our country's best interest.

Should these fallible people cheat in their profession or vocation, remove them. They have failed in their calling. They must go and perform in another arena and pray for redemption.

But I really don't need a report on their every indiscretion. I don't want to know who they "sexted." Who they had an affair with. What their sexual orientation is. Who their love child is. And I don't believe we have a right to demand their medical records, even if they're running for the highest office in the land. Have we really succumbed to a place so low we can't respect that basic right to privacy?

I just don't want to know these things.

If you have to know all the dirt—we have places for you.  
Watch reruns of "Housewives of New Jersey."  
We'll never have heroes or leaders to admire if we

continued on Page 50

## Smith / My View

from Page 48

It may well be and my bet is the team at VTC will find out. Already, the good psychologist has brought in a professional with a big microscope and people who compute a lot of numbers to help collect and analyze data. It's the kind of collection that would have been daunting without the technology ... maybe even impossible, given the amount of information that needs to be looked at. Warren believes that the addict's "brain is fundamentally different because of the way he uses the brain. He's using one set of [brain] muscles and not the other." He throws out a lot of technical detail that I don't understand dealing with exactly what's happening inside the addict's head and how the physical structure is different because use is different. "Everything has a cause," he says, "and it's good if we can understand the cause."

From what I've gathered over the years, there is no clear data on addicted people being successful getting clean, but a number used with alcoholics frequently is a 2 to 5 percent success rate. From my experience, I'd say that's about right. Almost nobody gets sober permanently, which opens this whole field up for some research that can make a difference. Addiction wrecks families, businesses, communities and costs our nation billions of dollars a year. But we don't have a clue how to deal with it. Charlatans run insta-fix treatment centers, quick-buck artists write books promising a cure for \$19.95 (just buy the book and you're healed), shrinks tell you to leave it to them. AA, bless its heart, works for the few while the many suffer. Similar programs have less success.

Truth be told, though: not a damn bit of it works for the great majority of people addicted to booze, drugs, food, gambling, sex and a variety of other issues.

So if Warren Bickel and his team of motivated geniuses at VTC can find something that will, indeed, work—say the kind of exercise that prevents the brain from becoming an addict's brain—then we've gone a long way toward helping an enormous population (about 10 percent of us).

And Ed Murphy's dream of a medical school that incorporates the skills that matter in healing people will have become a thunderously successful reality. 



**Dr. Warren Bickel: "Everything has a cause."**

Dan Smith

## Field / On Tap

from Page 49

keep scratching at closet doors and peeking through keyholes. Kenneth Starr did us no favors. Come on, American busy-bodies... we now know the shape of a presidential body part. That's sickening and unnecessary...I don't care who you are.

My mother (and Thumper on the Disney movie "Bambi") said it best: "If you can't say nothin' good about someone—don't say nothin' at all."

We certainly have a right to criticize. Our nation was founded on exercising that very right. But we'd be better off if we restricted that right to the specific task—or the relevant subject at hand.

Right now, I'm about to send a text that some of you might find inappropriate. No, I'm not telling you what it's about. Mae West would probably just yawn, though. So there. 

# Letters

## A sporting chance

The cover story [Recreational Sports; June 2011] was excellent. It was probably very educational for many of the citizens in our valley. Thanks also for the plug you gave for Commonwealth Games.

**Fuzzy Minnix**  
Roanoke County

## Investing in the game

I believe [the Recreational Sports cover story] will do wonders to open some eyes regarding the need for continued investment to support these initiatives and facilities by the local decision makers.

Sports are hugely important to the citizens of the Roanoke Valley whether it is obvious to everyone or not. It's a part of what makes the valley so special in many ways and one of the reasons why it's so attractive to the many visitors who come here to participate.

**Pete Peters**  
Botetourt County

## Citizens define us

I like how the [Recreation Sports cover story] touched on different types and aspects of amateur sports in the Roanoke Valley. I have noticed in the 25+ years I have lived here that no matter how hard the civic leaders try to make an image for the Roanoke Valley or filibuster some project like the amphitheater, the citizens of the Valley seem to define what we are.

For years people have said the Roanoke Valley would not support sports teams and it is true of professional and semi-professional sports. Citizen's here just don't support them. But amateur sports all the way up to college teams are well attended and supported primarily through word of mouth and very little promotion from the municipalities and local newspaper (which, although I am an avid reader of, seems to be stuck in the 1950s reporting on school sports almost exclusively).

**L.P. "Woody" Windley, CPA**  
President  
Roanoke Valley Credit Union

*Send letters to [news@vbFRONT.com](mailto:news@vbFRONT.com) or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at [www.vbFRONT.com](http://www.vbFRONT.com)*

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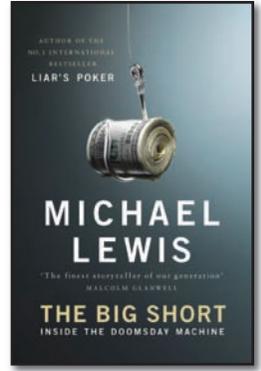
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## Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 150-word 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 Editor Dan Smith at [dsmith@vbfront.com](mailto:dsmith@vbfront.com)



### *Derived*

Eloquent, fast-paced and highly readable, Michael Lewis's *The Big Short* (W.W. Norton, \$27.95) is an impressive, often salty, fact-filled explanation of the complex marriage between the bond and real estate derivatives market. It unfolds like fiction.

