

Valley Business

# FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING  
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

\$3 • ISSUE 33 • JUNE 2011

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Eye Contact  
Eye Doctor

Resumé Gal  
Shop Guy

Blog  
Rules

The Impact of  
*Recreational  
Sports*

Fuzzy Minnix,  
Sports Official



*Bonz Hart is founder and president of Meridium, a software product developer.*

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When it comes to sports, there's opportunity on all sides. You don't have to be a "jock" to see it. That's the message in this edition's cover story. Although we talked to 16 individuals and looked into 14 organizations, we only wish we could have brought you the good news from many, many more sources. These are passionate people. Positive people. The story is one of re-creation of a community—through recreation. And with regions all across the country looking for a sporting chance at recovery and rebound, it's good to hear we're making that happen right here—on our own playing fields.



**Tom Field**



**Dan Smith**

“

take a look at a piece of bylined reporting written by a journalist who also blogs. The differences between the two should be clear.

— Page 30

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it's good for the region ● ● ● ●

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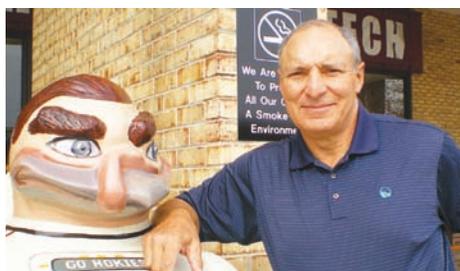
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Cover photography of Fuzzy Minnix by Greg Vaughn Photography. Art direction by Tom Field.

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# JUNE



Susan M. Ayers



Kathy Bibb



Janeson Keeley



Gene Marrano



Nicholas Vaassen



Greg Vaughn

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



Judi Billups



Anne Giles Clelland



Tom Field



Kathleen Harshberger



Anne Piedmont



Erin Pope



Dan Smith



Kathy Surace

“”  
the underwriting process is like  
peeling an onion

— Page 22

“”  
the storm  
was Biblical,  
a swirling,  
blowing,  
heavy rain  
that did not  
stop the race.

— Page 40

## 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)
- Nancy Gray** Hollins University (Education)
- 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.

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Greg Vaughn Photography

# Play Ball!

it's good for the region ● ● ● ●

If you play recreational sports anywhere throughout the region, it's more than a good chance you've run into **Odell "Fuzzy" Minnix**. (Perhaps literally, at home plate.) He serves on the Roanoke County School Board and plays our umpire FRONTcover model on this edition. Are people around here fanatic about their sports? Among his examples: "A grandma hit one of the stadium officials with a lawn chair."

*I'm at the airport, leaving for a business trip. There, in the terminal is a fourteen year old girl—one I coached in basketball and softball a few years back. "Hey, Amanda," I say, "Are you heading for vacation?" No. It turns out she is headed to Texas. And then Florida. Pennsylvania. And more. She's playing softball tournaments through the summer. Just one season of many. Because no one knows if your team will win games or be quickly eliminated, her parents have to book hotels and make their airline reservations for the whole weekend. One out-of-state tournament can easily cost \$2,000 or more (even with discount travel) counting the hotel, airfares, meals, team costs, tournament fees and expenses. Throw in a family with siblings, and the cost only multiplies. For Amanda, and the many kids on travel teams, a typical season can cost between \$10,000 and \$25,000.*

## The business of recreation sports >

**Executive Summary:**  
*It's apparent recreational sports have become more than recreational. Communities and the businesses within them are cashing in on the opportunities*

by Tom Field

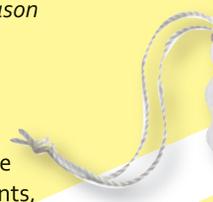
Recreational or not—that's serious business.

Where does the money go? Most of it ends up in the communities that provide the venues, host the events, and the local businesses that surround the games. Hotels, restaurants, convenience stores and gas stations.

Many families mix their personal vacations (or substitute them) with travel teams and their kids' sports schedules.

Long gone are the days where kids picked up a used bat and a ball, gathering at the nearest open yard in the neighborhood to play a pickup game, catching barehanded with barely enough kids to make up one team. And you dared not do anything to anger the kid who had the ball; otherwise, he would take it and go home. Game over.

Though the "Little Rascals", "Mayberry", and "Bad News Bears" days seem to have disappeared in neighborhoods across suburbia—that doesn't mean today's organized sports is a bad thing.



In fact, the organizations that have stepped up to the plate to serve children, their parents and the community at large can point to many benefits and advantages to all “stakeholders”... including the players, the families of the players, the education system, the businesses and sponsors, and the entire local citizenry and community at large.

Presented below is hardly a complete list of such organizations. It’s just a scratch on the surface. But the examples illustrate how important recreational and volunteer sporting activities (we’re not even including the collegiate or professional arena) can contribute to our region—in the same fashion as any other business or economic enterprise.

## Commonwealth Games—emphasis on “wealth”

“We just can’t let an event like this leave.”

So says Peter Lampman of the Virginia Commonwealth

Games (officially, the Coventry Commonwealth Games of Virginia). The games director and president of Virginia Amateur Sports says “municipalities are chomping at the bit” to get this annual event, which grows in popularity every year.

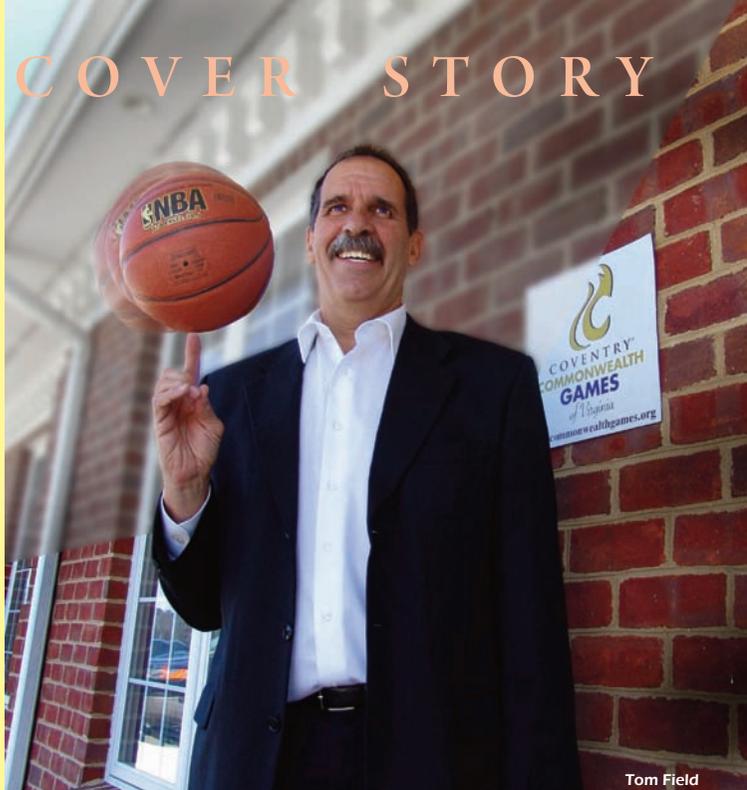
He has good reason to be protective.

“This is our 22nd year,” Lampman says. In 2010 we had 58 sports and 9,092 athletes. They come from the east, north, central, west... and the biggest portion from right here in the Valley. Our goal is around 10,000 [athletes] and our age breakdown is 19–24, 25–39, 44+, with about 75 percent under the age of 18.”

Lampman says the operating budget is \$550,000. About two-thirds of that comes from sponsors, and the rest from entry fees, special events, local government and funding.

The games—modeled after the Olympics—generates \$3.5 to \$4 million dollars in local spending, over what is essentially one weekend in July.

The spinoff from local spending comes from the athletes and the people with them, filling up gas tanks, shopping, and eating.



Tom Field



Municipalities are chomping at the bit to get this [Commonwealth Games]

—Peter Lampman  
President,  
Virginia Amateur Sports

\$4,000,000  
IN LOCAL SALES



Tom Field

timing is off, you could threaten your recruiting efforts or cause dissension with your existing loyal base. On the other hand, you don't necessarily want other communities to see an opportunity to outbid your legacy event.

More than one economic development insider has observed that "eastern Virginia gets the state fair—western Virginia gets the Commonwealth Games."

With limited funds from state and local government, it is becoming increasingly obvious that private funding from corporate sponsors will determine where the big events will reside.

## Brought to you by...

The "Coventry" in the Coventry Commonwealth Games of Virginia is Coventry Health Care (a trade name for Southern Health Services Inc.) who became the title sponsor in 2006. Prior to that, Coreast (bank) was the games sponsor.

For a majority of sports market activities serving local communities, corporate sponsorships are crucial for survival and sustainability.

Though there has been no official announcement regarding the Commonwealth Games, several inside sources have sent alerts about the potential loss or change of the title sponsor. The stakeholders in such organizations know you should never assume a sponsor can remain with you indefinitely; but at the same time, they often have reason to be hesitant in making public solicitation. On the one hand, if your

## Shining Star among teams

When it comes to the value of sponsors, L.P. "Woody" Windley agrees.



"Companies like Kroger... what a great civic organization," he says.

The president of Roanoke Valley Credit Union has observed the economic impact of local, recreational sports—first hand. He pulls out a budget of just one team he is involved with, mostly as a parent. The Roanoke Star Soccer Club has an operating budget of \$600,000. Led by Danny Beamer, that budget covers coaches, fields, fees and such for about a thousand kids, ages 4 to 19, Windley reports.



[The teams] train your children for the business world. Kids learn how to prioritize and how to achieve goals. Organized sports also provide excellent business contacts

—L.P. "Woody" Windley  
President/CEO  
Roanoke Valley Credit Union

# COVER STORY

"The environment really has changed," Windley says. "The way it was when I was growing up is just not the way it is now. Parents are concerned about safety. Life is more organized."

The financial executive rattles off figures and stats, including scholarship awards and the names of members who are playing professionally in Europe... but then quickly turns to benefits and advantages of organized sports that aren't shown on his spreadsheet.

"The emphasis of a good club is that it produces solid players, good citizens. It trains your children for the business world. Kids learn to prioritize. They're organized, they're getting their homework done... The club taught them things like achieving goals. It made my job easier."

Windley admits another benefit of the soccer club:

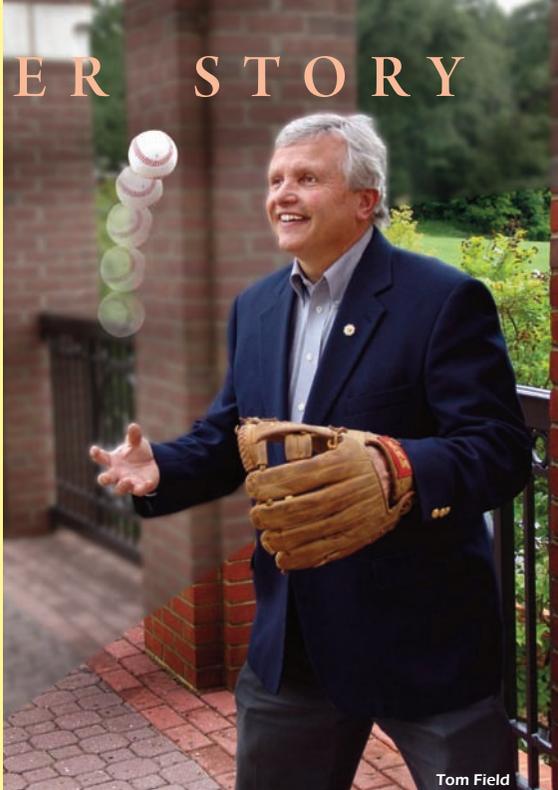
"Business contacts! I couldn't even name all the parents who have loans here..."

"Did you know from one AAU team, all eleven players are now playing college level?"

Montgomery is as much a cheerleader as a sports advocate. He points out the community contributions of the charitable events as well, such as the Chance Crawford softball tournament and Roy Stanley golf tournament.

But every description always includes names. Tiki and Ronde Barber, JJ and Abby Redick, Abby Oliver, Coach Mike McGuire, and a hundred other names if you have time.

"Sports is a pretty big part of our community," Montgomery sums up.



Tom Field



Sports is a pretty big part of our community

—John Montgomery  
Publisher/Editor,  
*Play by Play*

**\$350,000**  
IN BUSINESS

## In recognition

John Montgomery loves naming the kids who played locally and have now moved on to the collegiate level. In a recent edition of his *Play by Play*, the publisher of the sports journal says 39 players of local high school basketball are now playing collegiate.

"And our astute readers pointed out three or four more," Montgomery says.

## Running for revenue

Marathons and triathlons and bicycle races are gaining popularity across the country. In western Virginia, the New River Triathlon, the Blue Ridge Marathon (officially, the National College Blue Ridge Marathon) and Roanoke Twilight Bicycle Race are drawing more participants, crowds, and dollars than ever to their respective communities.



Tom Field

we get a big draw from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee.

We're using facilities in Roanoke, Botetourt, Hollins, Glenvar, Northside, North Cross, the Girl Scouts..."

Tanis says the Shamrock Festival (usually held the second weekend in March) hosted 228 teams, at 9–12 players each, plus their parents and siblings.

"A typical team will average ten players, which is over 2,000 athletes. Add in the coaches, parents and siblings, we figure an average team accounts for 25 people. We fill up the hotels over the two nights."

Indeed, thousands of rooms are booked throughout the area for the annual Shamrock Festival volleyball tournament.

Tamalyn's husband, Mark, ran his own spreadsheet of the lucky Shamrock's spinoff in local dollars spent.



For a single event like the Blue Ridge Marathon, John Hull of the Roanoke Regional Partnership reported that "the 2010 study showed the impact of the inaugural event was nearly \$350,000 in increased business."

That's just one race—but it seems there are a lot of winners.

### A Spike in interest

Tamalyn Tanis runs a club and tournament that gets a lot of attention. Her sport of choice is volleyball. Her club is Roanoke United.

But it's her Shamrock Festival that's getting all the luck these days.

"We have a waiting list of over 30 teams just hoping to get in," Tanis reports.

"Teams will come in from Florida, New York City and

"This assumes no shopping and doesn't factor in the 150–200 out-of-town college coaches, officials and tournament staff," he is sure to point out.

At 25 visitors per team, 16 hotel rooms (8 per night) at a cost of \$110; weekend food expense per person at \$75; and weekend gas expense per team at \$150—the total spent per team is \$3,785. At 228 teams, that's a total of \$862,980 spent for the weekend.



We have a waiting list of over 30 teams just hoping to get in

—Tamalyn Tanis  
Director,  
Shamrock Festival  
Volleyball Tournament

If you include the unknown items such as shopping, incidentals and the people who weren't factored, it's feasible to say this one volleyball tournament generates approximately one million dollars to the local community.

