

The Business Journal

of Tri-Cities Tennessee / Virginia

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Plus Aerospace Park drives regional momentum *and* BTES earns the Baldrige

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COVER STORY

14 2017 40 Under Forty

This year's class of rising stars in the business community is the Silver Anniversary group, and includes the 1,000th honoree in the award's history.

Photos by Tara Hodges,
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Office 423.854.0140
or 423.979.1300

Publisher

William R. Derby
bderby@bjournal.com
423.979.1300

Co-Publisher

Jeff Derby
jderby@bjournal.com
423.306.0104

Managing Editor

Scott Robertson
srobertson@bjournal.com
423.767.4904

Director of Business Development and Marketing

Jeff Williams
jwilliams@bjournal.com
423.202.2240

Robin Williams
rwilliams@bjournal.com
423.794.6938

Creative

Derby Publishing, LLC
Graphics Director / Judd Shaw
jshaw@bjournal.com
423.833.2726



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FEATURES

10 A new example of true regional cooperation

The signing of the Aerospace Park funding agreement could serve as a platform on which to build more cooperative ventures. In the meantime, the airport is seeking to use it as a platform to receive more state funding.

12 BTES wins the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

Bristol Tennessee Essential Services becomes the fifth winner from Tennessee and the third from the Tri-Cities.

38 Tri-Cities Crossings goes live

The first tenant for the long-awaited Tri-Cities Crossings will be the largest KIA dealership in Tennessee.

42 \$2 million in financial empowerment

The United Way of Southwest Virginia and two partners are investing more than \$2 million to help the region's employers improve their employees' financial skills, and employers are eagerly signing on.

DEPARTMENTS

Kingsport 100 Business Minute5
From the Editor.....7
Trends.....9

On the Move44
Awards & Achievements44
The Last Word46

KINGSPORT 100

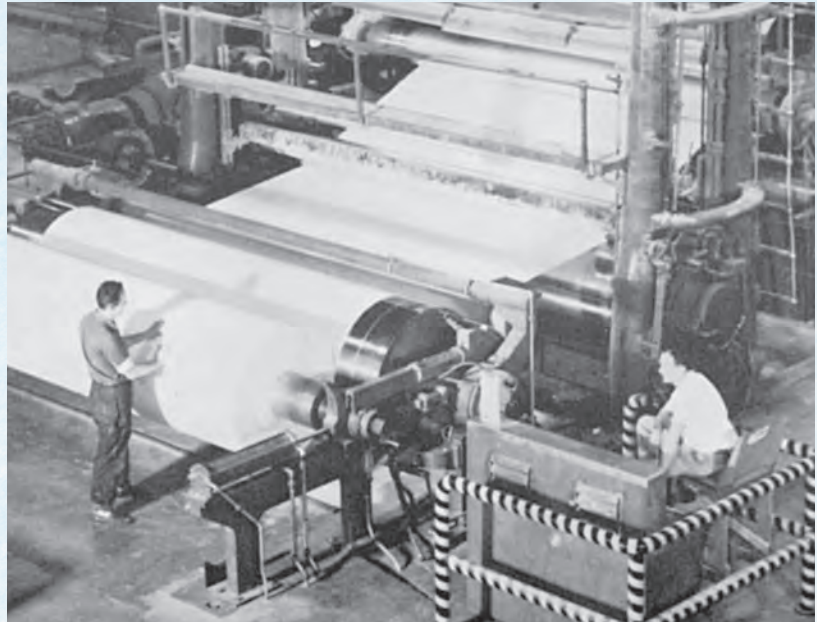
Celebrating the Kingsport Spirit ▶ 2017

DOMTAR'S KINGSPORT OPERATION WELCOMED CITY TO CENTURY CLUB

Domtar, the owner of Kingsport's paper mill, got a one-year Centennial head start on the rest of the city, celebrating 100 years of the Kingsport mill's operation in 2016. The company's year-long celebration included the donation of 100 trees to the city as well as the funding of a new scholarship in the company's name.

The mill's origins date back to 1915 when the owners of the Columbia Paper Mill in Bristol decided to expand their operations in the area. Being familiar with the raw material supply in the region, they entered into an agreement with the railway that led to the creation of the Kingsport Pulp Corporation. Its plant started out with an output of around 40 tons of pulp per day.

For some time, the railway had been in talks with the Mead Paper Co., of Dayton, Ohio, to start a full-blown paper mill, not just a pulp operation. The Kingsport Pulp mill produced only soda pulp until 1923. At that time, Mead was finally induced to



An early 1960s vintage photograph of workers at the Mead Paper Co., checking the quality of the product.

build its own million-dollar paper mill adjacent to the Kingsport Pulp mill. Mead bought the pulp mill, eliminating its cost of having pulp shipped from Kingsport, while the railway replaced its pulp shipments out of Kingsport with paper shipments.

Willamette purchased the mill in 1995. Weyerhaeuser acquired it from Willamette in 2002, and it became part of Domtar in 2007. In Nov. 2017, the mill received the Tennessee Governor's Award of Excellence upon reaching the one-million-hour safety mark.

Welcome to the 100 Club!

Success, for both Domtar and the City of Kingsport, is a tribute to our employees, past and present, and the citizens of Kingsport. Thank you for being our partner for the past century. It is our privilege to share the journey with you!

Happy Birthday!



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This was the year that was...



One nice thing about *The Business Journal* is that we don't exist merely as what comedian Flip Wilson once referred to as a "church of what's happening now." *The Business Journal*, having covered business news in this region since 1988, also serves as historic record.

You can go back and find in our pages the stories of the birth of Eastman (as a stand-alone

company aside from Kodak), Mountain States Health Alliance and Wellmont Health System, among others. We have chronicled the rise of regional business leaders such as Scott Niswonger and Jeff Byrd. We have served as the medium in which new leaders like Alan Levine and Brian Noland gave their first long-form interviews. And we have chronicled the fall of individuals and organizations from the Regional Alliance for Economic Development to Virginia Intermont College. I would submit that our reportage on all of these stories holds up as accurate, complete and impartial. We have been willing to show the failings of our friends and the accomplishments of our rivals with unblinking honesty.

This year has proved no different. For instance, I personally like Dr. Janice Gilliam, former president of Northeast State Community College. *The Journal* was the first Tri-Cities based outlet to sit down with her for a long-form Q&A, travelling to North Carolina to do so just after it was announced she would be moving here. In that interview I found her to be engaging, knowledgeable and energetic. But this year, when the state forced her resignation after faculty demanded a deep investigation into college's bookkeeping, I was forced to admit that the facts are the facts. And when, in an interview with another outlet, she blamed her underlings for her administration's mistakes, I wished *The Journal* had been the one looking into Northeast State's finances in time to break the story.