His cast of characters begs for a movie. Lewis explains that subprime mortgages were worthless and yet a few people manipulated new tools to wrest an immense profit from them. Among the tools they used were credit default swaps and the ABX index, effective because audits were all but impossible with such Byzantine concoctions of repackaged deals.

Curiously, *The Big Short* does not sufficiently examine the role of politically-motivated deregulation in allowing unfit financial vehicles to be driven off a cliff. I hope that is the subject of his next book.

—Claire English

### *Getting stuck*

He has done it again. Seth Godin reinforces why he is the Michael Jordan of business writing. *Poke the Box* (The Domino Project, \$12.99) is his latest where he asks: Who is initiating? Who is starting? Who is challenging mediocre in organizations? His advice? Start and finish. Poke and ship. Keep starting until you finish.

The 85-page book screams action, accountability and results, something

organization and employees of all kinds can no longer ignore.

Godin says organizations get stuck because they stick with their "A" players so long that they lose their bench. The same people arguing on behalf of accepting the status quo are the ones who, years ago, set out to change it. How ironic?

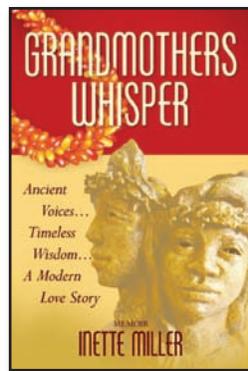
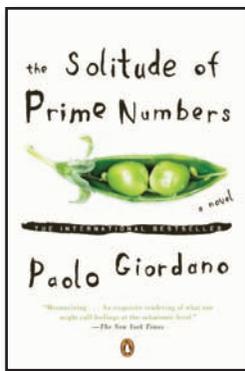
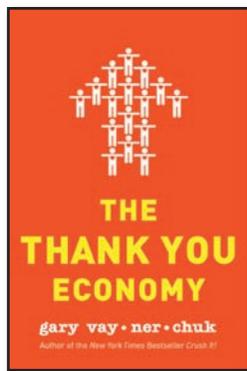
"After a project is shipped, there is no useful work until someone starts a new project." This Godinism stuck.

—Stuart Mease

### *Another winner*

Gary Vaynerchuk has done it again with *The Thank You Economy* (HarperBusiness, \$24.99), the follow-up to his best-selling *Crush It*. It is written in the same engaging and fun style, with loads of examples of companies that are rocking it with a newfound appreciation of clients and customers. Vaynerchuk gives good advice and sound marketing principles for propelling your business to the next generation of customer service, reaching out and providing information and establishing relationships through social media platforms.

The days of the consumer putting up with anemic customer service are gone. Consumers want and need communication, authenticity, and caring from the folks they do business with. *The Thank You Economy* explains how future success in business will be contingent on reaching out to customers



and finding that balance between traditional marketing and social media approaches.

—Kathy Bibb

## Unrequited, very

You can't help but get caught up in the lives of the two protagonists in Paolo Giordano's *The Solitude of Prime Numbers* (Penguin; \$15); there's a net throughout the 24-year journey. It's a net that will drag you down though, to the bottom of the river.

Hemingway-esque in mood, the aptly named *Solitude* introduces Alice and Mattia, whose lives are only filled with quiet desperation—even though the reader observes their probable match the whole time. They only connect on a level so below the surface, even Hemmingway would find too unfeasible to present. The novel is filled to the brim—with unfulfillment. Full of promise—that you suspect will never deliver. And yet ... you press on.

*Solitude* is angst. But it's very personal. Directed ultimately at the self.

If you're lonely, isolated, looking for love—rent a chick-flick and grab your box of tissues. Your fear of everlasting despair is likely confirmed in this little story. Not inspiring, but wholly engrossing when you need to feel the pain, sing the blues, inflict a bit of self-deserved loathing, and the necessary reminder that other souls are hurting all around you. Giordano shows us no compassion; a poignant lesson in why the need is so great.

—Tom Field

## Spiritual life

Inette Miller's *Grandmothers Whisper* (Infinity, \$17.95) is a gripping memoir from a former war correspondent and respected journalist. She gave up a safe, secure, traditional life to follow a dream, an idea and the spirituality that was hidden deep in her soul and aroused by a Hawaiian with a nearly unpronounceable name, 'Iokepa Hanalei 'Imaikalani. Miller was a single Jewish mother on vacation in Hawaii when she met Iokepa, son of a Hawaiian father and a mother from Idaho. He is a man with a distinctly native Hawaiian look and the deep spirituality that defines his people. She shed her previous life when they bonded and began a life of deep spirituality, respect for native custom, belief and uniqueness.

I had lunch with the two of them (and my friend Bill Elliot) recently and it was a memorable hour, full of the kind of unbridled excitement that defines the book, the deep revelation of two people obviously much in love and the sharing of beliefs that are foreign to most of us—and, frankly, quite attractive and sensible. The book is worth the investment of your time. It will move you.

—Dan Smith

(**The reviewers:** Claire English is retired and owns The Vintage Life in Roanoke and Atlanta. Stuart Mease is with the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. Kathy Bibb an advertising executive with FRONT. Tom Field is FRONT publisher. Dan Smith is FRONT editor.)