## Experiencing a complex

**\$2,750,000**  
FIRST YEAR

There's another big ticket item in recreational sports marketing within a

community, beyond the teams and the tournaments that surround them. It's the sports venues themselves.

No one knows that better than Richard "Pete" Peters, the Botetourt County director of parks, recreation and tourism. The new Greenfield Sports Complex has already produced an immediate boon and serves as a popular draw to local and travel teams.

"Travel ball really has been the biggest change I've seen," Peters says, when referring to the services offered by a parks and rec department. He's adamant about "keeping" 75 percent of the complex for Botetourt residents' use. But travel teams and groups seeking first rate facilities is not something Peters is going to ignore.

The numbers prove him out.

"In 2010, we served over 25,000 people [at the new complex alone]. We expect 30,000 this year, 32 events, and teams from 16 states."



Tom Field

Economic development organizations factor daily expenditures from visitors from anywhere between a low \$65 to a more realistic, but still conservative \$155.

Peters did not report specific figures, but given the actual 25,000 people tracking through the complex at Greenfield, and using the mean (average) of \$110 in daily expenditures, it's reasonable to project the first year dollars spent at \$2,750,000.

Greenfield Sports Complex is especially attractive to softball teams, with its 4-hub design (modeled after the Moyer complex in Salem), but the master plan of the entire property promises even more activity. Preliminary drawings show additional fields for soccer and football, volleyball and tennis courts, batting cages, picnic shelters and fishing pier, disc golf, community building with gyms and more.



The biggest change lately has been the increase in travel teams versus just recreational

—Richard "Pete" Peters  
Director of Parks & Rec,  
Botetourt County



gets an average of \$10 million to \$14 million from sports-related activities in Salem each year.

"It fluctuates," Shaner says, "due to some years we have the World Series, or the U.S. National Softball championship..."

Salem's director of parks and recreation is quick to point out that the money and the activities are very much "shared" ventures, particularly among Roanoke City, Roanoke County and Botetourt. And when asked about Salem's branding and moniker as the "Championship City," Shaner seems overly concerned that the designation is not to be taken flippantly.

"We got into this business [sports marketing] 15 years ago—many people don't understand where we were then. Now, it's more competitive than ever. We figured out that model; but what we're doing may not work for your city," Shaner advises to other municipalities looking for a quick and easy way to replicate Salem or cash in on sports marketing.

Salem's success in attracting high end sport events is represented by a lot of numbers and acronyms.

"Over 68 NSA and ASA and 61 NCAA championships," Shaner lists; "along with all that comes with Virginia Tech, the Salem Red Sox, and everything we do at the Salem Civic Center."

It is interesting that Botetourt is one of the oldest counties in the entire country, but the recreation department is relatively young (beginning in 1987, Peters says).

Peters says the objective of the sports complex and the rec department in general is, "to first, provide good quality of life for residents; but also, to bring in tourism."

### Attracting champions

What's a few million dollars when it comes to annual contribution to a community? As a catalyst to economic impact from sports marketing, no one can tell the story of this region without mentioning the City of Salem. And yet, John Shaner says the greater Roanoke Valley



We got into this business 15 years ago—many people don't understand where we were then. Now, it's more competitive than ever

—John Shaner  
Director of Parks & Rec  
City of Salem

# COVER STORY

"The main reason we've been successful is because this is what our city manager and city council wanted," Shaner says.

The vision—implanted a decade and a half ago—is what's responsible for the booked hotels and numerous charter busses Salem residents are accustomed to seeing from one sport season to the next.

"It's what's best for the Roanoke Valley. Teams stay in Roanoke City—not just Salem. Salem is the engine to organize, but we can't do it without cooperation."

Shaner says it would be very difficult to find four localities who worked as well together [as Roanoke City and County, Botetourt, and Salem] versus bidding against each other for the same events.

He also mentions the growth in charitable sport events, like the Chance Crawford tournament, which he says now commands \$600,000 for one weekend, 1,100 hotel rooms, for 143 teams.

## County comprehensive

Roanoke County has maintained a steady reputation as a destination for recreation, but that image just jumped up multiple levels

**\$11,000,000**  
DIRECT SPENDING



with the recent construction of the 76,000 square foot Green Ridge Recreation Center (including "Splash Valley") and the incredibly comprehensive recreational activities guide it publishes (Roanoke County Recreation magazine). The guide—which all county residents receive, and is used for marketing the region—offers camps and classes and events from painting to karate to yoga to sports teams. It's like a college catalog.

Pete Haislip, Roanoke County's director of parks and recreation says a big part of his department's job is to make everything as seamless as possible.

"This is very, very big business," Haislip says. "Over the past few years, everyone's jumping on the band wagon."

Haislip says the new recreation center (which received some criticism



This is very, very big business... Over the past few years, everyone's jumping on the band wagon

—Pete Haislip  
Director of Parks & Rec  
Roanoke County



Tom Field

Similar to other directors of parks and recreation at nearby municipalities, the Roanoke County director is cautious about taking credit for the success that recreational sports has produced for the single community. But he doesn't hesitate to provide a figure.

"Eleven million dollars."

That's what Haislip says the greater region receives from direct spending by participants of recreational sports.

"Good quality fields," Haislip says, serving both small and large tournaments—are important. And that includes everything from providing the restrooms, the concessions, and the shade people want when they attend these events.



The economic impact is phenomenal

—Shawn Worthley  
Facility Coordinator,  
Christiansburg Aquatic  
Center

from some county residents, who said such an expenditure was unjustified during an economic crisis) has proven itself with its performance.

"Just in the water park itself, over half the people using it have been from out of town. The center has served to poise the County as an extra attraction for travel teams."

Haislip said the new rec center is popular for teams and people traveling with the teams; whether they are playing on Roanoke County facilities or elsewhere. Indeed the Green Ridge Recreation Center is easily found by Internet searches and within the Virginia Tourism Corporation marketing activities and Web site.

"The economic impact [the County and region receives] is definitely worth the price [of developing facilities]," Haislip believes.

## Making a bigger splash



It's been less than a year that the Christiansburg Aquatic Center has been open, so it's a bit premature to report the economic impact. But that doesn't stop Shawn Worthley from stating his observations.

"The economical impact is phenomenal," Worthley, the facility coordinator exclaims. "People who come here stay here to eat, we serve everyone from young kids through high school, the Virginia Tech swimming and diving teams, the ACC meets..."

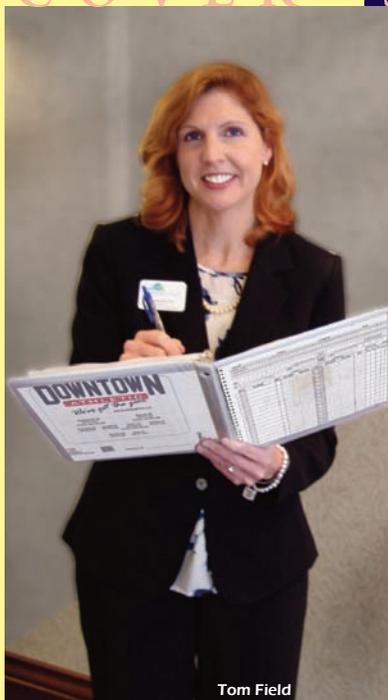
The building boasts an impressive architecture, which is particularly striking at night.

Terry Caldwell, the aquatics director, says the opening of the center has been a very positive move for the area.

"The joint venture between the Town of Christiansburg and Virginia Tech has been an influential factor in the fast success of this facility," Caldwell reports.

"The town invested in aquatic recreation not only for the citizens but for competitive swimmers along the east coast. Since opening in July 2010 the 64,000 square foot Aquatic Center has been host to 21 competitive swim and dive meets and welcomed over 78,000 people."

Caldwell says the new center really is an "economic engine" for Christiansburg, as it not



Tom Field

only produces revenue, but adds to the meals and lodging tax base.

"'Build it and they will come' has proven to be a statement the Town of Christiansburg will gladly acknowledge," says Caldwell.

According to a market study by Plunkett Research, Ltd., "sports provide a lucrative and continually growing marketplace worthy of immense investments. To facility developers and local governments, sports are a way to build revenue from tourists and local fans. Sports are big business. A significant portion of the workforce in developed nations such as the U.S., U.K., Australia and Japan rely on the sports industry for their livelihoods."

That's nothing new to the individuals involved in local sports and recreation in western Virginia. The only real change to "the game" is that it is more intense than ever.

A community's ability to successfully market and capitalize on the recreational sports segment—with special emphasis on young people—can be summed up in a paper one student posted on a sports-related Web site. It described all the adventure and excitement of the games he played and the places he played them. The title of his paper tells it all: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." 

## Keeping Score

No one knows the true financial contribution of recreational sports to the Roanoke Valley, New River Valley and greater western Virginia region—but we have pretty good estimates thanks to several economic watchdogs (who provided many of the stats for this cover story).

The Roanoke Valley Conventions & Visitors Bureau (CVB) uses a formula, such as "x number of players times \$150 times x number of days = dollars in direct spending" which is a conservative estimate, according to the CVB. For events that include tickets or turnstiles, such as the NSA, ASA, USSSA softball tournaments held at the Moyer Sports Complex and Kiwanis Field in Salem, the CVB reports direct spending at those 18 events from July 2010 to October 2010 (less than four months) to be

**\$1,419,188.**

Communications Director Catherine Fox (pictured) says, "We know these events have a positive impact on the local economy. This is a lucrative segment of travel, much of which is organized locally."



## Windows to the soul >

When Elizabeth Taylor died, much was written about her beautiful violet eyes, and how they captivated those with whom she spoke. Ms. Taylor visited Radford University while I was a student there to campaign for her husband, Sen. John Warner. When I looked into those violet eyes, I realized it was more than the color of her eyes that captivated; rather it was how she used those eyes. When she talked to me, she held my eyes completely, and didn't look around to see who else was watching or listening. Flattering and captivating. You bet. I never forgot it.

In our culture, we typically make direct eye contact about 40-60 percent of the time. If we don't make proper eye contact, we could be considered sneaky, untrustworthy or even lying. On the other hand, if we hold a gaze too long, we can intimidate and be considered over confident, rude or aggressive.

Although proper eye contact is necessary for social and business communications, some of us have a hard time doing this. I tell my clients that, if they are shy, to look at the spot between the eyebrows and it will appear they are making eye contact.

The 40-60 percent standard doesn't necessarily hold true in other cultures. In some Middle Eastern traditions eye contact is very long, lingering, and intense. This can intimidate Westerners, so if you are doing business in those cultures be aware, and resist the urge to break eye contact. We share a language with the English, but some of our habits are quite different. While we make direct eye contact when speaking, our British colleague will often look away while speaking, and then look at you directly to indicate that it is your turn to talk.

In Japan or China direct eye contact could be a sign of disrespect. Children are taught to lower their eyes when speaking to a superior or an older person. However, it should be noted that the well-traveled Japanese or Chinese person has studied western culture and makes direct eye contact easily. We could take a lesson here, and study all cultures if we wish to excel in the global marketplace.

Our eyes reveal a great deal about ourselves and others. Eyes reveal love, happiness, sadness, bitterness, hatred, amusement, sincerity, trust, distrust; in fact the whole range of human emotions. So let's be aware of what our eyes are telling others. We might be sending a very different message from what our words are saying. 

## Etiquette & Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

**Executive Summary:**  
*Proper eye contact varies widely, depending on the culture. Be sure you get it right. You could inadvertently offend.*

## Business can become personal >

**Dear Getting a Grip:** *I had to fire my best friend last week from the company which I co-own because it is losing money and we simply can't afford him anymore. He has a wife and two children and a mortgage and I feel truly terrible about this. He has been as good a friend as I've ever had, has always been there for me in difficult times and I don't want to lose that friendship. I feel guilty because I chose him over me.*

**Dear Lost:** One of the greatest challenges business owners face is negotiating the corporate and personal spectrum in the workplace. On the corporate end of the spectrum, a company is a business entity, a human construct derived to standardize the exchange of goods and services. On the personal end, real people work for the company, all of whom bring or develop relationships with each other, from the superficial and distant, to the creative and close.

The company's owner is both one of those people and the one responsible for the business entity that provides the livelihood for all. Company owners must be agile and strong, as they will be required to move quickly, sometimes forcefully, along that corporate and personal continuum.

"A company terminated employment of one its employees because the company's profit was insufficient to cover the wages and benefits of the employee" is a statement from the corporate end of the spectrum. "I fired my best friend," is definitely from the personal end.

**Getting a Grip:** Many friendships, especially between those of unequal status within a company, cannot survive the workplace because they operate too far on the personal end of the corporate-personal spectrum to endure the requirements of preserving and growing a company. Especially in a tough economy, it can get really lonely at the top.

Feeling lonely, "terrible," guilty—all real and legitimate—can lead to bad business. The risk of failing on both ends of the corporate-personal spectrum can be mitigated by company leaders if they connect with others in similar positions. Not only will they create collective knowledge and wisdom about company leadership, thus strengthening their positions on the corporate side of the spectrum, they can be there for each other during the very personal hard times when a best friend has to be fired, knowing that friendship may well be gone forever. 

*Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to [grip@handshake2o.com](mailto:grip@handshake2o.com).*



## Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

### Executive Summary:

Getting too close to those we supervise has a way of not working out so well.

## Footwear : Get it right >

# Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

**Executive Summary:**

*The right shoe keeps the right outfit ... well ... right.*

A reader asks, "Nothing can ruin the effect of a great outfit quicker than the wrong shoes. Why is that? When are loafers proper for business dress and when are tie shoes required?"

An outfit creates an image. It conveys a dressed up, business-like image, or a dressed down, casual attitude. The wrong shoe interrupts that message and confuses the observer. The design features of garments or accessories either contribute to the mood of the outfit, or detract from it.

Lace-up shoes have long been the choice for business wear. Oxfords are the most formal lace-up men's shoes and they look great with a business suit. Brogues are a slightly more casual version of the lace-up shoe because of the design perforations on the upper. They complement a business casual outfit, such as a sports coat and flannel trouser. Some lace-up shoes appear more casual than Oxfords or Brogues, with more topstitching and design features, giving them appeal in today's business casual atmosphere.

Loafers were an American innovation in the 1930s. At first, proponents of traditional footwear viewed wearing loafers to be akin to wearing slippers in public. Nevertheless, the style caught on, with Italian shoemakers creating versions that are elegant and comfortable, such as Gucci loafers.

Versatile enough to complement anything from a casual summer suit to jeans, Gucci loafers exude a casual attitude no matter how expensive the materials. They coordinate well with corduroys, tweed, cashmere and wool flannel, but also look great with khakis, jeans and polo shirts.