I would put our coverage this year of the Ballard merger up against anyone's. Thanks for that go in part to Ron Scott, CEO of Appalachian Community Federal Credit Union. Scott hired Jeff Keeling, our lead healthcare writer, away from us, but graciously allowed Jeff to take the time as a free-lancer to continue following that story for *The Journal*. Both Scott and Keeling have a sincere desire to see this region grow and thrive. Neither is originally "from 'round here," but both could serve as role models for Tri-Cities professionals.

It has been my profound hope that our work this year will serve as the record for what has been a remarkable year in business. The Ballard merger and the regional cooperation on the creation of Aerospace Park both show how we are finally understanding the need to move away from the old every-community-for-itself model into a regional economy. The same can be said for the rise of the GO Virginia-based cooperation now being found from Lee County to Bluefield to Galax, with special emphasis on Bristol and Washington County, Va.

The rise of the Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership (NETREP), which saw Carter, Unicoi and Washington counties unify their economic development efforts – and the success of NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership, which worked nine successful projects that represent 587 jobs and just over \$90 million in investment are also causes for celebration. In addition, the Greene County Partnership's work on the Forward Air expansion created 210 jobs in Sullivan County. The Ballard tagline "better together" clearly applies to economic development.

2017 was also the year community development and economic development began to come together as never before. Through the work of the First Tennessee Development District and the United Way of Southwest Virginia, massive career fairs were held in Johnson City and Abingdon in which thousands of students from dozens of school systems were introduced to hundreds of the region's employers. The first step to growing tomorrow's economy is making sure today's youth are aware of opportunities to have successful careers here.

2017 saw triumphs. Sykes saw an opportunity in Wise County to expand by buying the Frontier Secure operation for pennies on the dollar and now employs 800 in the region. Bristol Tennessee Essential Services won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the small business category, becoming the third honoree from the region (Eastman, Pal's Sudden Service). Engineering programs have been created at ETSU and King University to join the existing program at Milligan College.

The year also saw disappointments. NN Inc., sold its heritage assets in the region and moved its headquarters to Charlotte. The Bristol Mall closed. Kingsport's is a shadow of its former self. Yet the potential for more new retail appears finally to be close to being realized at Tri-Cities Crossings. Time will tell.

On behalf of all of us at *The Business Journal*, I hope your story in 2017 has been one of success. We wish you a happy and prosperous 2018 and thank you for your continued support.

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Regional housing market sees late-year headwinds

Northeast Tennessee home prices declined for the first time in 14 months in October while sales increased 9.5 percent.

October's price drop is a reaction to the lack of inventory and buyer fatigue – especially in the \$200,000 price range, according to Northeast Tennessee Association of Realtors (NETAR) President Eric Kistner. "Our market is still very much on track for another record year. But there are some headwinds building."

The big issue is two years of record sales have rendered the inventory of homes in the \$200,000 price range to a point where much of what's on the market is not compelling enough to demand higher prices. "Homes in that price range traditionally account for more than 70 percent of local existing home sales." Much of the average price increase we've recorded has come from more sales in the upper price ranges.

Last month there were 160 fewer listings than there were in September and 730 fewer than October last year, Kistner said. Currently, the region has a five-month inventory of homes on the market – roughly the same level it has been at since August. That's creating some buyer fatigue, which puts downward pressure on sales prices.

NETAR's Trends Report on market conditions in the 11-county region shows there were 575 closings on single-family home sales last month. That's 35 more than September and 50 more than October last year. October's average sales price was \$152,918, down \$3,803 from last year and \$19,695 less than September's average.

So far, this year 5,281 single-family homes have closed – 130 more than during the first 10 months last year, and the average sales price is \$7,535 (4.7 percent) better.

October was also a strong month in the condominium and town home market. There were 59 closings, up 22 from October last year and the average sales price of \$127,912 was \$11,458 better. October was the fourth straight month year-over-year prices have increased.

So far this year, 495 condo and town home sales have closed. That's a 21 percent increase (86 closings) from the first 10 months of last year. The average sales price is 4.4 percent (\$5,302) better than last year.

The average single-family home sold in October was on the market for 125 days. The days on market for condo and town home closings was 117 days.

October 2017 single-family sales and average prices vs. October 2016

CITY MARKETS

Johnson City: Sales - 68, up 14. Avg. price - \$180,106, down \$14,094.
Kingsport: Sales - 55, down 6. Avg. price - \$151,495, down \$29,837
Bristol, Tenn.: Sales - 31, down 1. Avg. price - \$142,598, down \$37,189.
Bristol, Va.: Sales - 21, up 8. Avg. price - \$103,295, down \$43,730.
Greeneville: Sales - 17, down 1. Avg. price - \$134,718, up \$14,281.
Erwin/Unicoi: Sales - 15, down 8. Avg. price - \$118,313, down \$31,738.
Elizabethton: Sales - 11, down 2. Avg. price - \$115,700, up \$10,154.

COUNTY MARKETS

Sullivan: Sales - 155, down 14. Avg. price - \$167,204, down \$9,230.
Washington Tenn.: Sales - 145, up 38. Avg. price - \$184,210, down \$6,595.
Greene: Sales - 69, up 8. Avg. price - \$149,094, up \$25,219.
Hawkins: Sales - 47, up 2. Avg. price - \$118,576, down \$7,493.
Washington, Va.: - 47, up 9. Avg. price - \$131,618, down \$25,262.
Carter: Sales - 37, down 8. Avg. price - \$153,420, up \$37,484.
Wise: Sales - 29, up 16. Avg. price - \$88,907, up \$526.
Scott: Sales - 16, up 9. Avg. price - \$88,344, down \$41,085.
Johnson: Sales - 9, down 6. Avg. price - \$157,257, up \$30,190.
Lee: Sales - 5, up 3. Avg. price - \$71,300, down \$73,700.

NETAR counts city sales as those in the high school zone. City sales and price data are included in the county totals.