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



photo: Tom Field

## Greenbrier at Hotel Roanoke >

**Lynn Swann**, director of public relations for The Greenbrier (West Virginia resort) addressed pr, advertising professionals, and guests at the Hotel Roanoke on June 14. The Greenbrier has been in the media spotlight more than usual over the past year with the opening of its casino and its hosting of the Greenbrier Classic,

PGA Tour, national boxing matches and music concerts. The event was managed by PRSA—Blue Ridge Chapter and AAF/Roanoke.



photos: Tom Field

## Beer on the field >

Moving from its usual place in the stands during games, beer was showcased in booths along the outfield fence at the **Big Lick Brewtopia** on June 18 at the Salem Red Sox home field. Presented by the Roanoke Jaycees, people sampled craft beers from regional microbreweries. Above: **Roanoke Railhouse** was a popular stop for samplers as the **Harwell Grice Band** entertained.



photos: Dan Smith

## Patrick Henry Hotel opens >

Developer **Ed Walker** was at the center of the action June 23 in downtown Roanoke as the renovated **Patrick Henry Hotel** held its ribbon-cutting. The hotel, which will house residential and business customers was finished seven weeks ahead of schedule and on budget, according to Walker, who has renovated several other significant properties downtown in recent years. He also officially announced in June that the Ice House in Wasena Park would be his next project, though he is not sure exactly how it will be used yet.

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

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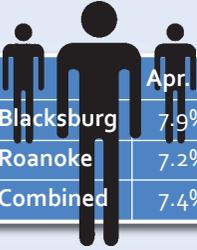


Forbes named First Citizens BancShares, Inc. the fourth-best bank in America in its December 2010 “Best and Worst Banks” ranking. First Citizens Bank is a subsidiary of First Citizens BancShares, Inc. Member FDIC

With the exception of home prices, the economy continued in the Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas continues to improve – often at a faster pace than the state and nation. Unemployment is down and fewer people are filing initial unemployment claims. Home sales and retail sales are up, while foreclosure activity is down. And the number of people flying out of Roanoke Regional Airport continues to climb.

## Unemployment/Employment Real Estate

**Unemployment** dropped below 7.0 percent in April for both the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs and was down from both the previous month and April 2010. The combined Roanoke and New River Valley region's unemployment rate fell 14.8 percent from April to April, a sharper drop than at both the state (-13.4 percent) and national (-8.4 percent) levels.



	Apr. 10	Mar. 11	Apr. 11
Blacksburg	7.9%	7.2%	6.4%
Roanoke	7.2%	6.8%	6.2%
Combined	7.4%	6.9%	6.3%

The number of people **employed** in the region in April was up over both the previous month (1.4 percent) and year (0.02 percent). While the region's civilian labor force fell from 239,911 last April to 237,076, more people are working. Expect the size of the workforce to grow in the coming months as college and high school graduates enter it.

Apr. 2010	Mar. 2011	Apr. 2011
222,068	218,999	222,119

The number of people filing **initial unemployment claims** continues to drop locally – 18.1 percent over the year for week 20 (May 13-19). The Blacksburg MSA dropped 31.1 percent, the second steepest drop of all Virginia MSAs. Roanoke saw an 11.6 percent drop.

Week 20, 2010	Week 20, 2011
481	394

*Source: Virginia Employment Commission*

Real estate continues its rollercoaster ride. The average **home price**, according to the Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS, was down 1.4 percent in April from the previous month, and down by 6.7 percent from a year ago. Nationally, home prices dropped 1.2 percent over the year. The **number of homes sold** locally rose to its highest rate this year, up 7.2 percent from March.



Apr. 2010	Mar. 2011	Apr. 2011
\$182,471	\$170,506	\$168,123

Apr. 2010	Mar. 2011	Apr. 2011
328	265	284

*Source: Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS, National Association of REALTORS*

On the flipside of home sales – **foreclosure activity** – the numbers are looking brighter. The number of foreclosure filings in the region registered a sharp drop of 56.8 percent from a year ago. The drop outpaces both Virginia (48.6 percent) and the United States (34 percent)

	Apr. 2010	Apr. 2011
Blacksburg	24	10
Roanoke	166	72
Combined	190	82

*Source: Realtytrac*

## Travel

**Airplane passengers boarding** at the Roanoke Regional Airport are up from both a year ago

# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

and a month ago. The number of people flying out in April rose 4.3 percent from last month and by 4.5 percent from a year ago.



PASSENGERS		
Apr. 2010	Mar. 2011	Apr. 2011
26,026	26,079	27,194

Source: Roanoke Regional Airport

Gas prices are lower than a month ago, but – to no one’s surprise – 43.3 percent higher than a year ago, according to AAA. Gas prices in the region are lower than many other parts of the state.



GAS PRICES		
June 1, 2010	May 1, 2011	June 1, 2011
\$2.471	\$3.763	\$3.51

Source: AAA for a gallon of regular gas.

## Retail Sales

A slightly brightening economy is causing more people in the Blacksburg and Roanoke MSAs to open their wallets. **Retail sales** in March were up from both the previous month – by a healthy 9.6 percent – and from the same month in 2010 (1.9 percent). Retail sales in Virginia dropped 1.6 percent from March to March.



RETAIL SALES		
Mar. 2010	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011
\$4,499,645	\$4,183,101	\$4,586,202

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation

—By Anne Piedmont,  
Piedmont Research Associates

# CENSUS DATA

## A diverse look at diversity >

### Executive Summary:

*It doesn't look like this region has much variety in its population until you look beneath the surface.*

### By Anne Piedmont

This shouldn't come as news to anyone: The Roanoke and New River Valleys are not the most racially diverse places in Virginia. But a look below the regional numbers to the individual cities and counties reveals a different kind of diversity. And a look back 20 years reveals a changing population.