English shoemakers favor tassel loafers, cut higher on the foot and with a dressy appearance. They are accepted as "business wear" in the U.S.



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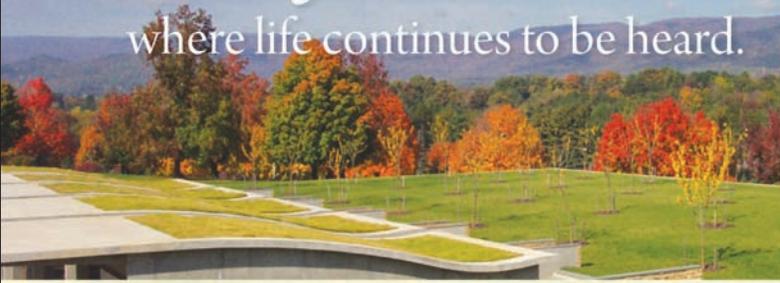
Despite this versatility, loafers have their limits. As Bernhard Roetzel of the Men's Guide to Grooming and Style noted, "Today loafers have long been accepted as classics—but on really formal occasions lace-up shoes are still preferable."

Simple rules to remember:

- Lace-up Oxfords are dressiest for serious business attire, with a smooth finish, very little surface design and dark color.
- Tassel loafers are considered business wear. However, more casual loafers clash with a business suit.
- The more topstitching and hardware, the more casual the shoe.
- When in doubt, go for the dressier shoe. An Oxford can dress up dark jeans.
- For formal events patent pumps, patent Oxfords or Black Gucci loafers are acceptable. 



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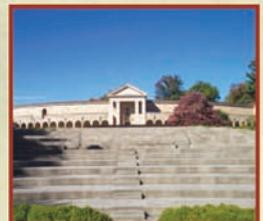
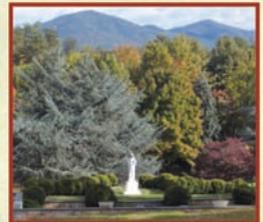
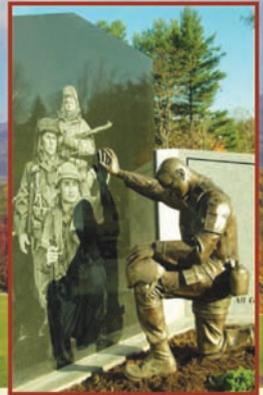


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Dan Smith

**Harvey Brookins Jr.: "The flow of new loan dollars into our communities represents a very powerful statement for job creation and for economic development."**

## Getting a loan in tough times >

### **Executive Summary:**

*It often comes down to preparation and the best prepared customers have the best shot at getting the loan.*

### **By Susan Ayers**

One of the most challenging tasks that small business owners face is finding the money to operate. The outcome of the loan application often boils down to how much preparation the applicant has put into the process.

"Banks are in the business of making loans," says Stellar One Senior Vice President Karen Turner. "However, it is essential that the repayment question be answered positively. Often the route to a successful outcome lies in the information presented to the bank."

Banks have always had a thorough underwriting process. The rules are not

new and the types of business loans that were offered in the past are still being offered today. "However, the recent heightened expectations of regulators, investors and the public for financial industry soundness have enhanced the process, making it seem more meticulous for bankers and their clients alike," says Turner.

"We're making a variety of business loans today as we have in the past," says HomeTown Bank Executive Vice President Terry O'Shaughnessy. "Banks are under regulatory pressure today and have become more diligent in the underwriting process. With the economy as it is, banks tend to make fewer exceptions to guidelines and exceptions made are fewer and farther between than when things were going well."

Fundamentally, the underwriting process is designed to help a commercial banker answer the following simple question: Can the business afford to repay the loan according to terms?

Turner says the underwriting process is like peeling an onion. The different layers represent various areas of risk that must



**Terry O'Shaughnessy: "Banks tend to make fewer exceptions to guidelines."**

Dan Smith

be assessed—those related to management, business, industry, strategic and financial risk. Examining these layers helps answer the one simple question. The goal is always to get to a "yes."

"There are times that the process reveals a 'no,'" says Turner. When "no" is the answer, it adds to the perception that the only way you'll get a loan is if you don't need it. I encourage any small business applicant to discuss the reasons for the loan decline

with their banker" and discover what would have to change to get a "yes."

This conversation could change the course of any loan decision. If that isn't the case, knowing where to go next to fund a business loan is important.

Because small business owners have to accomplish so much with limited resources, many do not have the time to pull together the package and often they don't realize

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Dan Smith

**Karen Turner: "The route to a successful outcome lies in the information presented to the bank."**

the benefit of providing a thorough loan package.

Virginia's Small Business Development Centers exist to provide this type of assistance. This region maintains offices in Roanoke and Radford that offer help in the areas of business planning, marketing, financial analysis and access to capital. Additionally, SCORE is a non-profit that helps small businesses start, grow and succeed. SCORE is part of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

and has operated more than 40 years.

"SBA lending is a crucial part of helping small business owners because it offers an alternative to those who may not be able to obtain traditional bank financing," says Wachovia Business Banking Manager Harvey Brookins Jr. Wachovia is a Wells Fargo company. "We believe that the flow of new loan dollars into our communities represents a very powerful statement for job creation and for economic development."

How are women faring in this economic climate? SBA reported in October 2010 that women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing sectors of our nation's economy and that even during the economic downturn of the last few years, have been one of the key job creation engines in communities across the country.

In early May 2011, the Federal Reserve reported that approximately 27 percent of respondents to its quarterly survey of senior bank loan officers revealed increased loan demand by large companies and that the appetite for loans from small businesses rose 10 percent.

"We continue to do what we can to make credit available to help our nation's economy recover." says Brookins. "There may be some unexpected challenges that a business will face. Before a lending need arises, we encourage business owners to establish a business relationship with their banker. Businesses that have relationships with us give us a chance to learn more about their business and their financial needs." 



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**Bill Hackworth: “People don’t stop and [think] about what they’re asking for.”**

Gene Marrano

## Attorney for the people >

### Executive Summary:

*In the Roanoke City Attorney’s office, the range of law practiced is wide and the challenges are constant.*

### By Gene Marrano

Bill Hackworth realized soon after taking over as City Attorney in Roanoke in 1999 that plans can go astray, dictated at times by the headlines.

Hackworth and his staff of five assistant city attorneys—each with a specific area of legal expertise—are often putting out fires. Each gives legal orientation sessions for the departments they work with on a regular basis.

He figures there are about 75 city government entities that the office serves, not to mention the interests of 90,000 citizens. “Ultimately we’re charged with protecting the public,” he says. On some issues that seem to get certain taxpayers riled up, many times at City Council meetings, Hackworth offers this explanation: “A lot of people are misinformed to begin with.” Freedom of Information requests are often too vague or complex: “People don’t stop and [think] about what they’re asking for.”

Hot button issues like Victory Stadium and property condemnation at the Riverside Medical complex on South Jefferson have kept his office busy, but there are many routine tasks as well. The office drafts and reviews all city contracts, provides legal opinions for city council and the school board, handles all real estate transactions in Roanoke and collects debts owed for utilities, weed cleanup, property liens, etc.

## In Brief

**Names:** William M. "Bill" Hackworth

**Employer:** City Attorney for Roanoke

**Age:** 62

**Location:** Roanoke

**Background:** Hackworth earned a bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University, and graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1973. He added a master's in public administration from the University of Virginia in 1981. After clerking in United States District Court (1973-1974) and serving as a trial attorney for the United States Department of Justice in Washington, Hackworth was the assistant City Attorney in Roanoke from 1978-1988. City Attorney since 1999. He has served as president of the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia organization. His two children are a lawyer and a doctor. An avid reader and history buff. His first wife died and he is married to Ann Hackworth, a journalist. Avid bicyclist. Rode the Blue Ridge Parkway for his 60th birthday.

**Philosophy about his job:** Hackworth prefers the "preventative practice of law," trying to stay ahead of the curve legally to avoid problems later. "We're trying to protect our clients [and] the public." He also likes to get things done. "Its not always easy in government."

It's not always routine: "[Many] laws have changed," says Hackworth, noting that Lexus Nexus and other online tools have made research much easier these days, when there is an "alphabet soup of regulations. Our practice has become a lot more complicated." Most of the time

legal precedents and case law elsewhere in the Commonwealth are the touchstone, He says, "We don't often look out of the state for legal guidance."

Not that he shies away from a challenge: the former long distance runner is now an



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avid biker and has cycled the entire Blue Ridge Parkway route twice to date, the second time to celebrate his 60th birthday.

The City Attorney's office defends council and the school board when lawsuits are filed—as was the case with now-demolished Victory Stadium, which some wanted to save from the wrecker's ball and renovate. "[That] has kept me busy for years," says Hackworth with a smile about an issue that generated several suits. In general, since he started in local government, "the whole pace of practicing law has picked up considerably." Criticism comes with the territory, one reason he avoids partisan politics.

Hackworth recalls his first days as City Attorney in Roanoke, when he came to town armed with an ambitious to-do list. He was met head on by an environmental issue, when barrels of toxic materials were found buried on city property. The EPA and DEQ had something to say about that. The to-do list was addressed several weeks later. "It gets interesting sometimes," Hackworth understates. 



Bill Hackworth has biked the Blue Ridge Parkway twice.

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**Dr. Johathan Till:** “The black magic is going away.”

## Science guy >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Jonathan Till uses his broad interests to dabble in a whole lot more than the human eye, where he is a specialist.*

### **By Erin Pope**

Dr. Jonathan Till, one of Roanoke’s better known ophthalmologists, is something of a polymath: an expert in a lot of areas.

When Till and his wife, Dr. Linda Till—a respected local periodontist—moved into their shared Electric Road office building in 2008, he wanted a say in the location’s external and interior appearance. He says he inherently enjoys the process of “building and constructing, since most things in medicine are always changing and under construction.”

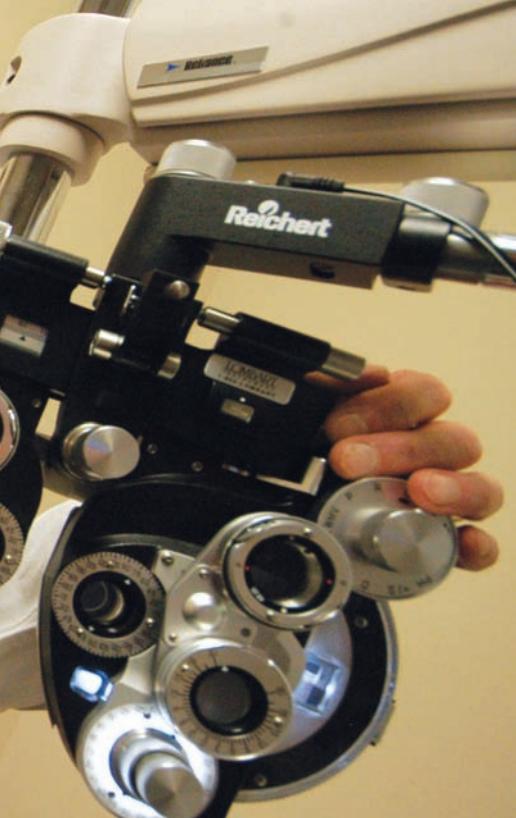
He points to the lobby’s calming décor, as well as the gentle curvature of the front entrance, and says he specifically planned the building to look welcoming and “almost like a hug” to the public.

A former physics major at Emory University, Till excelled in the sciences, and was gently pressured by his family to attempt the rigors of medical school. He says that ophthalmology initially appealed to him because that particular specialty involved “lasers, optics, and all the other physics-related stuff I already liked.” The human eye is essentially “an example of cellular histology,” says Till. “I think it’s fascinating how the problems are obvious to pinpoint.”

Till’s interest in science is more than simply career-oriented, however; his outlook is a visionary one, and he’s intent on discovering advanced ways to approach the ways we all regard eye care.

Till’s fondness for fine details and scrutiny has earned him a long list of admiring clientele, and his curiosity about the world at large extends far beyond ocular medicine. His inventive touches are obvious throughout his practice. His ease with computer programming prompted him to create an office-wide system that simplifies patient referrals between his office and other doctors, and he regularly attends conferences comprised of other ophthalmological professionals.

A visit with him is like hanging with Carl Sagan.



Erin Pope

Till worked at LewisGale for 23 years until he decided to invest in top-notch technology when he moved into his own office. He makes sure to retain his proficiency with any advances in the ocular sciences—from computer programs, to journal articles written by peers, to pharmaceutical methods which may prevent the average set of eyes from aging as quickly.

“The black magic is going away,” says Till when asked about how his field has changed since he began peering into eyes for a living. Advances in other areas—even astronomy—

have had direct impacts on how ophthalmologists treat conditions like the intense eye pressure associated with glaucoma, as well as myopia and presbyopia, and the myriad afflictions that can plague hypersensitive eyes. “Eye varieties are pretty much like flavors of ice cream,” says Till. “They might all be the same relative size, but there are hundreds of different flavors and factors that make each one special. We have to figure out how to treat everybody.”

Till surmises that it’s probably impossible to gauge how much further his field can go, but wants to improve the entire spectrum of what we consider “good” eyesight. His office has already pioneered new surgical methods, from crystal lenses for cataract patients, to an astigmatism procedure he’s performed longer than any other ophthalmologist in the area. He also points out that most of his procedures have a relatively fast recovery time, and that patients are ecstatic to have their eyesight perfected so quickly.

Still, Till strives for his clients’ complete ocular impeccability. “We need to try better,” he insists. He’s researching concepts like retrogenetic engineering—wherein scientists have figured near-miraculous ways to fix chromosomal abnormalities—and says he’d even like to broaden the human ability to visualize the world partly by “other wavelengths. Other animals are pulling it off, but we’re not yet.” 

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### Blogging 101 >

**Executive Summary:**

*It's time to back up and see what all the fuss is about and to set some ground rules.*

**By Janeson Keeley**

Wikipedia defines a blog (or "Web log") as a type of Web site characterized by "regular entries of commentary, descriptions of

events, or other material such as graphics or video." Unlike traditional Web sites, blogs usually allow comments between the visitors and the author.

Blogs can be divided into three categories: news, opinion and commentary, and promotional.

News blogs may be produced by traditional media outlets, such as newspapers, or may be authored by citizen journalists. A true news blog applies journalistic standards to its posts and uses the blog as a means of publishing news more quickly than a traditional publishing cycle allows. Valerie Garner, author of [www.roanokekfreepress.com](http://www.roanokekfreepress.com), is a citizen journalist who also writes for The Roanoke Star-Sentinel. She notes that, "With a weekly [newspaper], I go into much more detail" than in a daily post.