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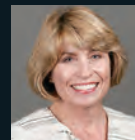
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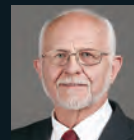
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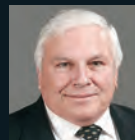
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Bristol Mayor Jack Young, Johnson City Mayor David Tomita, Kingsport Mayor John Clark, Sullivan County Mayor Richard Venable, Washington County Mayor Dan Eldridge and Tri-Cities Airport Authority Chairman Dr. Jon Smith at a Regional Partnership Agreement signing ceremony at Tri-Cities Airport Nov. 8. PHOTO BY DAVE ONGIE

Region's governments unite behind Aerospace Park

Up next: TDOT grant application

By Dave Ongie and Scott Robertson

The mayors of five northeast Tennessee cities and counties joined the chairman of the Tri-Cities Airport Authority (TCAA) Nov. 8 in signing a document codifying their commitment to fund a significant portion of the cost of creating an airport-based business park.

"The Tri-Cities Airport has always been an example of regional cooperation since its creation," said Dr. Jon Smith, the chairman of the TCAA. "The development of an aerospace park is an important example of continuing efforts by our city and county commissioners to come together for a common goal to try to attract quality jobs."

It is hoped the 160-acre park will attract aerospace sector jobs and capital investment to the region within the next two to three years. Twenty-one acres of the site are already certified through the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development as a Select Tennessee Site, making it the first airport site in Tennessee to receive this certification. The funding from the local communities, along with funds from the Tennessee Valley Authority and hoped-for grant funds being sought from the Tennessee Department of Transportation, will go toward grading the rest of the land in preparation for development.

Proponents of a regional approach to economic development hailed the day as potentially historic. Said Washington County Mayor Dan Eldridge, "This step that has been taken is really a big step, to me, for two reasons," he said. "No. 1, because it presents such an opportunity for quality job creation in the Tri-Cities. No. 2, and this probably means more than anything else, we have created a template not only for cooperation among the local governments in this region, but we've created a template for investment."

"Local governments have put \$8.5 million in this project," Eldridge continued. "For me, this is a foundation for us to build on. There will be other opportunities for us to work together, to cooperate, to make investments that make our region better. I think a big part of what we're doing here today is celebrating the opportunity this is providing us."

In a lighthearted moment after the papers were signed, Johnson City mayor David Tomita reached over and put his arm around Kingsport mayor John Clark. It was symbolic of the cooperation that has been shown by the two cities, which routinely compete with each other and Bristol.

The level of cooperation that it took to make the Aerospace Park

a reality didn't come easily, but Tomita seemed satisfied with the results. "You're going to hear a lot today about cooperation, collaboration and partnerships, and that's a great thing," Tomita said. "What we've done here is something that does not come easily. Those papers ... There's a lot of blood, sweat, tears and emotion in those papers. We're proud to be here executing them today."

Airport Director Patrick Wilson said the signing has drawn positive attention from several sectors. "We have received recognition for what has been done in bringing the cities and counties together from the economic development community at the state level, from the airport industry congratulating us on having that regional effort, and we see it from the aerospace industry becoming excited to have an entire region that gets it as far as what it takes to attract companies."

The next step in the funding process is the submission of a grant application to the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Wilson said. "TDOT has issued grant criteria for what's called the Aeronautics Economic Development Grant." The airport must submit its completed application by Dec. 8 in order to compete for grant funds. "Our staff is working to bring that application together. Thankfully, we have been working on the various concepts and forecasts and construction estimates for the cities and counties for more than a year. So we have a lot of the data TDOT is asking for from our previous work."

TDOT is giving airports across the state the chance to apply for dollars from a one-time grant offering. "TDOT is looking for, from us, basically a description of the project and a narrative

...This is a foundation for us to build on. There will be other opportunities for us to work together, to cooperate, to make investments that make our region better.

- Dan Eldridge,
Washington County Mayor

on the goals of the project as relates to economic development. The good thing about that is that our project is totally focused on bringing opportunities for private investment from companies to the region and to Tennessee, and with that, job opportunities. That's exactly in line with what this aeronautics economic development grant is for."

Former Tennessee Economic and Community Development Commissioner Randy Boyd, now a candidate for governor, was part of the task force responsible for the creation of the TDOT grant funding. "Airports across the state are the

front doors to our communities, and all across the nation they are losing funds," Boyd said at the signing. "This grant focuses on economic development, so airports have to focus on how they are going to bring economic growth into their communities to get a portion of the funds."

Again, Wilson said, the fact that governments in the region have united to put skin in the game should be a selling point to TDOT. "They have agreed to fund 50 percent of the \$17 million total that is needed for the full development of the site. The cities and counties have put \$8.5 million of local funding toward the project. We have already received a grant from TVA's InvestPrep program for \$350,000 of that. The local governments are matching that. That leaves \$8,150,000 of the local dollars that we are requesting a state match from the grant of \$8,150,000 as well."

The TDOT grant application review process should be fairly concise, as the state has already indicated it will notify grant recipients sometime in January. [B](#)



Airport Director Patrick Wilson with several pages of the TDOT grant application packet spread before him. PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERTSON



(L-R top row): Supervisor of Customer Service Diane Smith, Supervisor of Networks Michael Parker, System Engineer Chris De Troye, Supervisor of Electric Engineering David Hacker, Supervisor of Purchasing and Stores Cody Johnson, Customer Relations Representative Leslie Blevins, (L-R bottom row) Business Development Manager April Eads, General Accountant Heather Jenkins, Network Specialist Jesse Adams, and Administrative Systems Analyst Jessica Waterman. Senior Leaders (inset L-R): CEO Mike Browder, Director of Engineering Clayton Dowell, Director of Operations and Safety Kenneth King, Director of Management Services Tara McCall, Director of Accounting and Finance Lola McVey.

BTES wins Baldrige Award

By Scott Robertson

Bristol Tennessee Essential Services (BTES) is one of five winners of the 2017 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, becoming the first utility to be so honored and the third Tri-Cities-based entity to win, joining Eastman (1993) and Pal's Sudden Service (2001).

In announcing BTES' win, the U.S. Department of Commerce said that among BTES' qualifications, the utility, "offers electricity and fiber services to 33,000 customers with only 68 employees. It offers the fastest internet available in the United States at 10 Gigabits per second, has implemented efficiencies that saved its customers approximately \$70 million over the last 40 years, and has customer satisfaction levels approaching 100 percent on many products and performance measures."

BTES participated through the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE), which the utility has been part of since its inception in 1993. Fifteen members of the BTES staff have served as TNCPE examiners.

CEO Mike Browder said he was not initially enthusiastic about taking part. "I said, 'I'm not going to jump through a bunch of hoops just to win an award.' But when Browder saw the list of recommendations in the TNCPE report on BTES, he said, 'Most of them made sense. So I said, 'The things we ought to do anyway, we need to do.' Whatever was left was not much and I would jump through those hoops.'" BTES won TNCPE Excellence Awards in 1994 and 2012.