Roanoke City, the region's urban center, comes in first as the most diverse, followed by the three college communities of Radford,

Montgomery County and Salem, as well as fast-growing Franklin County. Roanoke City is the only local community with a higher percentage of African Americans than both Virginia and the United States, 28.5 percent, compared to 19.4 percent in Virginia and 12.6 percent for the U.S. The suburban and rural counties tend to be less diverse. In the combined region, the percentage of African Americans grew by 6.5 percent since 1990. The Roanoke MSA saw a 7.6 percent increase, while in the New River Valley, the percentage of African Americans in the population has remained unchanged at 4.3 percent.

Montgomery County has a higher percentage of Asians (5.4 percent) than the U.S. (4.7 percent). Roanoke County has the second highest percentage at 2.7 percent.

Why is this important? The changing racial make-up of the region and its communities affects schools, businesses and other civic organizations as different traditions and

languages move in. The cultural quilt that includes all of us gets a little richer. Knowing the differences within the region

is important to businesses and families looking to live and work in places where they feel comfortable.

## COMBINED ROANOKE & NEW RIVER REGION

	1990	2000	2010	90-10 Change
White	89.2%	87.1%	84.7%	-5.0%
Black	9.3%	9.5%	9.9%	+6.5%
American Indian	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	+100.0%
Asian	1.2%	1.5%	2.2%	+83.3%
Other	0.2%	0.5%	1.2%	+500.0%
Two or More Races	N/A	1.2%	1.8%	*+50.0%

## ROANOKE MSA

	1990	2000	2010	90-10 Change
White	87.2%	84.9%	82.2%	-5.7%
Black	11.9%	12.2%	12.8%	+7.6%
American Indian	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	+200.0%
Asian	0.6%	1.1%	1.6%	+166.7%
Other	0.2%	0.5%	1.3%	+550.0%
Two or More Races	N/A	1.1%	1.8%	*+63.3%

## BLACKSBURG MSA

	1990	2000	2010	90-10 Change
White	93.1%	91.2%	89.5%	-3.8%
Black	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	0.0%
American Indian	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	+100.0%
Asian	2.3%	2.5%	3.5%	+52.2%
Other	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%	+250.0%
Two or More Races	N/A	1.3%	1.8%	*+38.5%

\* Prior to 2000, there was no option for Two or More Races.

## RACIAL DIVERSITY IN THE REGION 2010

	White	Black	Amer. Ind.	Asian	Other	2 or More
Botetourt County	94.9%	3.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	1.0%
Craig County	98.7%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.7%
Franklin County	88.5%	8.2%	0.2%	0.5%	1.4%	1.2%
Roanoke County	90.0%	5.0%	0.2%	2.7%	0.6%	1.5%
Roanoke City	64.3%	28.5%	0.3%	1.7%	2.4%	2.8%
Salem	88.2%	7.1%	0.3%	1.6%	1.3%	1.5%
<b>Roanoke MSA</b>	<b>82.2%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
Giles County	96.7%	1.6%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.9%
Montgomery County	87.6%	3.9%	0.2%	5.4%	0.8%	2.1%
Pulaski County	92.5%	5.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.4%	1.4%
Radford	86.9%	7.8%	0.2%	1.6%	1.0%	2.5%
<b>Blacksburg MSA</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau



Each July Carole Pratt volunteers at the Remote Area Medical Mission of Mercy in Wise County.

## Retirement: A technical designation >

### Executive Summary:

*Carole Pratt's dental practice is closed, but that doesn't mean she's no longer working. Quite the contrary.*

### By Laura Purcell

There's not even time to slow down for Carole Pratt.

The Pulaski dentist and her husband, Richard Mansell, sold their Pulaski practice in 2008 after 32 years. Retirement for Carole Pratt hasn't meant sitting in a rocking chair.

She serves on numerous boards and committees, including LewisGale Pulaski Hospital, Virginia's Economic Development Partnership, and the Virginia Oral Health Coalition. She also volunteers with the Dental Aid Partners of the New River Valley, and at one of the largest dental free clinics in

the country, held in Wise County each July.

"Volunteerism is important now more than ever because there are not enough resources in the world to make a difference otherwise," Pratt says. Giving back to the rural communities of Southwest Virginia, where Pratt was born, raised, worked, and raised her own children, is close to her heart. "Over 62 million Americans call rural communities home, and on average these people are older, sicker, and less well insured than their urban and suburban counterparts," Pratt says. This aging population faces many health issues, has access to fewer primary care physicians and health care providers at every level, is often prohibitively far away from any specialty care and finds most healthcare costs out of reach.

Dental care is often overlooked, and those who are uninsured may see it as a luxury. But Pratt knows oral health is incredibly important, professionally and personally. Although she had regular dental checkups as a child, when Pratt had her first dental x-rays as a young dental student, they uncovered a mouthful of cavities (which

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Pratt attributes to her love affair with Dr. Pepper). However, lack of dental care can exacerbate a host of chronic diseases. Quoting a report from the Institute of Medicine, Pratt says, "Oral health complications may be associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes."

Pratt is now tackling healthcare concerns from a different angle. She was named one of five Health Policy Fellows of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and will serve a one-year term in Washington, D.C. beginning in September. As a fellow, she will participate in the policy process on Capitol Hill, and use that experience to improve health, healthcare and health policy. She will help develop legislative proposals, arrange hearings, meet with constituents, brief legislators and staff House-Senate conferences.

Pratt is excited to learn more about federal policy-making, and to serve as a voice for the needs of rural communities. "I want to learn as much as I can about policy making at the federal level, and I hope this fellowship may open some doors. I just want a seat at the table," Pratt says.