Anyone can write a blog based on opinion, commentary, or experience. "Bloggers have the freedom to be controversial, provocative, opinionated in ways that professional journalists filing news stories don't," says novelist, non-fiction writer, and former OMNI magazine editor, Keith Ferrell ([landlessons.blogspot.com](http://landlessons.blogspot.com)) of Franklin County. "To get a good sense of this, take a look at a piece of bylined reporting written by a journalist who also blogs. The differences between the two should be clear."

For example, Valley Business FRONT's blog, [morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com), is strictly a news blog, subject to the same journalistic standards



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as the magazine, while editor Dan Smith's blog, [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com), is a personal blog that, as Smith says, "has nothing to do with FRONT or with journalism."

Businesses and organizations can use blogs to "trumpet a new invention, offer explanations, inform, or entertain," says Anita Firebaugh, freelance writer, lifestyles blogger ([bluecountrymagic.blogspot.com](http://bluecountrymagic.blogspot.com)), and former news reporter. She adds, "A well-used blog is another promotion tool, just like Facebook or Twitter ... and should be a part of a marketing plan and utilized to best fit the business needs."

Some tips for effective business blogs:

Garner recommends that you familiarize yourself with copyright and defamation laws as they apply to blogs. Civil or criminal suits can be brought against bloggers who,

knowingly or unknowingly, violate these laws.

Ferrell cautions: "Be accurate in your blogs, and that includes attending to the 'basics' such as spelling and grammar. Don't build the best business in the world and then send the message that you're less than literate."

Firebaugh suggests that a company or organization decide ahead of time how comments will be handled. She recommends moderating comments, and notes that, "to create a blog and accept comments and then offer little in the way of active response is futile. People will not come back."

Finally, if you decide that a blog would fit well into your marketing plan, make sure that you commit resources to it on an on-going basis. A blog with two six-month old entries conveys the message, "Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time." 

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Roy D'Ardenne (standing) conducts training session.

## Emphasis on standards >

### Executive Summary:

*International standards, embodied in the ISO qualification, has taken on an level of importance that tells exporting companies they must comply to compete. D'Ardenne Associates helps companies qualify.*

### By Gene Marrano

ISO standards (International Organization for Standardization) have been around since the mid-1980s, first as a benchmark for manufacturing (ISO9001), then for environmental, occupational safety and health, food safety and information security. A Roanoke-based training firm with more than 120 years of real-world experience collectively is now bringing its expertise to organizations regionally and nationally.

Roy D'Ardenne decided to go into business himself in 1993 after going through several downsizings and job

changes in the manufacturing world. Within the past year he has expanded, bring on Vice Presidents Steve Anderson, Clay Hodges and Susan Snyder. Each has experience in a particular industry niche.

D'Ardenne Associates concentrates on ISO training and consulting for aerospace and defense, IT service management, automotive, environmental and health firms, among others. It conducts audits, offers management consultation, logistics support and training for topics ranging from operational efficiency to systems implementation.

"We are training all types of businesses and industries," says Roy D'Ardenne, "depending on [the business model]." Changes over the past decade have put less emphasis on ISO documentation and more on process monitoring.

The firm features four-day training programs for clients at Hotel Roanoke, a curriculum endorsed by Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement. D'Ardenne says the goal "is to bring people to the Roanoke area."

An affiliation with BSI Management Systems



**D'Ardenne Associates' Clay Hodges, Susan Snyder and Steve Anderson with D'Ardenne.**

(formerly an arm of the British government has helped towards that end. There are some funds available from Virginia's Department of Business Assistance to defray the costs of ISO training.

The goal for companies D'Ardenne Associates works with is having international standards put in place, with corporate buy-in from the top of the management pyramid to assembly line and office workers. Making sure a firm's workflow isn't affected by ISO implementation is paramount: "Our number one priority is not to interrupt the work," says Snyder.

ISO standards certification—often demanded by buyers of products and services—helps improve quality, drive innovation, facilitate global trade and provide safeguards for employees. According to D'Ardenne, he performs third party certification audits after a firm implements ISO standards. He's

worked with businesses that have employed as few as five people.

Snyder worked with government contractors in the aviation industry, where AS9100 is the specific version of ISO. "There's a lot of [aerospace] in this area, people just don't realize it," says Snyder, pointing to Federal Mogul, the Radford Arsenal and Moog as three examples.

Costs for training varies considerably and can run into five figures.

"A lot of times you can use existing processes and documentation – and not offer a lot of extra 'fluff' they don't need," says Anderson. "It's all about closing any loopholes found on an initial audit [or gap analysis], from front office through the operations."

D'Ardenne says, "You are implementing a culture change. It will drive things to the bottom line." 

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**Stuart Meredith:** "When the economy is down it brings out more leasing."

Dan Smith

franchises fell victim to the recession's more cautious consumer. The number of retail establishments declined at a slower rate locally than at the state level over the past two years, for those that seek a silver lining.

Local real estate brokers and property owners that work in the retail market confirm that business is sluggish. Some see signs of growth, while others remain more reserved about what the immediate future holds. Stuart Meredith, a principal broker for Hall & Associates in Roanoke, says the outlook is "getting much better, particularly in the leasing [market]."

## Commercial real estate: A mixed report >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Real estate professionals see some movement, but it is generally slow and the outlook for the near term is mixed.*

### **By Gene Marrano**

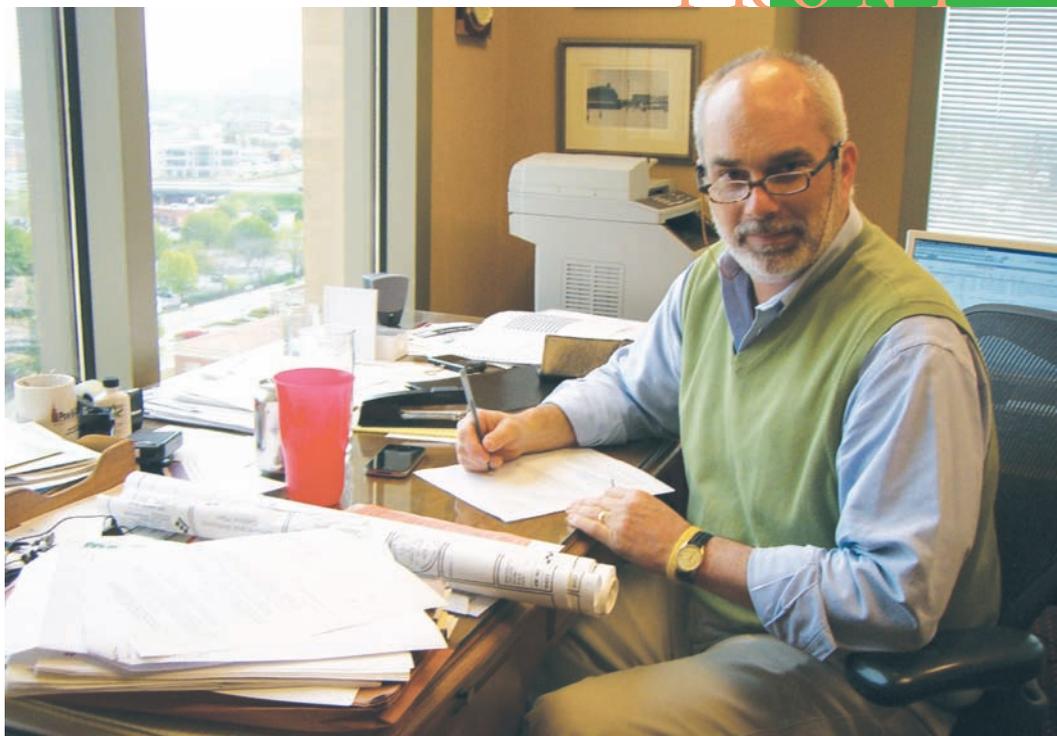
Recently, the Roanoke Regional Partnership released its second annual Report on Regional Economic Progress, which culled data from a number of federal, state and local sources. The 2011 metrics report shows, unsurprisingly perhaps, a mixed bag of results, both promising and uncertain. Tax receipt data is trending upward, even outperforming statewide data, a good sign.

That's despite the fact that numbers from 2008-2009 indicate there are fewer retail and restaurant outlets, as local businesses and

"When the economy is down it brings out more leasing," says Meredith, who sees evidence that banks are more willing to lend money. The Roanoke area's tendency to be more middle of the road economically—no wide swings on the sine curve—help now as far as retail stock is concerned: "There's not a glut [of empty spaces]," says Meredith, "[and] Roanoke was not building as fast prior to this downturn."

Smaller properties and retail spaces are moving faster, with mid-sized (2,000-4,000 square feet) the most popular, says Meredith, who is working with a mix of local and national prospects. "A few new tenants [are] in the market, which is a good sign."

Handholding of existing tenants and landlords has been necessary, says Bill Poe of Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group in Roanoke. Overall, "I think [conditions are] improving," says Poe. "People are at least looking for opportunities right now, whether they are jumping at them or not." Poe's firm is helping fill West Village in Southwest



**Bill Poe: "People are at least looking for opportunities right now, whether they are jumping at them or not."**

Dan Smith

Roanoke County, one of the few new retail success stories in recent years.

There aren't many "spec" buildings waiting to be filled says Cronk, with Keagy Village (no anchor store) a major exception, despite being "an attractive center in a good location [along Rt. 419]." It's generally better here than in other parts of the country, adds Poe.

Bill Ellenbogen of University Mall LLC in

Blacksburg says he doesn't have many empty spaces in an extensive list of holdings at the moment, although he has one that has been vacant for two years (the former Ritz Camera location).

"We used to put up a sign and we would get a lot of calls," says Ellenbogen. These days, he says, "We're not even getting any calls. People are not looking. That's a real bad sign, very unhealthy."

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**Bill Ellenbogen:** "We're not even getting any calls. People are not looking. That's a real bad sign, very unhealthy."

Ellenbogen refers to other retail properties in Blacksburg like First & Main, which he says was "shafted" by town officials when they prevented a Wal-Mart from moving in there as an anchor store. "They've got a huge portfolio of vacant spaces."

A 40-year player in the NRV market, Ellenbogen saw things slow down in 2008, with the lack of ready financing a major hurdle for those that do not have a slam-dunk business plan or product.

Prospects unable to secure lending are a major problem, according to Millie Moore of Retail Real Estate, Roanoke. Banks that were looking to the Small Business

Administration to guarantee loans are now finding that pot of money has shrunk.

"There's been no funding from the federal government for three years [despite the bills introduced]," says Moore. "We just can't seem to get ahead of the game here. We can't grow without loans." Some are taking out second mortgages or cashing in retirement plans in order to secure business loans.

"There is reason to be optimistic as recovery takes root in the Roanoke Region," the Regional Partnership's metrics summary concludes. Local commercial brokers like Stuart Meredith hope to share in that optimism: "Our guys are staying busy," he says. 

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all photos: Dan Smith

**Entry foyer**



**Conference room**

## Work Spaces

### The idea place >

#### **Executive Summary:**

*At Inprint, ideas are business and the place to come up with them is where you are.*

#### **By Susan Ayers**

Inprint had been in business 10 years when it went looking for a permanent home.

"We decided in 2002 to look for a property of our own to become a permanent home for our business," says David Mikula, a co-owner with David Harris, in whose home the business had started. They found an old home in Vinton. "This was an unusual choice to locate in Vinton," says Mikula, "but we saw enormous potential in downtown Vinton: being near I-581 and close to downtown Roanoke."

The building needed extensive renovation. Mikula and Harris did as much of the labor as they could, spending six months renovating

the property in the evenings. "There isn't a square inch of a wall, floor or ceiling that hasn't been redone," says Mikula. "It was a labor of love—a beautiful old building built in 1920 with original woodwork."

Carpet covered all the floors and wallpaper covered every wall in the house. They scraped up the carpet and stripped the walls. The floors were refinished and the walls were either repainted or re-wallpapered. The HVAC and electrical system was upgraded. And the exterior was landscaped.

The lobby with the chair well and the conference room are corporate. The kitchen has the looks of a 1950s diner with black and white checkered flooring and an Elvis clock with swiveling hips. A room with red walls dubbed the "brainstorming room" is upstairs.

Each of the three employees has a niche, but they are constantly sharing ideas back and forth and collaborating. "The way we work isn't like a plant, so where we sit and brainstorm varies," says Mikula. "We're constantly sharing ideas back and forth and collaborating. Sometimes it's spur of the moment. That's our work flow."

Mikula has a passion for working with clients to build brand strategies. To gain the greatest possible understanding of a client's strengths and weaknesses and position in the marketplace, he frequently conducts brand research,

# DEVELOPMENT FRONT

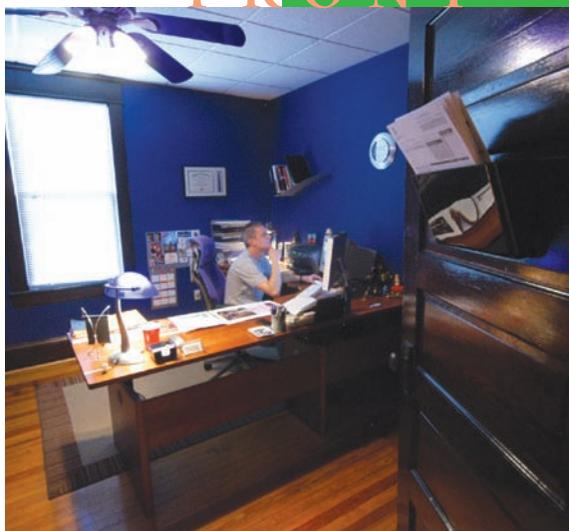


David Mikula in his office.

including interviews and surveys. He has an understanding of the client's clients as well.

"All of this research is compiled into a creative brief. With the brief to guide us, we will then collaborate as a team and brainstorm," says Mikula. "Having this research enables us to do creative work to advance the objective of the client."

He then works with the rest of the Inprint team to formulate strategies and bring brands to life. "Heather Young, our art director and David Harris, the creative director, bring a lot to the table. I'm the only one in the building who isn't



David Harris likes it dark.

a hands on designer," says Mikula.

"There is ongoing communication with clients all the way through the process," says Mikula. "I guide our clients through social media. I blog." Harris establishes the creative vision for each project. He has over 25 years of design experience.

The design studio shares space in the back portion of the building with Greg Vaughn, who photographs Valley Business FRONT's covers.

"We wanted a comforting, creative and inspiring environment and I think we pulled that off," says Mikula. 



Colorful kitchen



One panel left in the kitchen.



Stratton Delaney: "Sort of like a gentler NASCAR."