The BTES application for the 2017 Baldrige Award was submitted in May. After extensive review, the first round of judging took place

in mid-August, after which BTES hosted examiners for a week-long site visit in October. The judges completed their work in November, and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross called Browder to inform him of the results around the middle of the month.

"We thought we had a pretty good chance," said Customer Relations Representative Leslie Blevins, who headed up the application process for BTES, "because the commerce secretary only calls the winners, and when we were working with the commerce department to set up the call, they told us the secretary wouldn't be available at the time we initially mentioned."

"We also had been tipped off that if we were winners, the call would come from the 202 area code," Browder said. "When it rang, I looked around the room and told everyone, 'It's from 202,' so we had a chance to scream and celebrate for a second before I picked up."

Since its inception in 1988, more than 1,700 companies, communities and organizations have applied to win the Baldrige Award. Only 110 have received it, including five from Tennessee. Fedex won in 1990. Caterpillar Financial Services Corp., won in 2003.

BTES is scheduled to receive the award at the annual Quest for Excellence Conference April 11, 2018 in Baltimore.

Browder said he is proud of the people at BTES, but that despite earning the pinnacle award for performance excellence, everyone at the utility knows there will be no resting on the newly-acquired laurels. "We know what we do next time has always got to be better next time than it was last time. Good enough is never good enough forever." **B**

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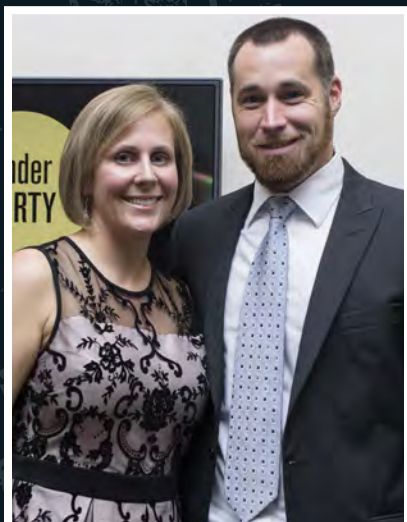
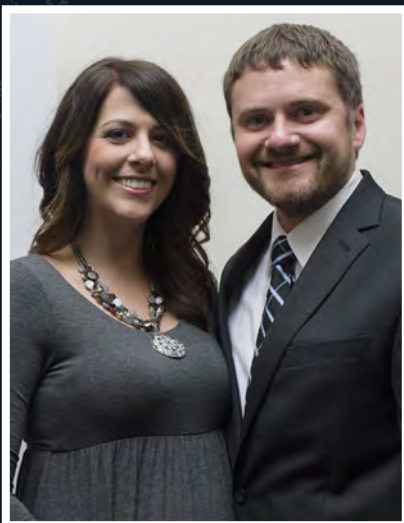
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25th Annual 40 Under Forty Gala

The 1,000th member of the Tri-Cities' class of 40 Under Forty honorees was named at the 25th Annual 40 Under Forty gala Oct. 6 at the Millennium Centre in Johnson City. "The 40 Under Forty program, initiated by what was then *The Business Journal of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia* in December, 1993, has taken note of individuals who have gone on to become successful entrepreneurs, C-suite executives and elected officials over the years," said Scott Robertson, managing editor of The Business Journal of Tri-Cities TN/VA. "It has become a great predictor of both individual career success and community involvement. This year's honorees have, in their young careers, already shown not just drive, ambition and talent, but also a desire to bring their communities along as they grow their careers."

The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Brenda White

Wright, who graciously agreed to speak at the event for the third time. Wright was the inaugural keynote speaker, returning to address the 10th annual event as well.

Special thanks go to the Tri-Cities-based businesses that partnered in the 25th annual event: Milligan College; RJYoung; Wellmont Health System; Mountain States Health Alliance; Kaplan CFO Solutions; Blackburn, Childers & Steagall; and Saratoga Technologies.

Thanks also go to the Carnegie Hotel, which serves annually as host for the 40 Under Forty photo shoots and interviews; Sweet Snaps Photography, Mail Works, the Millennium Centre, Moon Tuxedo and the staff of *The Johnson City News & Neighbor*.

Nominations for the class of 2018 are being accepted now at 40under.com.

Jennifer Adler

Adler makes a significant impact both in her role as assistant director of the Roan Scholars Leadership Program at East Tennessee State University and as a recently-elected alderman for the city of Kingsport. In just two years with the Roan program, Adler has developed a stellar reputation among students, peers, and campus and community leaders alike, and become a sought-after speaker and committee member. Whether discussing traditions in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism for a campus "Civility Week" event; offering tips to undergraduates on how to craft a personal statement for graduate school; or debating issues among the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, she is a gifted communicator who thinks deeply about – and can quickly assess – complex issues, then translate those thoughts into straightforward ideas and recommendations.



William Barrett

One might expect the son of two librarians to be quieter and less ambitious than his peers. Not so for Barrett. He has a flair for capitalism dating back to when he sold cinnamon flavored toothpicks to classmates in elementary school. And he has no fear of large jobs. Imagine having to make Neyland Stadium ready for 100,000 guests. Imagine having to clean up Death Valley at LSU or Jordan Hare Stadium at Auburn or Lane Stadium at Virginia Tech – or 160,000-seat Bristol Motor Speedway. That's what Barrett's company, Can Do Enterprises does. Barrett started his business career with a pressure washer and has grown Can do into a nationwide cleaning management company. Not satisfied with that, Barrett has also started three other companies, and runs Millstone, a century-old mill in Limestone, Tenn., that has quickly become one of the region's favorite wedding sites.

Samuel Booher

Booher is one of those accomplishment addicts who can get more done in 30 minutes than some do in 30 days. At the age of 31, a partner at the Law Firm of Holmes & Stice PLC, Booher is the current chairman of the Kingsport Regional Planning Commission, a founding board member of the Kingsport Young Professionals' Group, PEAK, past-president of the Mountain Region Speech and Hearing Center, past-president of the Kingsport Bar Association, and board member for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kingsport. He also works alongside his grandfather, Sam Anderson, as a downtown developer in Kingsport. It's safe to say there would be no PEAK organization without Booher. He wrote the charter and the bylaws, filed for the 501(c)4 tax exempt status, and in his spare time, even wrote the lease agreement for the dog park.