It may seem unusual to tackle this kind of endeavor after a long career, at age 60, but Pratt is energetic, devoted to her cause and quick to point out the immense support she gets from friends and family. "My friend and mentor Terry Dickinson

## In Brief

**Name:** Carole Pratt  
**Age:** 60  
**Position:** Dentist and Healthcare Activist  
**Location:** Shiloh area of Pulaski, VA  
**Background:** Background: Raised on a tobacco farm in Smyth County, Pratt pursued her love of science at Virginia Tech and studied dentistry at the Medical College of Virginia. Now retired, Pratt has won a fellowship to study health policy in Washington, D.C.

says that we all face a critical question at some point in our lives—"What do you want your life to stand for?" The good news is that it is not too late to be the person you want to be. And yes, we are all called to serve," Pratt says.

"Find a cause that you care about deeply, and devote some of your energy to that cause."

In 2009, Pratt ran for the District 6 seat of the Virginia House of Delegates, which represents Bland and portions of Giles, Pulaski, Tazewell and Wythe counties. She lost to incumbent Anne B. Crockett-Stark. When asked if she would consider running for political office again, Pratt answered, "Not this year." 

## "Power To The People"

Wind turbines at the new William Fleming High School Stadium will generate a portion of the power required to run the stadium. When the turbines produce more power than the stadium uses, the excess power will flow backward through the meter into the APCO grid for use by other APCO customers. The Stadium's electric bill is in turn reduced by the amount of power returned to the APCO grid.

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# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Kiser

### Investing

**Jason Kiser** has been promoted to vice president at Chas. Lunsford Sons & Associates in Roanoke.

## LEGAL FRONT



Adams

### Law firms

**Kristin Adams** has joined the Roanoke

law firm Anderson, Desimone & Green as director of elder law services.

## WELLNESS FRONT

### Policy

Dentist **Carole Pratt** of Pulaski has been named one of five Health Policy Fellows with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) for 2011-12. Pratt begins her one-year term in September. The Health Policy Fellows program is a minimum of one-year residential experience in D.C. that gives mid-career health professionals and scientists an opportunity to participate in health policy processes at the federal level.

### Hospitals

**William D. Jacobsen**, CEO of Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital in Rocky Mount, has won two

prestigious awards: the American Hospital Association 2011 Grassroots Champion Award and the American College of Healthcare Executives Senior-Level Healthcare Executive Regent's Award.

### Organizations

The Roanoke Area Brain Injury Connection has named the following to its executive board: **Daniel Gaskell**, Carilion Clinic, president; **Juanita Thornton**, Phoenix Star Clubhouse, past president; **Heather Witt**, community volunteer, vice president; **Linda Turner**, Court Community Corrections, treasurer; **Frances Buford**, community volunteer, secretary; **Jore Cooper**, CPA; **Sheri Deel**, Carilion Clinic; **Dr. Rod Dunker**, Carilion Clinic; **Steve Hall**, community volunteer; **Ellen Harvey**, Carilion

Clinic; **Mike Krackow**, Jefferson College of Health Sciences; **Venetta Manson**, Source 4; **Wendy Moses**, CPA; **Denise Rose**, Lewis-Gale Health System; **Stimis Smith**, Carilion Clinic; **Connie Vance-Kingery**, Century 21; **Tracey Ward**, Carilion Clinic.

## TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Silver

### Awards

**Juliet Silver**, CEO and president of Virtual IT Inc. in Roanoke, has been named a 2011-2012 Woman of the Year by the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW).

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



**Humphrey**

### Manufacturing

**Ann Humphrey** has been named director of modernization business management at ATK Energetic Systems, operator of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



**Roberts**

### Architecture/Engineering

**Nicole Roberts** of Balzer Associates in



**Reynolds**

Roanoke has become a licensed Professional Engineer in Virginia.

**David Reynolds**, a structural engineer at Spectrum Design, in

Roanoke has received his Professional Engineer (PE) license.

### Real Estate



**McGraw**

**Jan McGraw** has joined

# So much more.

[vbFRONT.com](http://vbFRONT.com)

- > Tech Team Wins International Hybrid Car Challenge
- > Contest Offers Cash To Small Business
- > New Taco Restaurant Perks Up Williamson Road International Corridor
- > Arkay Packaging in Botetourt To Expand
- > Businesses Lead Cool Cities Coalition Winners
- > Study Says Lynchburg Area 'Recovered' from Recession
- > Community College Cost Rising; Remains a Bargain

## morefront.blogspot.com

So many FRONTreaders just can't get enough in our monthly magazine. "Give us more!" they say, "OK." we say, "OK." Read more stories and latebreaking updates on our moreFRONT blog.

- > Self-Employment and the Job Fair
- > Free Energy Assessment Can Save \$\$\$
- > Roanoke Cost of Living Is Sweeeeet!
- > Job Fair Tomorrow at Civic Center in Roanoke
- > Yet Another Award for WVTF Public Radio
- > Roanoke Public Radio Wins 3 Murrow Awards
- > Tech Engineers Rank Football Helmets
- > MedCottage-Born in Salem-Makes National Debut

and much more (of course; hence, the name)

# Career FRONT

Prudential Waterfront Properties at Smith Mountain Lake as a sales executive.

**L.T. Simmons** of Long & Foster Real Estate-Blacksburg has been named the 2010 Ethics in Action recipient.

## SENIOR FRONT

### Facilities

**Sharon McAllister** was recently named as the new Care Manager for Warm Hearth at Home in Blacksburg. **Kc Marchione** was



McAllister



Marchione

appointed as the Sodexo General Manager at Warm Hearth Village.