Dan Smith

## Shooting reality >

### Executive Summary:

*The rewards are simple for Roanoke's Starlight Bicycles owner Stratton Delaney.*

### By Erin Pope

Stratton Delaney reacts to life's curveballs with the typical ease of a Lone Star native. The owner of downtown Roanoke's Starlight Bicycles knew that his first child and a major rainstorm was each due the weekend of April 16—two exciting, stressful events which coincided with the inaugural Roanoke Twilight Criterion race that Delaney spent months planning.

His son was born the day before the race and the storm was Biblical, a swirling, blowing, heavy rain that did not stop the race.

A frequent customer asked Delaney if the potential deluge would affect the race, and he shrugged and said he planned on being there, regardless. When asked if he knew whether to expect a daughter or son, he smiled, shook his head and

said, "Nope. I'm fine either way."

Keirin Culture, Starlight's original incarnation, was the shop Delaney opened within the Black Dog Salvage building four years ago. It featured upscale Kazane (Japanese for "the sound of wind") frames and accessories, and the small shop quickly gained a positive reputation for providing light, custom-made, aerodynamic road bikes for reasonable prices.

Delaney still carries the company's products and recommends them to customers. Starlight Bicycles also sells well-known brands like Trek and Felt for the less intense clientele. Delaney estimates that his shop routinely displays between seven to eight different bike brands and accessories at any time, and says that Starlight specializes in constructing bikes "from the frame on up."

He says he and his assistant, Owen Nielsen, typically work on three to four models a day, and that the process "is a real challenge. It's a learning experience every single time you build one."

Delaney says he's been comfortable astride two wheels for as long as he can remember. He began entering races in high school, and has been a frequent participant in

long-distance bicycle events across the state and beyond.

Delaney had always wanted to conceptualize his own competition, and designed the Roanoke Twilight Criterion as a race that could be as much fun for the onlookers as the participants. He says it's hard for a bystander to cheer for a specific athlete in events like the Blue Ridge Marathon, since the route covers so much area. The Twilight Criterion, in contrast, offered its riders a course three-quarters of a mile long, and each participant pedaled between 60 and 70 laps. Delaney cheerfully describes the race as "sort of like a gentler NASCAR."

Delaney says his shop never has a slow season, and believes his clients' reluctance to pay for parking downtown is one of the few deterrents. Delaney knows the hardcore riders in the region, but says it's

even more rewarding to talk to the novices who've just discovered cycling. "The customers and the city have been incredibly easy to work with," he says.

Delaney bemoans that owning the shop "takes time away from your own cycling. You're always in work mode all day long; you always have to communicate and answer questions."

He says he has to be in touch with his Asian business contacts at odd hours, and how his side-project, Starlight Custom Apparel, is becoming more popular among cyclists who want personalized outerwear during statewide races and practice rides.

The reward is simple: "Being able to try out ideas because no one will tell you no. That, and not having a boss." 



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The Web opens the door for citizen journalists, bloggers and the average person to publish information.

**Valerie Garner: “If you want citizens to trust the government you have to be transparent.”**

Margaret Boyes

## Citizen journalist: A passion for politics >

### Executive Summary:

*Citizen-journalist Valerie Garner, never one to shrink from a fight, is helping to re-define how news is served up in the Roanoke Valley.*

### By Margaret Barchine Boyes

Valerie Garner has rarely strayed far from the excitement of the moment.

Examples: She bought a 1967 Chevy Camaro, which she drag raced in her hometown of High Point, N.C. She worked for the Teamsters Union, and got a job in the print industry during the days of lead type and metal plates. She moved to Roanoke in the early 1970s and worked for one day as the only woman surrounded by a sea of men in a hot, sweaty press room of the Roanoke Times.

The 64-year-old mother of two was married twice. She earned an associate degree in data processing in her 40s, spent 20 years working as an information security analyst and consultant, travelling the U.S. She became a community activist during the battle between her neighborhood group and the City of Roanoke’s proposed development for the nearby Countryside

Golf Course, and ran twice for city council.

This attractive, well-mannered woman is now a regular contributor to the weekly Roanoke Star Sentinel newspaper and the citizen journalist behind the Roanoke Free Press, a Web site she says she created “for the people.”

Valerie has a passion for politics and for writing in-depth articles where she often gives minute details about how a decision was reached. “People need to know how they [government] came to the conclusion [on a particular issue],” she says.

This drive to ensure government transparency was ignited during the Countryside issue. Valerie noted that neither she nor the residents of her Northwest Roanoke neighborhood knew the City of Roanoke had purchased the Countryside Golf Course for development, until they read about it in the daily newspaper the following day. “The whole neighborhood was shocked,” she says.

It was Valerie who rallied her neighbors and organized a meeting where two council members and a planning manager met with a packed house of residents that swelled her back and front yards. Valerie says she and the neighbors believed they had been heard at this meeting, but later felt slighted by mixed messages from officials. The experience birthed several aspects of a new Valerie Garner: advocate,

blogger, citizen journalist and politician.

Valerie says it is her nature to be curious and to learn “why.” She has never set foot in a newsroom, but she regularly attends city council meetings and frequently scoops the local media on major stories. Many of her sources trust her because of her deep understanding of the subject and her honesty.

Her focus is local politics, especially the Countryside issue, but her attention is shifting to the state because of its affect on localities. Valerie confesses to watching streaming legislative sessions as much as she can, and says she’s trying to write more about fun topics so she does not burn out on government.

Journalism puzzles her. “I don’t know where the future is [heading],” she says. “The Web opens the door for citizen journalists,

bloggers and the average person to publish information.” She believes there is little money to be made for online news, but she plugs away.

In April, Valerie was a panelist for the Virginia Coalition for Open Government’s seminar targeted for citizens, bloggers and journalists. Her topic, the Freedom of Information Act, is something she used regularly to get what she needed in the Countryside issue. “If you want citizens to trust the government you have to be transparent,” she says. “If Countryside never happened, I would never be a citizen journalist.”

Her immediate future includes doing “the Roanoke Free Press as long as I’m able. I [wonder] how long that will be? I don’t answer myself because that is admitting that it will come to an end and I don’t see that brick wall yet. I view my life the same way.” 

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



**Susan Geary:** “If you were driven to be great as a waiter, you will likely be driven in something you like doing.”

Dan Smith

## The perfect resumé >

### **Executive Summary:**

*Susan Geary of First Rate Resumés knows how to write a resumé. She should. She’s had 65 jobs.*

### **By Dan Smith**

Susan Geary gets restless after a while and that often means another job is just around the corner. She’s had about 65 of them in her 49 years, she says, and they’ve run a range from airline hostess, to radio broadcaster, to television news producer, to waitress, to real estate sales. She even dropped out of massage school.

“When I was a kid, I wanted to do everything when I grew up,” she says, grinning. “My resumé has to be pretty good to overcome all those changes. It was something I learned.”

Now, it’s something she teaches or does for you for a fee of \$300 for a new college grad to \$550 for a CEO. Her company, First Rate Resumés in Roanoke has broken the mold of two-year gigs. It began in 2000 and has run concurrently with other jobs, including a stint where some of you know the name: morning newswoman at WVTF Public Radio in Roanoke.

She has four different certifications as a resumé writer and trained at conferences and on the Internet. She is a graduate of Northern Arizona University and real estate school, but that had nothing to do with resumé writing.

And what does she do that you likely won’t or can’t? “I’ll pull a lot of useful information out of you,” she says. “You can get information on writing a resumé out of books, but it’s like copying your neighbor’s tax form. Every resumé is specific to a person.”

She says many resumés contain unnecessary jargon or “superfluous words like ‘successfully.’ Some of that is almost necessary because of Internet word searches, but you can tell when somebody has copied a resumé from a book. Use the words you would use in everyday life.”

Geary says people who have had jobs for a good while should completely re-write their resumés. If you’ve accomplished things that sound good, but you don’t want to do again, she says, don’t emphasize those. Write the resumé for the job you want, not the job you don’t want. “Leave irrelevant jobs out of the resumé unless there’s a large gap you need to fill.” Jobs should not generally go back farther than 15 years, she says.

Still, sometimes the smaller jobs are telling about ambition and drive. “If you were driven to be great as a waiter, you will likely be driven in something you like doing,” she says.

When you're out of work for more than six months, Geary says, get involved, even if it doesn't pay. "Volunteering is important" because it fills gaps and shows ambition and commitment. It is also vital for networking. "I wrote a resumé for a former housewife, who had been busy as a volunteer, got a certification as a mortgage banker and quickly got a job because of all the great contacts she had developed," says Gear.

She says the current economy has left people in an odd situation. Fifteen or 20 years on a job, which goes away, then two or three jobs in succession. "That's a stain on a resumé in normal times," she says, "but not so much now. Employers generally understand, though there now is a situation developing with employers who won't hire people who are unemployed. The government is looking into that practice. It may be illegal."

Carefully-worded cover letters remain important, Geary says. "Fewer HR managers are reading cover letters, but surveys indicate 50 percent of employers want them. A cover letter assesses written communication skills and explains why you're contacting the company. Because we rarely know which 50 percent of the recruiters want them. I believe it's best to err on the side of caution and include a cover letter every time." If you're going to write the cover, "It should be personalized to the company rather than a generic template," says Geary. "Mention what you know about the employer, and why you want to work for the company. It's a sales letter, and it's selling you" 

## Resumé tips >

Susan Geary of First Rate Resumés in Roanoke recommends your resumé contain the following:

1. Accomplishments sell. Focus on what you did to make money, save money, become more efficient, improve safety and customer service scores and by how much.
2. Dump the objective. No one cares what you want. They care what you can do for them. Use an attention-grabbing headline instead.
3. Use keywords that pertain to your occupation. Computers are now reading resúmes and are geared to search for particular words, acronyms and phrases.
4. Drop your street address. With Web sites such as zillow.com, it's easy for an employer to determine if you're upside-down on your house.
5. Use resumé worksheets so you can understand what goes into a resumé. Everyone has a different background and goals.

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Evan Lepler in his “office” at Salem Municipal Ballpark.

Dan Smith

## It ain't the money >

### Executive Summary:

*In minor league baseball, it's almost never about the money. Evan Lepler, the Salem Red Sox broadcaster, can attest to that. The satisfaction, though, is great compensation.*

### By Gene Marrano

For 25 year old Evan Lepler, a lifelong Boston Red Sox fan and Massachusetts native, it doesn't get much sweeter than this: working for your hometown team as radio broadcaster with the Salem Red Sox.

The advanced-A Carolina League team is a long way from Beantown, for sure, although Lepler has already sat in the booth at Fenway Park, making the best of it after Salem's scheduled "Futures Game" there last year was rained out. That was a contest he was set to broadcast. He went on the air for 20 minutes anyway, describing the scene to Sox fans here on WFIR 960am. "It might be the only time in my life I'd be able to do that," he recalls thinking.

Lepler hopes to make it back to Fenway someday in earnest, this time as the play by play announcer for Boston. He knows it's a long shot, but hasn't let go of the dream. "If you keep working hard there's a good chance good things can happen," he reasons.

He is a seasonal employee in Salem, supplementing his income doing winter college sports in North Carolina, where he attended Wake Forest (political science). Lepler gained experience on "Wake TV," a cable sports show dedicated to Deacons sports and was also part of a long running radio sports talk show.

During his senior year at Wake Forest the ACC Select Internet service was inaugurated at conference schools; Lepler broadcast non-revenue sports like field hockey, volleyball and soccer. On ACC Select he also webcasted a handful of men's basketball games that weren't televised – including one with Brigham Young, featuring then-freshman Jimmer Fridette.

In 2008 Lepler was recommended for a job with the South Atlantic League Delmarva Shorebirds, broadcasting road games for the low-A farm team of the Orioles. He's

not in it for the cash at this point: "A-ball level players only get around \$1,500 a month and I get significantly less than that [without club-paid health care benefits] during the months when I'm working," says Lepler. "Obviously I'm not doing this for the money. The team also provides me with an apartment during the season, which drastically cuts down on my expenses during the summer months."

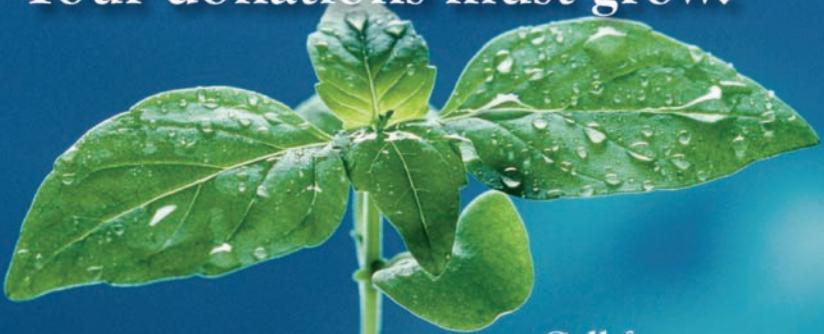
In 2009 he landed the gig in Salem, interviewing on a Monday and accepting the job on a Tuesday. Former Salem announcer Jason Benetti, now broadcasting games for the Triple-A Syracuse Chiefs, suggested Lepler to Red Sox management. "Its all about connections," he says. With Salem, Lepler does some Web site work, also sending out pregame notes and post game recaps to the media. He takes care

of the Red Sox Twitter account, as well.

In the past few offseasons he has been the studio host for South Carolina Gamecocks football and basketball on the IMG College network, filling in on other collegiate broadcasts from a studio in Winston-Salem. Lepler is also the voice of UNC-High Point women's basketball and does color on some men's games at High Point, working with his friend Benetti.

Lepler listens to other minor and major league baseball announcers on a regular basis, comparing notes. He also picks up stories from Salem Red Sox players that listeners might find interesting on the air. "I'm very proud of the energy I bring to the ball park every day," says Lepler, who continues to harbor those Fenway dreams. "I still haven't lost my passion for it." 

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## Next stop for grads >

## My View

By **Dan Smith**  
Editor

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

**Excutive Summary:** *OK, so you're now a college grad. Congratulations. Or is it condolences?*

Now that the kids are home from school, we need to figure out how to keep them busy. We're talking about the graduates here—the college graduates. The undergrads still have a lot of partying and borrowing to do, so let's leave them alone.

A consulting group called Twentysomething tells us that 85 percent of the 2011 college graduating class will move back home and that this class' debt has reached historic levels, an average of \$22,900 (according to FinAid.org) a mortarboard. That's not as much as I would have imagined the individual debt to be, given the anecdotal six-figure complaints I hear on a daily basis, but it's about what one of them could expect to make in a year. If he could get a job.