Seth Brown

Dr. Brown is medical director of the emergency department at Niswonger Children's Hospital, and his is a hometown boy makes good story. Before attending the Quillen College of Medicine at ETSU, Brown was an emergency medical technician in his hometown of Mountain City. Growing up there, he was convinced he would be a musician. He was a top trumpet player and even became drum major for the band. But one night when he was working as an EMT, he was part of the process of making a patient's heart start beating again after it had stopped. Fortunately for the children at Niswonger, he decided at that moment to put down his trumpet and pick up a stethoscope.

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Eric Carroll

Carroll is director of Unicoi County Memorial Hospital in Erwin. All he's done since taking that job in 2015 is take a facility built in 1953, do everything necessary to see it replaced with a brand new, state of the art building, then preside over the July 2017 groundbreaking for that new building, with a commitment of more than \$140 million in investments in the health of the community over the next decade. He's done that while the healthcare industry in America is looking for ways to close existing rural hospitals – not open new ones. He is on the board of CASA; The Erwin Chamber of Commerce; the Erwin 911 committee; the Unicoi County MEC; the Unicoi County Community Board; the Monroe Foundation; United Way, and half a dozen other community organizations and not-for-profit efforts. Not bad for a former CT Tech who started his career telling patients, “now hold your breath.” Now we're all just holding our breath to see how nice that new hospital will be.



Melina Christian

Christian, Nuclear Fuel Services' principal engineer, is making a difference at NFS and in her community. Christian has been at NFS for 12 years, and has been instrumental in the start-up and operation of the commercial development line in which surplus nuclear material is recovered and made into the nuclear fuel used to power America's nuclear navy. She's a mentor to young engineers and a member of the NFS Speakers Bureau. When she's not on the job, Christian supports the Towne Acres Elementary Parent-Teacher Association, helping enhance the education experience of the students through programs like STEM Day, which brings community experts to the school to foster the students' love for science, technology, engineering and math.

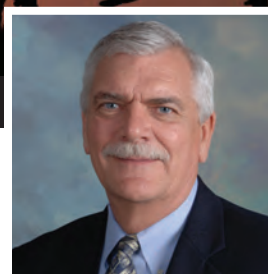


Congratulations to this year's honorees

To this year's class of 40 Under Forty—well done. You have separated yourselves from the pack. As you continue on, some advice from those who know every twist and turn, pit stop and passing lane up ahead.

- **Negotiating 101: The most important class they don't teach in school.**
Ken Kaplan, Managing Partner
- **There's always more work, not so with little league games and dance recitals.**
Vaughn Fisher, Managing Partner
- **Relationships—like butterfly wings—are fragile but can take you anywhere you want to go.**
Lisa Starnes, Engagement Partner
- **Listen to your employees: you're not the only one with skin in the game.**
Daryl Crouse, Engagement Partner
- **A river cuts through a rock, not because of its power but its persistence.**
Mike Holt, Engagement Partner

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Ashley Cox

Most entrepreneurs are experts in their fields, but know nothing about the HR aspects of running their business. Cox saw an opportunity in that – and became an entrepreneur specializing in providing HR services. She founded SproutHR following a decade of experience in corporate leadership and human resources positions. She's also a founding member and former co-leader of the local entrepreneur group TuesdaysTogether, helping them grow to nearly 300 members in just one year; she participated in and is now a certified facilitator of the CO.STARTERS program, a nine-week program for aspiring entrepreneurs; and she also plays an active role in the community with AccelNow assisting entrepreneurs in starting businesses. She facilitates training sessions locally and online and has been a featured guest expert on multiple online blogs and podcasts. Cox is a leader in facilitating the growth of entrepreneurship in the Tri-Cities.



Andrew Davidson

Davidson joined Nuclear Fuel Services in 2003 and has served in highly technical positions of increasing responsibility including Naval Fuel Development Engineering Unit manager, Uranium Downblending Engineering Section manager, and Uranium Downblending Program manager. He also has extensive experience working with government and commercial customers including the National Nuclear Security Administration, Naval Reactors, and Westinghouse. That's made him ideally suited for his current role as Uranium Downblending Program manager, where he has led several successful contract proposals, holds profit and loss responsibility for the business line with annual revenue exceeding \$60 million, and has contributed to NFS's business development and merger and acquisition activities.

*Congratulations
Myra O'Dell*

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As these remarkable co-workers progress in their careers, their outstanding contributions continue our tradition of excellence and reinforce our commitment to patients and the community.

Nicholas Denton

Pharmacy application team leader

Knowledge and Technology Services department



Denton, a pharmacist, is a highly respected subject matter expert recognized by his department, leaders, physicians and staff members of the Wellmont Cancer Institute. He directed the information technology portion of Wellmont's initiative to be selected for the Oncology

Care Model. This federal program focuses on higher quality and improving outcomes while decreasing costs. His work has been shared with other users across the country of the Epic electronic health record. Off the clock, he participates in organized fundraising events to support the needs of the cancer institute's patients.

Jody Helms, MD

Neurosurgeon

Bristol Regional Medical Center



Dr. Helms, who practices with Highlands Neurosurgery, serves as chairman of the Physician Clinical Council, medical director of the neuroscience service line and chief of surgery at Bristol Regional and is a member of the hospital's medical executive committee and credentials committee. In

addition, he performs a full scope of neurosurgical cases in the surgery department, making a favorable difference in patients' lives. Outside the office, he has served at family camp weekends for Young Life in Bristol and has participated in a ministry among the community's most vulnerable children and their families for State Street United Methodist Church.

Cody Murdock

Director of operational excellence

Wellmont Health System



Murdock is credited with being an effective communicator who easily builds relationships with leaders and staff members. He leads the day-to-day activities of operational excellence, a systemwide approach to create a problem-solving culture, seek opportunities to eliminate waste and create more efficient

and effective ways to deliver care. He began the operational excellence department, hiring the initial staff members, and he has worked closely with Wellmont's Process Improvement Council. He is a member of the Kingsport Rotary Club and serves on the fundraising committee for Contact-Concern. He and his team have also worked on a service project in their free time and are planning to engage in additional activities.

Candi Overholt, MD

Internal medicine physician

Takoma Medical Associates



Dr. Overholt has repeatedly demonstrated compassion for her patients, including many instances in which she meets with them after normal hours and at their homes. She also champions education, enabling her patients to make informed decisions about their health.

Dr. Overholt served Takoma Regional Hospital as chairwoman of the medical staff and the clinical quality performance committee, and she is now chairwoman of the ethics committee. In addition, she founded Empower Cocke County, a charitable organization designed to bring together multiple churches and improve the well-being of the community.