## EDUCATION FRONT



Robertson

### Colleges

**James "Bud" Robertson Jr.**, Alumni Distinguished Professor of History in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech, has been conferred the "Alumni Distinguished

Professor Emeritus" title by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

## OTHER FRONTS



Collins

### Economic Development

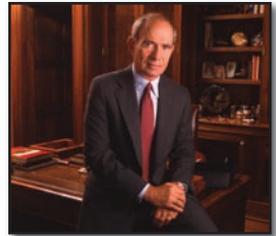
The Blacksburg Partnership has named **Traci Collins** outreach and events coordinator.



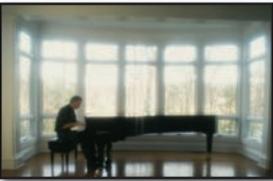
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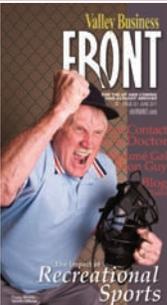
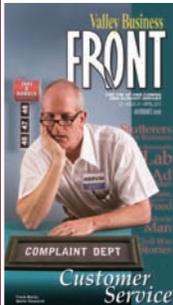
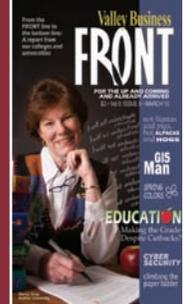
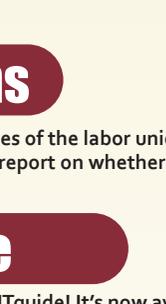
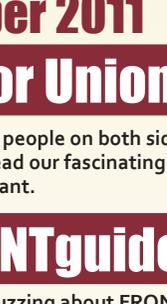
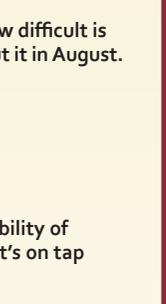
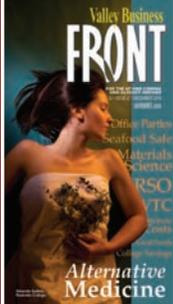
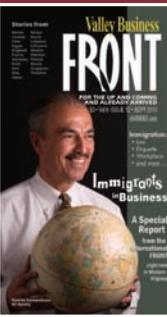
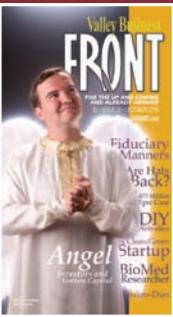
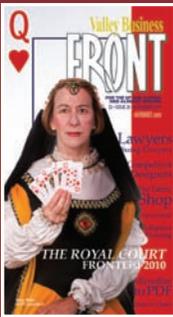


ROANOKE TIMES



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# Coming Up...

## August 2011

### Energy Costs

We all feel the high gas prices at the pump. But how difficult is rising energy costs for business owners? Read about it in August.

## September 2011

### Microbreweries

Have you noticed the increasing brands and availability of microbrew beers from our own region? Here's what's on tap in September.

## October 2011

### Labor Unions

We talked to people on both sides of the labor union issue. In October read our fascinating report on whether unions are still relevant.

### FRONTguide

People are buzzing about FRONTguide! It's now available at vbFRONT.com. Not just a book-of-lists or directory. In classic and progressive FRONTstyle, we're presenting the businesses, products and services you need most at your fingertips. Compact and easy to use. It's like having your own little black book! An evergreen 24/7/365 directory, we continue to build lists and add sponsors. To be a part, contact Kathy or Judi below.

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**540-389-9945**

**Judi Billups: 540-392-4178**

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# FRONT Notes



**Hard Hat Award winners: Brian Townsend (from left), Roanoke's assistant city manager; George Stanley, Richmond, development partner with Ed Walker; David Carson, chairman of City School Board; Ed Walker, Roanoke developer; Gail Burruss, board chairwoman of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and John Garland, Roanoke developer and president of Spectrum Design.**

## Preservation Awards to 6

Developers John Garland and Ed Walker continue to rake in appreciation from those concerned about preservation of Roanoke's history. They, along with one other individual and three institutions won the **Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation's** Hardhat Awards recently as part of National Preservation Month.

Award winners were Garland, Walker, George Stanley, the City of Roanoke, the Roanoke City School Board and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, all with long lists of redevelopment projects. The Hard Hat award recognizes historically sensitive rehabilitation projects and long-standing commitment and financial investment in preservation.

## Rutherford leadership changes

The Roanoke-based insurance international broker **Rutherford Inc.** has named John Stanchina president. He will lead the new President's Council for the company, as well. John Parrott is the new executive vice president of sales and Kimberly Enochs has moved to executive vice president of operations.

Chairman Thomas Rutherford and VPs Thomas Brown and George "Shad" Steadman will continue in their positions.

## Becher wins award

**The Becher Agency** (tba) of Roanoke has won an award for excellence in media relations during the 2011 Commonwealth

Awards presented by the Richmond chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

The agency was recognized for its national media outreach to promote the MedCottage, the portable, modular medical home that enables families to take care of loved ones on their property. Salem-based MedCottage has received coverage in such national media as The Washington Post, CBS News, National Public Radio, Prevention, Readers Digest and AARP magazine in addition to hundreds of media and blogger mentions in markets throughout the nation. The coverage resulted in hundreds of inquiries about the MedCottage and firm sales commitments.