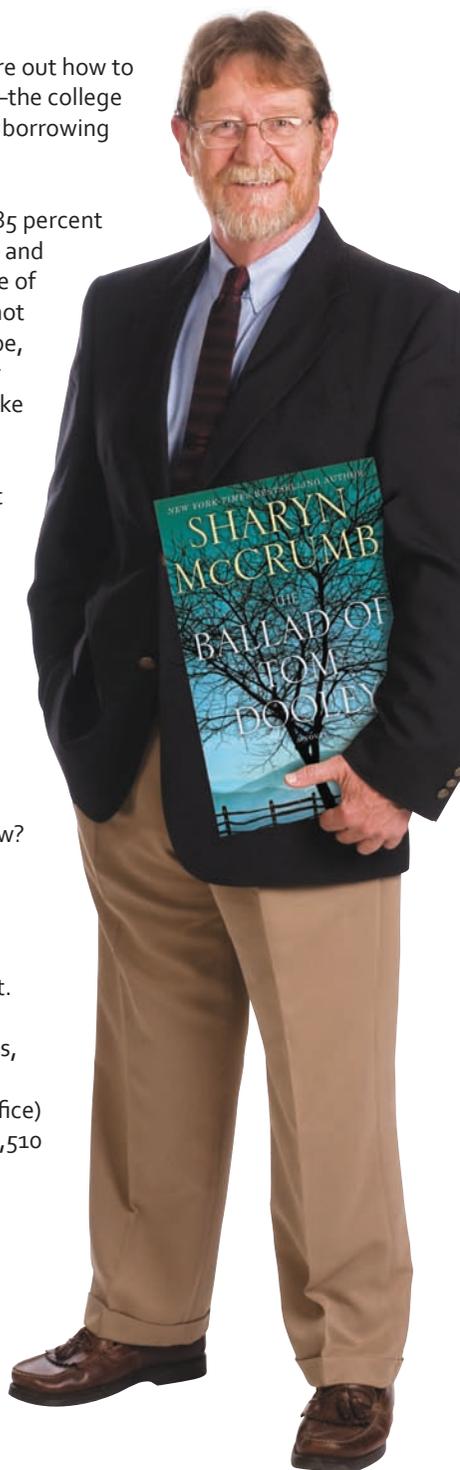
One of the immediate problems for this 85 percent is that a lot of them are moving into houses that are a lot poorer than they were when the kids left, full of hope and enthusiasm. Now that they've earned that coveted Russian art history degree, the enthusiasm is flagging a smidge. Even the counselors at the U are chuckling when the kids go in to talk about placement. "Place what?" would be a reasonable and reasoned response.

A lot of the kids made a crucial mistake—if their goal was to get a job that corresponds to their interest and their degree—when they settled on a major and, hey, who knew?

Here's the 20/20 hindsight they didn't have, courtesy of Career Explorer's Top 10 jobs for 2011 grads:

1. Network systems and data communication analyst.  
Salary \$42,00-\$116,000.
2. Physician assistants at \$55,880-\$115,080 (diagnosis, therapy and prevention).
3. Medical assistant, \$20,750-\$39,970 (running the office)
4. Medical records and health info tech, \$20,850- \$51,510 (if you're noticing a pattern here ...)
5. Computer software engineer, \$54,840-\$132,080
6. Physical therapist aid, \$17,330-\$34,100
7. Fitness trainers, \$16,120-\$60,760
8. Database administrators, \$41,000-\$104,070
9. Veterinary technologist, technician,  
\$19,770-\$41,490
10. Dental hygienist, \$44,000-\$91,000

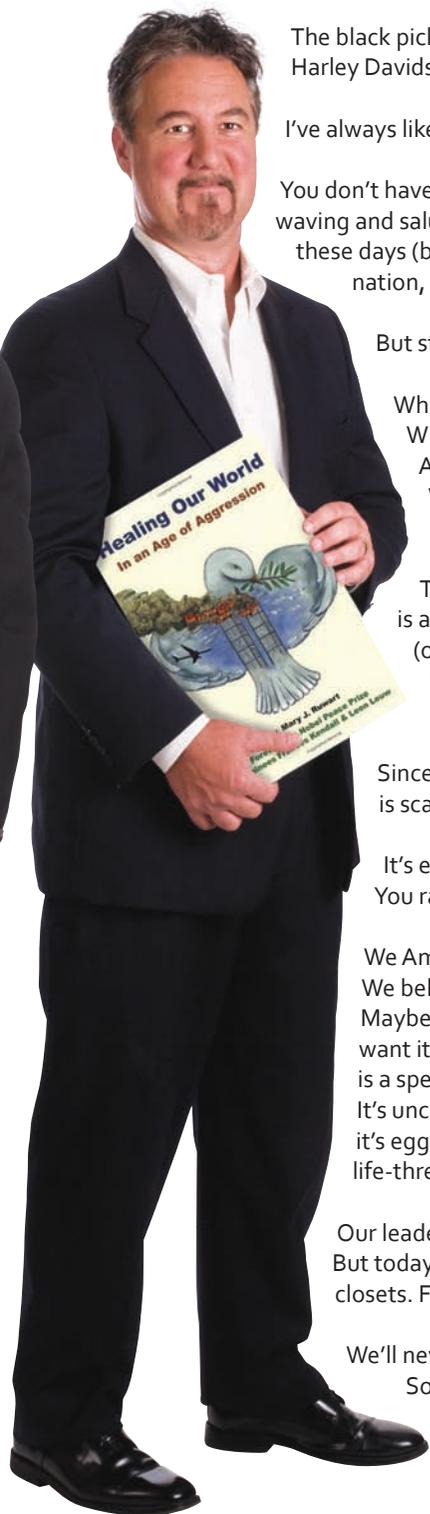
continued to Page 50



We love  
a rare bird >

By Tom Field  
Publisher

## On Tap from the Pub



The black pickup truck rolled by me. On the back glass—the familiar Harley Davidson American Eagle logo.

I've always like that image.

You don't have to cue the soundtrack of the fife and drum. I know flag waving and saluting the red, white and blue colors isn't all that popular these days (being that the USA is no more exceptional than any other nation, we're constantly told).

But still. There's that eagle.

What makes an eagle more special than any other bird? What of the robin? Or blue jay? Or dare I say, starling? And why is there such a thing as "dolphin-free tuna"? Where is the "tuna-free dolphin"? I've looked in the grocery store. It's not there.

The eagle, I suppose—like the bottle nosed dolphin—is a little more rare than the other species in its genus (or is it "genera"?). It's also pretty. Rather majestic. So, that's what it comes down to. Supply and demand. The less supply—the more demand.

Since other birds are pretty, what it really comes down to—is scarcity. And what, pray tell, makes the majestic eagle scarce?

It's endangered. It's special because it's hardly ever there. You rarely see an eagle.

We Americans love a rare bird. Take presidents, for example. We believe leaders should be exceptional. A bit above average. Maybe it's a new trend, but we're finding less majesty. Oh, we want it. Soaring. Flying. Proud. And high. But what we're getting is a species that's endangered because it has difficulty surviving. It's uncommon not because it is superior to the rest—but because it's eggs are thin-skinned and any disruption to its environment is life-threatening.

Our leaders—like bald eagles—are not flawless. They never were. But today, there are too many exposed nests, too many opened closets. Far too much reality and far too little privacy.

We'll never have eagles if they're as common as starlings. Some say we're better off without distinctions. 'Birds of a feather flock together,' right?

Sorry, but that reminds me of an Alfred Hitchcock movie. 

## Smith / My View

from Page 48

If you're keeping score, that's three computer techies and seven health and wellness workers at various educational levels, several of which are community college associate's degrees. That would represent quite a relative savings in the short run and maybe in the long run, as well, depending on what the Russian art history major decides to do with his \$100,000 education.

According to Career Cast, the 10 Worst Jobs for 2011 start with roustabouts (the guys who work the oil derricks) and move through ironworker, lumberjack, roofer, taxi driver, EMT, welder, painter, meter reader and construction. None of those requires a degree, but several of them pay more in a year than your art history major can expect to earn in a century. Hey, life's not fair.

While the art major is considering options (actually, checking to see if he has any options), Kelly Services gives some advice on which industries are red hot and may be looking for a nice liberal arts grad who has

shown ability to adjust and work cheap.

Here are a few of the options:

Consulting, elderly services, therapy (physical, occupational, speech), Internet hosting and publishing, home health care, cable programming, computer system design, mental health services, retail merchandise, outpatient care and other health practitioners, medical and diagnostic labs, employment firms (yeh, get a job for somebody else), waste treatment, physician office administration, personal care and community services, facility support, chiropractic, software publishing and passenger transportation.

Nothing strike your fancy yet? You can find one of those career assessment tests that'll put you right in the thick of things. I found one at [www.careercolleges.com/career-assessment-test/](http://www.careercolleges.com/career-assessment-test/) and it told me I am "best suited for a medical career." Wish I'd known that. Journalists earn roughly what a baker makes. In Russia. Dang. 🍷

“ ”

Company owners must be agile and strong. It can get really lonely at the top

— Page 19

## Waving at Jane

Sadly, it feels like we're waving goodbye—but maybe we're mostly just waving from across the border. **Jane Dalier**, account executive for FRONT is moving to West Virginia, as her engineer husband takes a new job in Charleston. Jane has been a wonderful champion of the FRONT and so intricately involved in all aspects, she continues to leave an indelible mark on our product and our spirit. She also has a strong connection with the New River Valley and our entire region. We suspect—and hope—the waving will also be waves of "hello" as she frequently skips over the state border, back into FRONTterritory from time to time. We wish you well, dear Jane!

*You'll always be in FRONT.*

Tom, Dan, Nick, Emily, Kathy, Judi



## Letters

### Support manufacturing

Your cover story on manufacturing in the May issue of Valley Business FRONT, "The Fight for Manufacturing" is especially valuable in reminding us that we are a country that was built on the manufacture of products. It would be to our benefit not to forget those roots and to encourage the manufacturing base, retaining those jobs on our shores and creating new ones.

**Jay Turner**  
**President**  
**J.M. Turner & Company**  
**Roanoke**

### Resources

The issue of manufacturing highlighted the importance of these deeply rooted jobs in our region. While some 40,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Virginia in the past 20 years, it may be hard to realize that the manufacturing sector contributes over 26 percent of all corporate income taxes to the Commonwealth and an estimated 27 percent of local business taxes. In addition, manufactured goods total more than 80 percent of all Virginia's exports. Plus, over 10 percent of Virginians are directly employed in manufacturing, saying nothing of the additional jobs that result from manufacturing. Business and jobs go where they're wanted. Finding more ways to grow diverse, advanced manufacturing firms through entrepreneurial efforts strengthens our economy. The rewards to our region and the Commonwealth are substantial.

**Joyce Waugh**  
**President**  
**Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce**

### Right environment

I was pleased to see such an intelligent piece on manufacturing—I should say local manufacturing. I don't believe those who write the regulations are always able to take a global view; their focus is often quite narrow. I think the most important thing government can do for local business is make sure we are providing a proper learning

environment for the education of the upcoming workforce. Keeping Virginia a right-to-work state will help avoid the kinds of labor conflicts that drive manufacturing to look for greener pastures.

**Bill Elliot**  
**President**  
**Davis H. Elliot**  
**Roanoke**

### Backing manufacturing

I challenge all of us to address the larger question [in "The Fight for Manufacturing," May, 2011]. Can a region afford to walk away from or create barriers to the success of any business sector? I hope your coverage gave some people a moment to pause. It takes effort to educate ourselves on what we have here and now and what we need to do to foster its growth. I hope you have helped to open the topic for greater conversation across our region concerning this important sector.

**Mary Miller**  
**CEO, IDD**  
**Blacksburg**

### Appreciated?

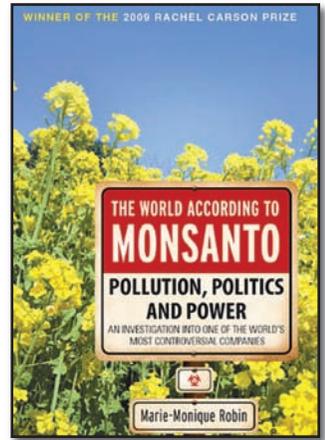
In this era of emphasis on service industries it is refreshing to see manufacturing in the spotlight for a change and to address some of the issues that manufacturers face on a daily basis. The frustration comes in the ever-changing rules and regulations, and the roadblocks and delays in expansion permitting and approvals. It makes us manufacturers feel a bit underappreciated and unwanted. Which I suppose is part of the reason so many of us are no longer around. It even makes me wonder—why do I look so happy in that photo?

**T. Joe Crawford**  
**Vice President & General Manager**  
**Steel Dynamics, Roanoke Bar Division**

*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)*

## 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 125-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)



### Secure food

If our concern regarding food security is valid, Marie-Monique Robin's *The World According to Monsanto: Pollution, Corruption and the Control of Our Food Supply* (New Press, \$26.95) is an unyielding exploration of Monsanto's century of existence and should give us pause. From its 1901 origin as a chemical producer, Monsanto emerged as a dominant fabricator of its own corporate "truth" and some of the world's most lethal products: PCBs and dioxins wiped out entire communities, Agent Orange defoliated land and collaterally poisoned millions and artificial bovine growth hormone (almost universally banned) is widely distributed in the U.S. food system.

Recently, Monsanto expanded its agricultural reach by marketing destructive products (Roundup) and questionably manipulating the seed supply by genetic modification of organisms (GMOs). Fraud, corruption and government collusion routinely pave the way for Monsanto's domination of agribusiness.

While Monsanto is a powerhouse (with 90 percent of global GMO seed patents and as the largest seed supplier in the world) this book makes clear that a sustainable agricultural system must marginalize Monsanto in order to safely nourish the global population.

—Mark Douglas Powell

### Of the people

*Lion of Liberty: Patrick Henry and the Call to a New Nation*, by Harlow Giles Unger, (De Capo Press, \$26) is a readable biography

of special interest to Virginians. Henry was the most prominent Virginia attorney of his time, perhaps the country's best orator, a popular politician who served as our first governor and four other terms in that office (he turned down a sixth term).

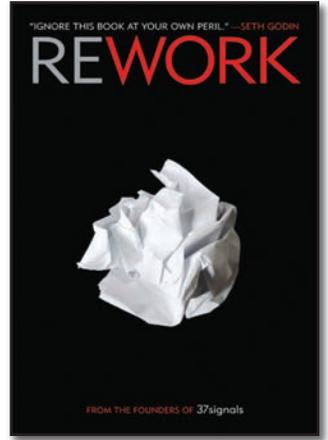
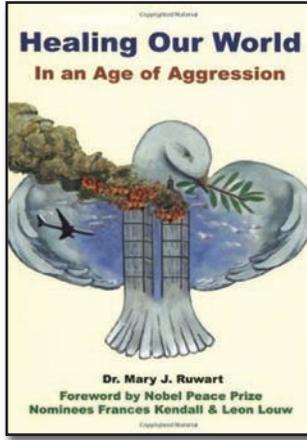
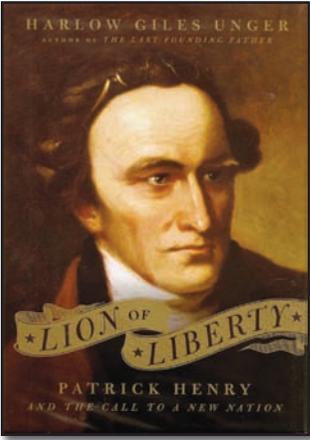
Henry was an early "tea partier," finding government (England's and ours) oppressive. He is one of the preeminent Founding Fathers (literally - he fathered 18 children, and his direct descendants number more than 100,000), but he is not as widely recognized as many of the others.