**Wellmont
Health System**

Nicholas Denton

Nick Denton blends an exceptional knowledge of information technology with a firm grasp of the needs and goals of cancer patients and caregivers. He serves as the Pharmacy Applications Team leader in the IT Department at Wellmont Health System. His main interaction is with the Oncology/Research clinical applications teams. Denton has earned a role building strong relationships with oncology teams across the system, focusing on patient care and cancer research. One example of his leadership is direction of the IT portion of the Oncology Care Model, a new CMS program for coordination of cancer care. His work has been shared with other users of Wellmont's electronic medical records system across the country. His work is setting the template nationwide. Denton takes his dedication outside of the workplace by spending personal time participating in organized fundraising events to support the needs of Wellmont cancer patients.



Tyler Engle

Engle is an Erwin native who accepted the position of executive director for the Joint Economic Development Board of Unicoi County in December 2016. He's accomplished much in a short time. Under his leadership, Unicoi County has already been selected as a 2017 recipient of the competitive Governor's Three Star Grant. Engle also currently oversees the development of a 20-year land-use plan for the Towns of Erwin and Unicoi and Unicoi County. He is an active member of the Erwin community, having served on the Unicoi County Board of Education since 2012 and as the Board's chairman since 2014. He is an active member of the young professional group RISE Erwin, the mission of which is to rejuvenate, invest in, support, and energize Erwin; as well as First Baptist Church, Erwin and the First Baptist Church Choir.



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Founding Board Member



DANA GLENN
Vice President

Congratulations!

PEAK is thrilled to announce that five of our members were recognized as 40 Under Forty.

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Matt Evans

At the ripe age of 27, Evans is the youngest vice president within HomeTrust Bank. Charged with creating, staffing and leading a new group; Commercial Portfolio Monitoring, Evans has been recognized as a subject matter expert, and an emerging leader within HomeTrust. This year, he was selected to participate in the HomeTrust Leadership Development Program, signifying the bank's faith in bigger and better things ahead. Equal to his corporate work is his investment in his community. An Alumnus of ETSU, Evans remains passionately involved in giving back to his Alma Mater. One of his nominators says, "He serves as a role model for our students to understand if you work hard, study, and commit yourself to your task, you can accomplish anything." In addition to his work with ETSU, Evans is a Rotary Club Paul Harris Fellow, a Second Harvest Food Bank volunteer and serves on the United Way Allocations Committee.



James Ferguson

Ferguson has been instrumental in helping GAAM Wealth Advisors build its brand and business. His nominators say he is mature and wise beyond his years and works tirelessly to help each client, team member and the community. He graduated from the The Citadel with honors and has his CFP designation. Ferguson is also enrolled in the UVA Darden EMBA Program and works closely with the community in the Chamber of Commerce and FoodHarvest.

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Jamie Rice
Town of Erwin



Tyler Engle
*Joint Economic Development
Board of Unicoi County*



Joseph Wigington
Erwin Utilities/Erwin Fiber



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Briana Fillers

Since joining United Way of Southwest Virginia in 2016, Fillers has led marketing initiatives transforming the brand of the organization to match its vital community impact work. The United Way of Southwest Virginia operates a workforce development initiative involving thousands of students in dozens of schools, covering 15 percent of Virginia's geography. Fillers' organized approach to communication has made it easier for educators, employers and students to understand and buy into that work. In addition, Fillers makes time to lead A Work of Art Gallery and Gifts. She has grown that organization since inception and provides oversight as well as operational volunteer work to this organization. She is also an active member of her church, Highlands Community Fellowship, as a member of a small group and being a go-to person within her peer group. And she has provided one on one mentoring as a Big Sister for the last six years.



Kristan Ginnings

Ginnings was on track for law school, with an eye toward a seat on the bench when the manager convinced her to change course. Rising through the ranks at First Tennessee and TriSummit, Ginnings was made a market executive for the Tri-Cities by Regions, and currently serves as the Tri-Cities market executive for First Citizens Bank. She leads the company's banking initiatives in the market, focusing on business and commercial lending. Ginnings is a graduate of the Johnson City Chamber of Commerce Leadership 2020 and served as its chair for 2016-2017. She is an allocations committee member for the United Way of Washington County, a board member on the Workforce, Education and Industrial Council for the Johnson City Chamber of Commerce, an adjunct professor for East Tennessee State University and a board member for CASA.

Congratulations
Bart McMillin



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Natalie Willis

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40 Under Forty Class of 2017

Dana Glenn

Business leaders in Sullivan County know and respect Glenn. They've seen her professional handling of presentations for NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership, the county's economic development organization, where she serves as marketing director. Her colleagues in economic development know and respect her, as is evidenced by the Southern Economic Development Council award she picked up in Charlotte at this year's annual conference. And she is known and respected by young professionals throughout the Tri-Cities for her work on their behalf with PEAK, the young professionals' organization on whose board she sits and of which she is currently president-elect. She is also an active volunteer for an array of different initiatives, including working with her former employer, The Kingsport Chamber of Commerce.



Lindsey Harris

Harris is a standout in a male-dominated field, serving as environmental group leader and project manager for S&ME where her colleagues praise her ability to negotiate with environmental regulators with competence, care, efficiency and effectiveness. She recently graduated from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) TN Leadership PE program. That program is targeted to industry professionals identified by their firm as a "future leader" of their business. She has volunteered for several Appalachian Service Projects and American Cancer Society events and is committed to assisting with the completion of the playground for Family Promise of Johnson City. Last year with Johnson City Morning Rotary, she was one of the youngest Rotary presidents ever in a district spanning from Greeneville, Tenn., to Northern Virginia.

Jody Helms

Dr. Helms has served on the medical staff of Bristol Regional Medical Center since 2010 and has already made a mark on the quality of care at the hospital and in his practice at Highlands Neurosurgery. He holds three leadership positions at the hospital – chairman of the Physician Clinical Council, medical director of the neuroscience service line and chief of surgery. He also serves on the medical executive committee and credentials committee. Despite his busy practice and leadership roles he stays active with Young Life in Bristol, and at State Street United Methodist Church, participating in a ministry among the community's most vulnerable children and their families.