## New Horizon contract

The \$10.6 million **New Horizons** building will be built by Shockey's, a Winchester general contractor, which will be paired with the Richmond architectural firm of Baskerville to complete the design-build on a facility that will offer health care to poor people. The building will be constructed on Melrose Avenue on an acre and a half. It will be close to 35,000 square feet on two floors and will provide a range of health services.

New Horizons has been operating out of a LewisGale-owned medical facility at Valley View Mall for several years. New Horizons Board Chairman Dick Robers said Shockey's was selected because of experience in constructing this type of building. Local contractors

have been shut out of several major projects recently.

*No sale for TAP*

**Total Action Against Poverty's** attempt to sell the Crystal Tower Building in downtown Roanoke, in which it is housed, and the former Southwest Virginia Savings building across the street, which was the home of Valley Business FRONT for a time, has been scrapped. The developer who wanted the properties was refused a loan. Tap wants \$2.25 million for Crystal Tower.

TAP has lost about half its government funding in recent years and is in need of a financial transfusion. It plans to close the top four floors of the Tower.

*Lynchburg 'recovered'*

A new study from **Virginia's Region 2000 Economic Development Council** says the region anchored by Lynchburg has recovered from the "Great Recession." The study concludes that "our diversified businesses – particularly in high wage, high growth sectors – are

strong and are producing positive results for our region," according to Bryan David, executive director of Virginia's Region 2000 Partnership–Economic Development Council.

Mangum Economic Consulting conducted the analysis, concluding that the region's employment trends remained positive for roughly a year longer than in other Virginia Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) or the state as a whole. The report also shows that recent data indicates that the region is rebounding more robustly than other major MSAs in Virginia. Data for the first four months of 2011 indicate that year-over-year employment in Region 2000 is increasing by 2.6 percent on average, as opposed to -0.5 percent in the Roanoke MSA, -0.2 percent in the Virginia Beach MSA, 1.4 percent in the Harrisonburg MSA, 0.1 percent in the Richmond MSA, and 1.0 percent statewide.

*CC costs rise*

Even with a newly-approved hefty increase in the price of tuition at

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**Virginia's community colleges**, the overall impact on the family budget remains low when compared to tuition at four-year institutions in the Commonwealth.

The State Board for Community Colleges established the 2011-2012 in-state tuition and mandatory fee rate at \$119 per credit hour, an additional \$9.50 per credit hour beginning in the fall. That equates to an increase of \$28.50 per three-hour class, or \$285 for the year for a full-time in-state student.

Because of some General Fund investments that proved successful, General Fund cuts Virginia's Community Colleges have since 2008 have been reassessed from \$105 million to

\$95 million. During that same time, Virginia's Community Colleges have enrolled an additional 48,000 students.

*Roanoke COL down*

The cost of living in the Roanoke Region is 8.5 percent lower than the national average and the second lowest of any metropolitan area in Virginia, according to the **Council for Community and Economic Research** (C2ER).

The first quarter 2011 ACCRA Cost of Living Index (COLI), compiled by C2ER, ranks Roanoke 83rd out of 312 metro areas, meaning that the cost of living here is less than 70 percent of the nation's metros.



Spectrum Design's new Cave Spring Middle School design

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Kathy Bibb** is an Account Executive for FRONT, with extensive experience in publications (including Auto Trader) and real estate, and has a business degree from Averett University. [ kbibb@aol.com ]

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**Tom Field** is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [ tfield@berryfield.com ]

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**Kathleen Harvey Harshberger** is a graduate of Radford University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills. She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [ harshbergr@aol.com ]

**Becky Hepler** lives and works as a high school librarian in Newport. She has been writing for more than 20 years. [ rbmteagu@pemtel.net ]

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**Gene Marrano**, a former sales and marketing executive in various manufacturing fields, is one of the most prolific journalists in the Roanoke Valley. He not only writes for several publications, but he has a television show ("Interview With Gene Marrano" on Cox Channel 9) and a radio show ("Studio Virginia," WVTF Public Radio). [ gmarrano@cox.net ]

**Mallory Metheny** is a recent graduate of Hollins University, earning a bachelor's in English with a concentration in creative writing and a minor in anthropology. She hails from Thurmont, Md., and is a freelance writer. [ mrm89@hotmail.com ]

**David Perry**, who works for the Western Virginia Land Trust, is an accomplished freelance writer. He is a native of Blacksburg and a James Madison University Graduate. His writing has appeared in Blue Ridge Country and the Roanoker, among other publications. [ dave@davidperryonline.com ]

**Anne Piedmont** is the president of Piedmont Research Associates, a marketing communications firm she has started after working for the Roanoke Regional Partnership as director of research for more than 18 years. She's also worked in public relations and journalism. She loves numbers and wants them to make sense for you. [ annepied@yahoo.com ]

**Erin Pope** is a Roanoke-based freelance writer and active participant in a local farm centered around wild mushroom cultivation. She graduated with a B.A. in English and Creative Writing from Hollins University and has worked at Monticello. [ eap7779@gmail.com ]

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**Dan Smith** is editor and co-owner of Valley Business FRONT. A native of Asheville, N.C., he has been a journalist for more than four decades and has won many journalism awards (writing, photography and design). He is a member of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame and was a 2009 recipient of the Perry F. Kendig Literary Award. He was Virginia's Business Journalist of the year in 2005. He is the founder of the Roanoke Regional Writers Conference. [ dsmith@vbFRONT.com ]