Henry saw himself as the spokesperson of the common man, while he was one of the Commonwealth's largest landowners, and from a prominent family. He opposed slavery, but did nothing to free his own numerous slaves. He served as colonel of Virginia's First Regiment of Foot, in which my ancestor William Hackworth of Bedford County served as a corporal. Henry declined appointment as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Secretary of State, and minister to Spain.

—Bill Hackworth

### Let loose Utopia

Mary Ruwart's *Healing Our World in an Age of Aggression* (SunStar Press; \$25) is one of those books that surprises. The cover is awful. Bad art that leads the reader into thinking the book is about establishing world peace. That would only happen if the whole human race embraced the same "Good Neighbor



Policy” she espouses. Too idealistic, I’m afraid.

No, the reason to get excited about *Healing* is that it offers a brilliant and simple proposition. Something that could work in a neighborhood, a state or a nation. There’s a lot of hope in this book, once we understand most authoritarian-imposed regulations do not fix our problems—they exacerbate them. Many laws enacted to “protect” us do far more harm than good.

Ruwart addresses just about every aspect of society. She systematically presents current and historic examples to support her case, followed by “a better way” in each instance, which applies her non-aggression model and shows the projected outcome. Many social justice books advocate the establishment of governmental systems (those designed to be compassionate) to address societal problems, this book says it’s dangerous when “we defer to authority figures because we believe that they know more than we do.”

Healing will appear radical to many, until you figure out our current model is radical in its opposition to the principles of freedom. I doubt this book will receive “classic” status. It should.

—Tom Field

## Rework investment

The founders of 37 Signals – perhaps the most respected development company in the U.S. and creators of *Basecamp* and *Ruby on Rails*—Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson wrote *Rework* (Crown Business, \$22) on their experience of creating a profitable small business and keeping it that way.

Reading these short ideas, revealed in a no-nonsense approach and supporting it based on their experience, was refreshing and motivating. There are so many good points in this book, it requires reading it 2-3 times to glean the full scope of the content. For example,

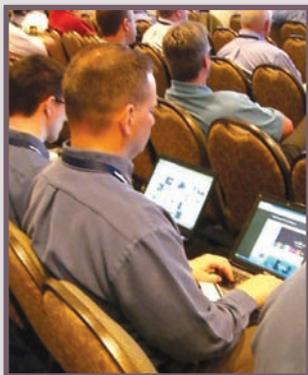
- You need a commitment strategy not an exit strategy.
- Do half of what you want to do and do the half well.
- The longer it takes to develop a project, the less likely it is to launch.
- Look for things to remove and simplify.
- Workaholics create more problems than they solve.
- Until you make something your idea is just that, an idea.

After reading the book you will understand why Mark Cuban said, “given a choice between investing in someone who has read *Rework* or has his MBA, I’m investing in *Rework* every time.”

—Stuart Mease

**(The reviewers:** Bill Hackworth is Roanoke City Attorney. Mark David Powell is active in the regional local food movement. Stuart Mease is with the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. Tom Field is FRONT’s publisher.)

# FRONT 'N ABOUT



## International Conference >

photos: Dan Smith

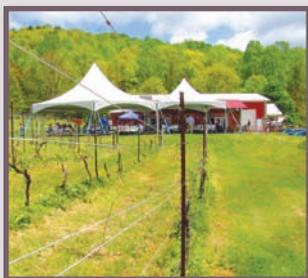
**Meridium**, the Roanoke-headquartered international asset management firm, dedicated its new/old building May 2 and held its significant Conference 2011 at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, drawing more than 300 clients and other interested parties. CEO **Bonz Hart**, who started the business in 1993 in his house and now employs 260 people, kicked off the five-day conference May 3 before a packed house (some of whose members took notes on their computers). One of the features of the conference was a Beale Treasure hunt, based on clues given at the various presentations.



## UW gathering at Hethwood >

photos: Tom Field

Looking at feeling much like an outdoor neighborhood block party, **Hethwood Market** in Blacksburg hosted a wine tasting and mini-festival on April 28 to benefit the **United Way** of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd.



## AmRhein's salutes moms >

photos: Tom Field

With mountain fog lifting just in time, a crisp sun-filled day greeted visitors to **AmRhein's Wine Cellars** winery on Bent Mountain in Roanoke County for a Mother's Day lunch, entertainment and wine tasting on May 8.

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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# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The economy continued to improve in the Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas in March. Unemployment is down and fewer people are filing initial unemployment claims. Home sales are up, while foreclosure activity is down. And the number of people flying out of Roanoke Regional Airport continues to climb.

## Unemployment/Employment

**Unemployment** dropped below 7.0 percent in March for both the Roanoke MSA and the combined Roanoke and New River Valley region. The Blacksburg MSA unemployment rate was unchanged from February, but was down sharply (-22.5 percent) from March 2010.



UNEMPLOYMENT			
	Mar. 10	Feb. 11	Mar. 11
Blacksburg	9.3%	7.2%	7.2%
Roanoke	7.9%	7.1%	6.8%
Combined	8.4%	7.1%	6.9%

The number of people **employed** in the region in March rose very slightly from February (0.05 percent), but fell from a year ago (0.6 percent). This, combined with improving unemployment rates, may indicate a smaller work force in the region. On a positive note, employment in the **goods producing** sector remained steady at 35,800 from March to March, according to the Current Employment Statistics.

EMPLOYED		
Mar. 2010	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011
220,349	218,875	218,999

The number of people filing **initial unemployment claims** continues to drop locally – 71.8 percent over the year for week 16 (April 15-21). The Blacksburg MSA dropped 80.3 percent, while Roanoke fell 66.9 percent.

INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS	
Week 16, 2010	Week 16, 2011
562	158

*Source: Virginia Employment Commission*

## Real Estate

Real estate continues its slow recovery. The average **home price**, according to the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, was up 5.7 percent in March from the previous month, but down by almost the same rate (5.6 percent) from a year ago. Nationally, home prices

dropped 3.4 percent over the year. The number of **homes sold** locally rose 22.1 percent from February, well above the national rate of 3.7 percent, but fell by 7.6 percent from March 2010. National homes sales fell by 6.3 percent from a year ago.

HOME PRICES		
Mar. 2010	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011
\$180,593	\$161,195	\$170,506

HOMES SOLD		
Mar. 2010	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011
287	217	265

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

In another sign of an improving economy, **Foreclosure** activity in March in the region was down 28.2 percent from the same month a year ago, according to Realtytrac. Foreclosure activity across Virginia dropped 24.2 percent from March to March.

FORECLOSURE		
	Mar. 2010	Mar. 2011
Blacksburg	23	17
Roanoke	147	105
Combined	170	122

*Source: Realtytrac*

## Air Travel

**Passengers boarding** at the Roanoke Regional Airport are up from both a year ago and a month ago. The number of people flying out rose sharply (26.9 percent) from March 2010 and by 4.6 percent from February.



PASSENGERS		
Mar. 2010	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011
24,929	20,540	26,079

*Source: Roanoke Regional Airport*

—By Anne Piedmont,  
Piedmont Research Associates

## Hablamos Español >

### Executive Summary:

*The increase in the region's Hispanic population has been dramatic in the past 10 years.*

### By Anne Piedmont

The increase in the Hispanic population has been one of the biggest stories to come out of the 2011 Census. More than 630,000 Virginia residents were of Hispanic origin, accounting for nearly eight percent of the total population, according to the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. That's a 92 percent increase since 2000.

Locally, the increase has been even more dramatic. The Hispanic population in the Blacksburg and Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Areas increased 154.5 percent from 2000 to 2010. Hispanics—13,275 of them—account for 2.8

percent of the region's population, up from 1.2 percent a decade ago. The localities with the highest number of Hispanics as a percentage of the population are: Roanoke City (5.5 percent), Montgomery County (2.7 percent), Franklin County (2.5 percent), Salem (2.4 percent) and Radford (2.3 percent).

Breaking down the two MSAs, Roanoke saw a 197.1 percent increase in the Hispanic population during that period, compared to 83 percent in the New River Valley. But, to get a sense of the full impact of the growth of the local Hispanic population, take a look at the 1990 Census data. There were just 2,680 people of Hispanic origin in the region. The 20-year growth is 395.3 percent.

While the percentage of the total population remains relatively low compared to the state average, the sharp increase has – and will continue to have – an impact on not just the workplace, but on healthcare, education and any other place where precise communications are important.

	2010 Hispanic Pop.	% of Total	Change from 2000
Botetourt County	356	1.1%	+96.7%
Craig County	36	0.7%	+111.7%
Franklin County	1,424	2.5%	+148.5%
Roanoke County	1,951	2.1%	+119.7%
Roanoke City	5,345	5.5%	+280.4%
Salem	601	2.4%	+193.2%
<b>Roanoke MSA</b>	<b>9,713</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>+197.1%</b>
Giles County	209	1.2%	+99.0%
Montgomery County	2,536	2.7%	+91.9%
Pulaski County	432	1.2%	+28.6%
Radford	385	2.3%	+109.2%
<b>Blacksburg MSA</b>	<b>3,562</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>+83.0%</b>
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>13,275</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>+154.5%</b>

	1990	2000	2010	90-10 Change
Roanoke MSA	1,501	3,269	9,713	+547.1%
Blacksburg MSA	1,179	1,946	3,562	+202.1%
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>2,680</b>	<b>5,215</b>	<b>13,275</b>	<b>+395.3%</b>

Source: Weldon Cooper Center, US Census Bureau

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FRONT611



Tom Field

**Billy Marshall with daughter, Olivia, who helps out in the office at Salem Specialties**

## Quiet, no longer >

### Executive Summary:

*Growing up, Billy Marshall of Salem Specialties loved his shop equipment, because "machine's don't talk." But when he became the boss, that had to change.*

### By Tom Field

When William "Billy" Marshall says he used to be an introvert, people laugh.

The wide-smiling, back-slapping, hearty-laughing "good ol' boy" from Salem sounds more like a Baptist preacher these days than the shy, demure kid who sort of creeped you out back in high school shop class.

In fact, those images of shop class... the handmade lamp stands you were forced to make, the delinquent boys hanging in the back of the room, the taste and smell of flying sawdust in your mouth, the strange man with missing fingers who never really taught much (and you wondered if he was really even

employed by the school)... Well, that's pretty much the opposite picture of Billy.

For one thing, he has all his fingers.

But indeed, he was right there—in shop class. And here he is today—running a machine shop.

"You know how people will say 'you're born how you're born'?" Marshall speaks, rhetorically. "Well, I don't believe that."

When his father handed operations of the family business down to his son, Marshall said he had to change "from the kid to the boss." And that wasn't easy.

"If you're continually involved in something you don't like, eventually it's going to get to you," Marshall says. You have to be willing to change.

Not being willing to change, says Marshall, "that's something I don't recommend to anyone."

Salem Specialties is a machine shop that employs 21 people—mostly machinists (except for the two office folk).

# EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Marshall said he grew up in the business his father started in 1965. He can't remember a time he wasn't hanging out at the shop.

He liked working with the equipment, because, as he puts it, "machines don't talk."

But as he worked his way up through the family business, up to vice president, and eventually to president, one day he understood he would have to actually manage people, be able to communicate, and be anything but an introvert to the employees who worked for the company.

He changed. He had to change.

As Marshall puts it, "I was transformed," quoting from the Bible, as he likes to do.

"Today," he says, "these folks here at the shop—why, they're some of my best friends. I enjoy them far more than the machinery."

That transformation was a good move. Salem Specialties continues to be strong in the industrial market. Marshall says the precision machining the company provides serves many vertical industries from transportation (railroad and trucking) to manufacturing (air drying systems, pelletizer equipment for plastics molding) to mining equipment, just to name a few.

"We're a machine shop," Marshall says. "Our business continues to come from long established relationships. Most of our people here have been here over 20 years."

Marshall talks about the people at Salem Specialties as if he was the preacher at a 200-year-old country church. In fact, if he has any worries (which he insists aren't really concerns, because "God is working everything toward a good end") it's the fact that he really has only one "young" person on board. The machinists he has have been very loyal.

"These are very capable people," he says. "They're company people. I've always felt like they have my back—and I have theirs."

The shop has a very "local" feel in the way it operates. On its western wing, there's a big banner that says "West Salem Table Tennis" where ping-pong games are played.

## In Brief

<b>Name:</b>	Billy Marshall
<b>Title:</b>	President
<b>Age:</b>	51
<b>Company:</b>	Salem Specialties, Inc. Since 1965 the production precision machine shop has made high tolerance (inside .005 inches) custom parts for industry, such as the railroad (switches, air products, braking), mining and manufacturing. Local accounts include Graham White (Salem), Gala (Eagle Rock), Volvo (Dublin); and Pascor (Bland). The shop employs 21 people.
<b>Location:</b>	Roanoke County
<b>Background:</b>	Locally born and raised, Glenvar area. First Salem High School graduating class (1978). Married to Carol; three children, April (21); Olivia (19); Aaron (14). Involved in Reformers Unanimous International, an addictions ministry.
<b>Philosophy:</b>	"Be thankful—for everything."

More than one person has stopped to ask if the company manufactures ping-pong tables. It doesn't.

But Marshall says his company really does reflect the "close community" like the one where he grew up (walking distance from the shop).

"Baptist Hollow," he says. "That's what they called the place where I grew up [Givens Tyler Road area of Glenvar, west Roanoke County]. We all knew each other."

Back then, Marshall says he was so timid as a kid, he wouldn't knock on his friend's door after school to see if he could come out and play.

"It was only a mile or so away. So, if he wasn't already outside where he could see me, it wasn't a big deal just to walk back home."

A lot has changed since the mid 1970s. You can't be too quiet to run a business. 

# Career FRONT

## FINANCIAL FRONT



Kakouras

### Banks

SunTrust Bank, Western Virginia has named **Van Kakouras** vice president and relationship manager within its Commercial Division in Roanoke.



Kerr

### Insurance

Scott Insurance has added **Nathan Kerr** to its Roanoke office, where he will assist commercial clients with property

and casualty risk management.