Teresa Hicks

Hicks, corporate director of Communications for Mountain States Health Alliance, has now swept the *Business Journal's* awards, having already been recognized as a Health Care Hero. Hicks was an award-winning reporter for the *Kingsport Times-News* and *Johnson City Press* covering health care, and served as the editor of a monthly publication on healthy living called *Thrive*, for which she won that honor. She joined Mountain States in 2011 as communications manager and became director two years ago. She oversees external and internal communications for the 14-hospital system serving 1.1 million patients in 29 counties. Her responsibilities include strategic communications, media relations, crisis communications, internal newsletters, physician communications and web presence.

Russell Ingram

Ingram is a come-backer – a young professional who grew up in this region, then left to find his fortune, only to return home to make it. When his father called him home from Chicago to work in the family business, Ingram Financial Services, in 2010, he realized home was home. Now Ingram says he sees the opportunity to take his father's vision and apply it to a new world. Ingram recently earned membership in the Million Dollar Round Table as one of the younger members in East Tennessee. He is also supportive of the community, where he previously served on the board of the Children's Advocacy Center. Russell also supported Steppenstone, by being a 2016 participant in Dancing with the Tri-Cities Stars, and hosting a golf tournament to raise funds for the cause.



Jenny Kontos

You may not have seen Kontos's name in the headlines, but you've seen the results of her dedication to community. An award-winning graphic artist by trade, she has held six positions with the American Advertising Federation. Kontos serves as a student mentor with tnAchieves. She volunteers her time, talents, and personal finances to the SBK Animal Shelter in Kingsport. She is co-leader of the Girl Scouts of the Southern Appalachians and fundraising chair at Ridgeview Elementary. Kontos put herself through the 2017 Leadership Kingsport Program and is a member of the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, the KOSBE WOW networking group, and the Abundance Networking Group. Through her Youtee project, \$2500 has been donated to The Greater Kingsport Boys & Girls Club and the Dollywood Foundation My People Fund.



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Assistant Director, Roan Scholars Leadership Program

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Bart McMillin

McMillin's life story could be called "Learning to run the world from Edgemont Avenue." Everything from his dad's business to the schools he attended were on that road. Oh, granted, he went off to Blacksburg to play football for Frank Beamer at Virginia Tech, but after a stint with a mechanical engineering firm in Nashville, he found his way home to start his own business. It was when he was listening to a group of doctors complaining about medical waste that he found his inspiration. With a pick-up truck, a box truck and a trailer, he founded Blue Ridge Environmental, which he has made into one of the region's fastest growing companies, doing medical recycling and business shredding. McMillin not only has the ability to work hard with his start-up company, but also has time to devote back to others by supporting Young Life and several environmental and wildlife concerns.



Cody Murdock

If the merger between Wellmont and Mountain States closes in early 2018 as expected, it's people like Murdock who will make it work. His current title is system director of Operational Excellence. His department is tasked with developing opportunities to standardize work to increase quality of care while eliminating waste and redundancy. Murdock developed Lean curricula for all 7,000-plus Wellmont employees. To date, the results have included improvements in patient outcomes and improved patient access. Murdock put in place a requirement that employees devote one hour to a community project every month. He says he hopes the system will adopt the idea of allowing employees to take one day every fiscal year for community service. The kicker is that this is being done while improving care and access while eliminating waste.

Myra O'Dell

O'Dell has climbed the company ladder from interning to becoming the newest partner at BCS Wealth Management. She earned that title, said one of her nominators, for leading in two ways – by example and with forethought. "She provides leadership by modeling a job well done," said the nominator, "but also by having great vision for planning company processes, goals and direction." Others mentioned her technical knowledge as a financial planner, her attention to detail and her ability to take complex situations and explain them to people without a financial services background. O'Dell is a loyal supporter and alumna of Milligan College, has served on the finance committee and the choir at her church, and has captained local USTA tennis league teams. She will also be a part of the next Johnson City Chamber Leadership Class.



Emily O'Quinn

O'Quinn is senior director of Corporate Communications for Contura Energy. She develops executive communications and messaging for internal audience of several thousand employees and diverse external constituencies. She also leads the crisis communication team and is responsible for employee town halls. O'Quinn participates in weekly cross-functional risk management meeting to assess potential external risks and response and develops and implements corporate themes and messaging. She has served on a wide variety of boards including: the Library of Virginia executive committee, the Barter Theatre, the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, Wellmont Health System Foundation, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, CONVERGE Virginia, the Bristol Public Library (past president) the Healing Hands Health Clinic Gala Committee, and the American Heart Association's Circle of Red.

Candi Overholt

Dr. Overholt joined the Takoma Regional Hospital medical staff in 2009 and distinguished herself by doing things like making calls on her patients after normal hours at their residences. She has previously served as chairwoman of the medical staff and the clinical quality performance committee, and she is now serving as chairwoman of the ethics committee. Overholt is also focused on improving the quality of life in the community. Most notably, she founded Empower Cocke County, a charitable organization designed to bring together multiple churches to improve the well-being of the community and the region.



Jennifer Owen

As senior vice president and senior commercial loan officer for Capital Bank, Owen manages a portfolio of middle market customers that have lending, depository, and treasury management needs. She is a Chairman's Club Award winner, having received the award for production results in the Top 10 percent of her company's commercial banking group. Before transitioning to banking, Owen was director of development for the Rutgers University Foundation, where she was honored as a recipient of the President's Distinguished Leadership Award for the Top 1 percent of fundraisers during the billion dollar Campaign for Promise. In the community, Owen serves in multiple roles, including the Northeast State Foundation Board, as well as in several leadership roles within her church. Owen is a graduate of the Leadership Kingsport Class of 2016.

CONGRATULATIONS Daniel Ruble

2017 40 Under Forty Honoree



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Mary Beth Oxenine Woodby

Woodby has built a career around strengthening the region's workforce. As career development coordinator for Northeast State Community College, she works closely with area employers to ensure that they have access to highly-skilled job candidates. She offers her expertise to individuals, school systems and community agencies to promote awareness and readiness for available career and training opportunities. She played an instrumental role in spearheading the Sullivan County Work Ready Community Initiative, which has since expanded into a regional effort for Northeast Tennessee. She continues to serve on the leadership committees for these efforts. In addition, she has volunteered with the United Way of Greater Kingsport since 2012; serving on the board and holding leadership positions on the Self-Sufficiency Vision Council and the Community Assessment & Planning Committee over the years.