**Kathy Surace** is FRONT Business Dress columnist, an image consultant and owner of Peacock Image in Roanoke. She was a fashion consultant for a major clothing chain for a number of years. [ kssurace@aol.com ]

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**Alison Weaver** is a freelance writer based in Roanoke. She contributed to and was a staff writer at the Blue Ridge Business Journal throughout the 1990s before working as a copy editor at The Roanoke Times for eight years. Her recent freelance credits include Redbook magazine. Her story on niche publications won the FRONT Story of the Year for 2009. She was the 2010 FRONT Contributor of the Year and also wrote the 2010 FRONT Story of the Year. [ alison.weaver03@gmail.com ]



Anne Piedmont

JUNE 2011 >  
Contributor of the Month

Anne Piedmont has taken on the task of keeping you up with the numbers that reflect life in this region. Just a few months ago, Anne debuted with her Economic Indicators, a promptly popular feature that helps put our economy in perspective. She has now taken on the task of relaying new census information and giving it life and relevance to the economy and the people who make it happen. Anne had a number of years to learn her computing skills at the Roanoke Regional Economic Development Partnership, where her research helped give the organization its marketing wallop. Anne is not a born number cruncher: she is the daughter of a respected public relations director (Don) and a much honored artist (Dot) and a Roanoke native who knows the region and its people.

“I wanted to be a rock and roll lighting designer

*Spectrum presents design*

**Spectrum Design** has presented its re-design for Cave Spring Middle School and it has been approved by the Roanoke County School Board. Construction has begun. The design features a total flip of the building.

The building will have a new entrance which will include separate drop-offs for parents, visitors, and bus traffic. The front of the building will be located where the rear of the building once was and will feature a new entryway and administration area underneath the original gymnasium. The new design can accommodate 900 students, more than the original building, and features a three-story neighborhood design, providing each grade with its own level.

*Roanoke College ranked*

**Roanoke College** in Salem was recently named to the Top 100 Social Media Colleges list published by Student Advisor. The list ranked colleges and universities nationwide based upon mastery of social media tools and Web sites.

*Program for startups*

**VT Knowledgeworks** in Blacksburg has a new program—priced at \$750—for startup businesses called FirstOffice, which is just that. New businesses

which can employ as many as three people are given space to work and ancillary services (which includes coffee) at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. Counseling and business acceleration services are also offered.

*Cool Cities winners*

**Cox Communication, Member One Credit Union** and Katie Wallace of the **Wallace Agency** were the business winners at the annual Cool Cities Coalition Awards in Roanoke. The coalition gives its awards to individuals and institutions in the region who have helped in one way or another to make the environment more livable.

Cox, which has earned a substantial environmental reputation, was cited for a number of efforts, most notably reducing its carbon footprint by 20 percent in 10 years. Katie Wallace was cited for her efforts toward the "Save a Ton" campaign and a presentation design for Roanoke's Green Citizens Academy. Member One's award hinges on its new environmentally friendly, 15,900-square-foot building that is expected to cut energy costs by 25 percent.

Other winners included the Roanoke Sierra Club, Anne Marie Green of Roanoke County, Jim Vodnik of Roanoke County, Herman L.

Horn Elementary School, volunteer Keith Weiwurm and Virginia Green Schools Challenges' Steve Sunderman. Roanoke Public Schools won a special achievement for winning the Green School Challenge for the entire state.

*National ADDY win*

**Neathawk Dubuque & Packett** (ND&P) in Roanoke won a Gold award in the national ADDY competition recently, winning for a poster campaign for The Perfect Fix, a handyman shop in Forest. The award was the company's first national ADDY win.

*Rofer recognized*

Roanoke-based roofing contractor **McNeil Roofing Inc.** has been recognized with a Perfection Award by Carlisle SynTec, a manufacturer of single-ply roofing materials. With receipt of this award, McNeil has also been appointed to Carlisle's inaugural Perfection Council.

*Advance agreement*

Roanoke-based **Advance Auto Parts**, an automotive aftermarket retailer has entered into a new \$750 million unsecured revolving credit facility, maturing in May 2016. This facility replaces the Company's existing

\$750 million revolver which matures in October 2011.

*Law firm recertified*

**Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte**, a Roanoke-based law firm, has been awarded recertification in Meritas, a global alliance of business law firms. Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte joined Meritas in 1995, and as a condition of its membership, is required to successfully complete recertification every three years.

*Carilion wins award*

**Carilion Clinic's** Roanoke-based cancer treatment program has been granted the Outstanding Achievement Award by the Commission on Cancer (CoC) of the American College of Surgeons. It is among a select group of 90 accredited cancer programs across the United States to receive this distinction

*Compiled by Dan Smith*

**FRONT Notes posted daily online at [moreFRONT.blogspot.com](http://moreFRONT.blogspot.com).**

Read extended versions of items listed above, plus photos and many more current listings each day on the [moreFRONT blog](http://moreFRONT.com), also available by link at [vbFRONT.com](http://vbFRONT.com).

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“ ”  
I speak one language, English,  
and some say since I'm from  
the South I actually don't

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## *Gary's physical therapy session would be right down the hall.*

For many of us, home offers the perfect setting to recover from an illness or injury. That's why our physical therapists at Carilion Clinic Home Care come to you. In the comfort of your home, we guide you through personalized exercise routines designed to help restore movement and improve strength. So you can get back on your feet—and back to your life.

Learn more at [CarilionClinic.org/homecare](http://CarilionClinic.org/homecare) or call 800-964-9300.

Inspiring better health.



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