Jones



Bohn

### Investing

**Mike Jones**, CFP, has been promoted to president of JSW Financial in Blacksburg.

**Sara Bohn** has joined JSW Financial in Blacksburg as a Certified Financial Planner.

## LEGAL FRONT

### Awards

**Henry Woodward** of the Legal Aid Society of the Roanoke Valley has won the Frank W. "Bo" Rogers Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing excellence.

**Lauren Ellerman** of Frith & Ellerman was named Young Lawyer of the Year.

## WELLNESS FRONT

### Hospitals

**Dr. Miguel LaPuz**, 53, is the new director of the Salem Veterans Administration Hospital, replacing John Patrick, who left for a VA post in Oregon. LaPuz was stationed in Salisbury, N.C., where he was chief of staff since 2009 and was interim director for six months in 2010. Salem serves 112,500 veterans \$267 million operating budget. LaPuz has worked to address

the backlog of claims from veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan with disabilities to get through the compensation and pension exam process. Some veterans have reported waiting a year or more to get benefits. He is a nephrologist and has an MBA.

### Physicians

**Dr. Daryl Rich** has opened Chiropractic and Wellness on Church Avenue in Roanoke at 16 Marketplace.

## DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Katz

### Architecture/Engineering

**Lora J. Katz** has joined Interactive Design

## “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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## Have a career announcement?

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



**Rookstool**

Group in Roanoke as the director of architecture and **Travis L. Rookstool** has been named a project designer.

### Service

**James Oliver**, president of Highlander Construction & Development in

Christiansburg has been appointed by the governor to serve on the Virginia Board for Contractors.

### Real estate

Hall Associates, a Roanoke commercial real estate firm, has named **Charles Taylor** an associate, assisting with market research and marketing the



**Apgar**

company's managed properties.

Prosperity Mortgage of Blacksburg has hired home mortgage



**Chan**

consultant **Angie Apgar**.

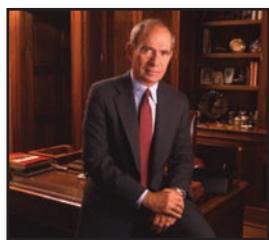
**Charlotte Chan** and **Pat Collins** have joined the New River Valley office of



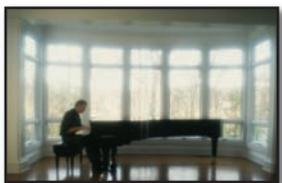
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ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

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# Career FRONT



Huff

Long & Foster Realtors.

**Matt Huff** of Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group in Roanoke has been awarded the Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) professional designation.

**Donna Travis** of Long & Foster Realtors in Blacksburg has



Travis

received the GRI designation.

## EDUCATION FRONT

### Colleges

**Josh Meyer** has been named coordinator for marketing and strategic communications at



Meyer

Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke. Meyer will also serve as the college's public information officer.

Hollins University has named **Stefanie Niles** vice president for enrollment.



Niles

## OTHER FRONTS

### Hospitality

**Tom Shaver** has been named general manager at the Inn at Virginia Tech by Benchmark Hospitality International, the Houston-based company that runs the hotel.

# Reduce Energy Use & Waste and Save Money

Volunteers for Energy is a technical outreach program which engages retired engineers, scientists and industrial professionals to help businesses, industries, institutions, and governmental entities reduce energy usage, eliminate waste, and manage natural resources efficiently.

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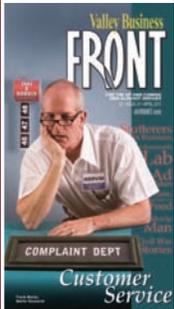
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# Coming Up...

**July 2011**

## Micro Business

Part of our current economy is the emergence or re-introduction of very small business operations. Meet them in July.

**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

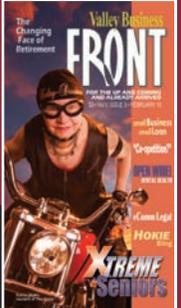
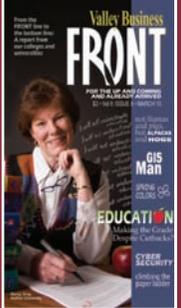
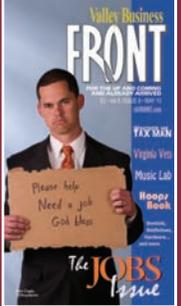
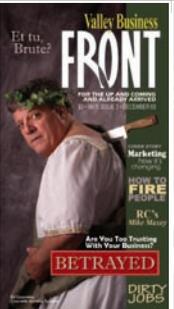
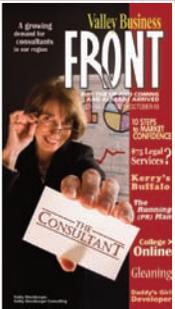
Have you noticed the increasing brands and availability of microbrew beers from our own region? Here's what's on tap in September.

## 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.

**Call Your Account Executive for more information...**

**Kathy Bibb: 540-293-2323**      **540-389-9945**  
**Judi Billups: 540-392-4178**      **vbFRONT.com**





Tech's Signature Engineering Building

## *Huge gifts for Tech*

An anonymous donor has committed \$25 million toward the Signature Engineering Building planned for **Virginia Tech**, the largest single donation ever given to the 139-year-old institution.

It was one of three multimillion-dollar contributions to Virginia Tech's College of Engineering highlighted yesterday by university President Charles W. Steger. Speaking at a press conference at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, Steger also announced \$3 million in support for the project from the Quillen family of Southwest Virginia, and the receipt of \$17 million from an estate gift in support of the mechanical and chemical engineering departments. Both will have space in the building.

The Quillens' support was led by alumnus Michael J. Quillen, who earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1971 and his master's degree in the subject in 1972, of Bristol.

The departmental support, in the form of both scholarships and professorships, is from the late Robert E. Hord Jr. of Richmond. He earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 1949 and his master's degree in power and fuel engineering in 1950.

## *Shenandoah Life sold*

**United Prosperity Life Insurance Co.** of Arizona is set to purchase **Shenandoah Life Insurance Company** of Roanoke after the landmark business had been in federal regulators' control for the past 27 months. Huge losses in 2008 led to the takeover and a buyer has been sought since then. The purchase will allow Shenandoah to emerge from receivership and will allow the investment of \$60 million into the company when the sale is finalized near the end of this year.

Shenandoah Life has policy holders in more than 30 states, but not issue new ones until the

sale is complete. Cashing in of policies will not be allowed until then, either. Shenandoah Life will apparently retain its identity and remain in Roanoke.

## *Companies share grant*

Nine projects totaling more than half a million dollars have been approved for Southwest Virginia's transportation equipment manufacturing industry. The grants provide money to make industrial plants more efficient, fuel new product creation, or beef up company research-and-development efforts, Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development announced.

The largest grant recipient is **Volvo Trucks North America**, headquartered in Dublin. Four smaller companies also competed successfully for the grants: **Salem Vent**, **Imperial Group** of Dublin, and **Dynax America** and **Metalsa** of Roanoke.

The grants are issued under a U.S. Economic Development Administration project focused on

Southwest Virginia. The money is designated to provide the kind of technical assistance that allows companies to grow and create jobs.

## *Jobs for Franklin County*

A \$220,000 Community Development Block Grant has led to the creation of 29 jobs in Franklin County. The grant will enable Solution Matrix to move its operations from Pennsylvania to a new building made possible by the grant. It will be used for infrastructure improvements that include water and sewer service. The company makes cold compression wraps. Half the jobs created by the move must go to low to moderate income workers.

## *tba wins VPA*

The Virginia Press Association has recognized **tba** (the becher agency) for the best newspaper ad of 2010 created by an advertising agency. The winning ad was created for Friendship Retirement Community with the

message: "Where acting your age is strongly discouraged."

#### *Relocation*

**Communicate Consulting** has relocated to the Christiansburg Industrial Park after spending a year and a half at the New River Valley Competitiveness Center (NRVCC), a regional business incubator, in Fairlawn.

Communicate Consulting is a marketing and public relations company. Heather Derrick of Communicate Consulting says, "We help businesses and non-profits increase their profits and build long-term relationships through strategic marketing and precise communication."

#### *Tech tuition increases*

The **Virginia Tech Board of Visitors** Executive Committee has set tuition and fees for the 2011-12 academic year rising for a Virginia undergraduate student to \$10,509, an increase of \$920. Tuition and mandatory fees for a non-Virginia undergraduate student will be \$24,480, an increase of \$1,263.

Total average annual costs for a Virginia undergraduate student living on campus with a meal plan will increase from \$15,879 to \$17,365. Out of state undergraduate students will see this figure rise from \$29,507 to \$31,336.

#### *Hotel Roanoke honored*

The **Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center**, a

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, has been recognized with three global awards within the DoubleTree by Hilton brand in 2010. The Hotel received the highest bestowed honor, The Connie Award, singling it out as one of highest rated property by customers. More than 240 hotels across the DoubleTree by Hilton worldwide portfolio were assessed and evaluated for each of these annual honors.

#### *MMT hires director*

Shortly after being rejected for one of the significant Taubman arts grants announced last month because of a suspicion about its viability, **Mill Mountain Theatre** in Roanoke hired Scott Treadway of Flatrock Playhouse in Hendersonville, N.C., as its producing artistic director. Treadway has a solid background in development, artistic directing and acting. He is a member of Actors Equity and has been in more than 140 productions.

MMT has been all but closed since January of 2009 and in that time has paid most of the debt that caused the closing. It has retained a single employee (Ginger Poole, who was also employed by Flat Rock Playhouse) during that time and has occasionally been host for productions. The theater is expected to open again in 2013.

#### *Inprint wins award*

**Inprint**, a Roanoke Valley advertising agency, and the Botetourt County Office of Tourism recently received a Virgo Award from the Virginia Association of

## *Have an announcement about your business?*

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

Convention and Visitors Bureaus at the annual Tourism Summit in Chesapeake.

#### *StellarOne dividend*

**StellarOne Corporation** has announced a quarterly cash dividend in the amount of \$0.04 per share payable on May 27. The payment represents an annual yield to shareholders of approximately 1.1 percent based on the closing price of StellarOne stock on April 26.

#### *HomeTown earnings up*

**HomeTown Bankshares Corporation**, the holding company of HomeTown Bank, reported earnings for the first quarter 2011 were \$262,000 compared to a profit of \$255,000 for the first quarter of 2010. Net income from operations improved 45 percent from \$178,000 in the first quarter of 2010 to \$258,000 in the first quarter of 2011. That was after excluding a \$77,000 gain on the sale of other real estate owned in 2010 and a \$4,000 gain on sale of securities in 2011.

#### *Bundy aids sale*

**Bundy Group**, an investment bank with offices in Roanoke, recently represented

Progressive Technologies Inc., a North Carolina-based custom battery pack manufacturer, in a sale to Universal Power Group, a Texas-based distributor and supplier of batteries and related power accessories.

#### *Entrepreneur site*

Help for the Roanoke-based entrepreneur has never been in short supply and now it is even more plentiful with a comprehensive Web site. The **Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce's** new [www.roanokeentrepreneur.com](http://www.roanokeentrepreneur.com) features the resources it offers that include funding and a wealth of advice.

#### *News shakeup at WDBJ*

The personnel shuffle continues at **WDBJ7 television news** in Roanoke with the hiring of a new news director and a new evening news anchor, both replacing highly-thought-of professionals. Dan Dennison, who has 37 years in the news business, replaces the respected—and fired—Amy Morris as news director. Dennison comes off a recent job in Hawaii where he was downsized, but has an impressive resumé.

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Susan M. Ayers** is a Roanoke-based freelance writer who has written articles on a wide array of topics that have been published in various media. As a former mortgage banking executive, she has experience in technical writing and business correspondence including white papers, management briefings, systematic analyses, awards programs, performance standards and responses to correspondence of a sensitive and confidential nature. [susanmayers@cox.net]

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**Anne Giles Clelland** is the founder of business news site Handshake 2.0 (handshake20.com) and the president and CEO of Handshake Media, Inc., a new media PR firm and member company of in Blacksburg. She has master's degrees in education and in counseling and is part of a team organizing the inaugural New River Valley Triathlon. [anne@handshake20.com]

**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]

**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. [harshbrgr@aol.com]

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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]

**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]

**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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**Greg Vaughn** is an award-winning Roanoke area photographer for more than 30 years whose work has appeared in local and international publications. [greg@gregvaughnphotography.com]



**Rob Johnson**

**MAY 2011 >**  
**Contributor of the Month**

**Rob Johnson**, whose work for FRONT has been flawless for nearly two years, is once again the Contributor of the Month for his work on May's cover story on manufacturing. It is a huge topic that took Rob's particular expertise and reporter's eye for detail and relevance that is so valued by publications like the Wall Street Journal and New York Times, for whom he is also a contributor. His excellence is appreciated and the fact that Rob is one of the nicest, most professional people around is a bonus for us and for you.

“”  
thousands  
of rooms  
are booked  
throughout  
the area

— Page 12

“”  
machines don't talk

— Page 6

“”  
If you keep working hard there's a  
good chance good things can happen

— Page 46

Meanwhile, Keith Humphry (61), the long-time anchor of the evening news at WDBJ who has retired, has been replaced by 23-year-old Chris Hurst, who will co-anchor the news at 6 and 11 p.m. Hurst has been in the business a year and a half; Humphry had 31 years.

*Tech Council name change*

The **NewVa Corridor Technology Council** (NCTC) is now the

Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC). The name change was announced at the TechNite Awards banquet on May 12. According to a statement from the board, the name change will "better identify us as an ambassador to our region" and "enhance our position for Internet search results."

*Radford Arsenal sold*

**BAE Systems**, a British company that has a U.S. base in Arlington, has won

a government contract, estimated at \$850 million over 10 years, and will take over operations at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant. BAE has a plant in Kingsport, Tenn., as well. The pending sale was reported several months ago in FRONT. Alliant Techsystems had managed the plant since 1995 and Hercules sold to Alliant, having managed it since its opening in 1941. BAE says it plans no major changes except that the plant is considering manufacturing commercial

products in addition to its military output. The plant makes propellants and explosives and BAE will direct the expenditure of \$400 million in facility improvement in the coming years.

*Compiled by Dan Smith*

**FRONT Notes posted daily online at [moreFRONT.blogspot.com](http://moreFRONT.blogspot.com).**  
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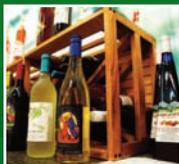
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Proper eye contact is necessary for social and business communication

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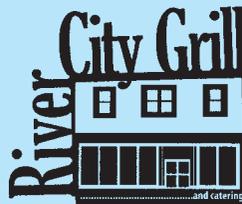
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