Kathryn Perrin

Perrin is a dynamic and passionate leader in the Bristol community. She's served in numerous leadership roles, including YWCA Bristol board, where she chairs the Bristol Bridal Station committee. She's also multi-term board member and past-president of Believe in Bristol, and a volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Kingsport. Perrin's career trajectory has led her ever upward at Eastman where she currently works in marketing communications, but she's never been too busy to give back to the community. Her tenure with the Believe in Bristol board has coincided with the tremendous revitalization of the Main Street corridor. As her second term ended and she had to roll off of the Believe in Bristol board of directors, she took on the leadership of a committee tasked with generating significant revenue for the mission of the YWCA.

Lindsay Powers

As membership and events manager for the Kingsport Chamber, Powers leads the organization's membership program. She also successfully manages the ambassador program, where she recruits and leads the organization's membership volunteers. In just two years, she has already been promoted twice to key leadership positions. Powers is earning leadership roles in Kingsport at the age of 23. She serves on the PEAK Young Professionals board, where she is events co-chair, and serves on the United Way of Greater Kingsport's communications committee. She is also a contributor and volunteer for Emory & Henry College, the Relay for Life and the United Way of Greater Kingsport. She has also volunteered for the Kingsport Mack Riddle American Legion Independence Day Parade, Boys & Girls Club and the Spring Wing Fling.



Jamie Rice

A native of Erwin, Tenn., Rice is co-owner and operator of LiveWell Investment Group and The Bramble in Erwin. She also serves as communications director for the town of Erwin. As co-owner of The Bramble, she led the renovation of the historic A.R. Brown building in downtown Erwin in its conversion to an event space that hosts weddings, parties, dinners, and community events. Rice is also an active advocate for the Erwin community. She serves as president of the young professional group RISE Erwin. Under her leadership, that organization has created the Annual Erwin Great Outdoors Festival held each spring, The Erwin Elephant Revival celebration and fundraiser, the Erwin Farmers Market, and the Nativity Parade. She is also a member of the Downtown Merchants Association and Love Chapel Christian Church.

Daniel Ruble

Ruble is a community standout in Washington County, Va. He is a successful certified public accountant with Spiegler Blevins and has aided agencies, boards and committees with his financial knowledge. He was elected to the Washington County School Board, and is currently running for another term. He is Chamber of Commerce past-president and is currently the treasurer. Ruble serves on numerous committees and boards at Abingdon United Methodist Church, the Holston Conference, and Emory & Henry College, where he graduated as a four-year Bonner Scholar. He also helped Abingdon United Methodist Church increase its budget 150 percent.



Brackton Smith

Smith moved to the area in April 2016 and in a year and a half has become a community leader. He sits on the board of The Rotary Club of Johnson City and on the Board of the Dawn of Hope Foundation, working on their annual golf classic and other events. He is president of Young Professionals of the Tri Cities which is an organization of around 100 members under the age of forty. He is also a successful financial advisor for Edward Jones, having already moved his office into a new downtown Johnson City location.



Congratulations, Dana!

**BUSINESS JOURNAL'S
UNDER 40**

We are proud to have Dana on our team and congratulate her on this well-deserved honor. *Where Tennessee Begins Its Business Day* is part of our reputation and Dana exemplifies that with her contributions to our organization and region day in and day out.

NETWORKS
Sullivan Partnership

Matt Storey

When you look at Storey's resume, it's hard not to be impressed. He's a strategy manager at Eastman. He has an engineering degree from Georgia Tech and has attended professional development courses at Wharton School of Business and Owen Graduate School of Management. He sits on four boards and is president of two organizations. He's a key player in the United Way and Second Harvest. He is president of the PEAK young professionals group. Said one nominator, "If you need encouragement, he's your guy. If you share an idea with him, you've immediately got a cheerleader. And when your idea hits a little bump in the road, he's there to help you strategize next steps." These seemingly small acts have not only helped a group of area young professionals gain confidence and do big things, but his enthusiasm in PEAK has become contagious as that group has grown.



Tianna Storey

If you're planning an event, you want Storey on your committee. In fact, given her history of community involvement, there's a good chance she's already on your committee. Storey has event expertise that's nearly impossible to come by. She puts this expertise to great use, not only in her job as catering manager of East Coast Wings, but also through planning events throughout the community. Storey has helped many area non-profit organizations, including Downtown Kingsport Association (DKA), PEAK, YWCA, and Make-A-Wish plan highly successful fundraising events on shoestring budgets. She has also served on the OneKingsport Downtown Revitalization work group and on multiple committees for the United Way of Greater Kingsport. In 2018, Storey will serve as president of DKA.

D.J. Swatzell

Swatzell is a certified financial planner who has been with Marmo Financial Group for 12 years. He currently serves as chief compliance officer and director of operations. Swatzell graduated from ETSU with honors in 2005. He has held a myriad of roles with MFG throughout the last 12 years and has been an integral part of MFG's growth throughout that time, rising to become one of the leading financial planners in Northeast Tennessee. Outside of the office, Swatzell currently serves as president of the Ronald McDonald House, where he has served on the board of directors for the last four years. He is an active member of Heritage Baptist Church in Johnson City.



Lori Templeton

Templeton has been using her relational and hands-on management style to build and grow Zion Marine successfully into its second year. In a male-dominated industry, underwater dam repair, Templeton and Zion Marine are flourishing. Under her leadership, Zion Marine has expanded to two offices and secured just under \$1 million in contracts. Her thorough branding efforts and strategic networking have made Zion Marine an easily recognizable name in the industry. She is also the founder of SO REAL, a volunteer-run non-profit seeking to end the cycle of violence and self-destructive behaviors among teens. This organization, a continuation of her platform she promoted as a former Miss Kingsport, has grown from serving two counties to covering a 250-mile radius in three states, impacting more than 125,000 individuals.


Jennifer Thacker

Thacker is not a university president – yet. As Northeast State Community College’s director of the Kingsport Center for Higher Education, she provides leadership and management for operations for administrative and support staff. She works in coordination with other departments/buildings, staff, city and state officials, and other stakeholders to effectively and efficiently manage an off-campus teaching site with heavy emphasis on student centered decision-making. She develops a team of academic professionals and other personnel from sister colleges and the community. She schedules classes and student events; and oversees non-academic student discipline. She also serves the community through board service, speaking engagements, and targeted presentations. And she is entering the dissertation phase of her Learning Environments and Educational Studies PhD program at the University of Tennessee.



Adam Tolbert


A lifelong resident of Smyth County, Virginia, Tolbert is the information technology systems engineer at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, a position he has held since 2013. He also serves as the Center’s legislative liaison, advising on legislation and policy matters. Since 2014, he has served as chairman of the Ninth Congressional District Committee of the Republican Party of Virginia, serving 29 localities in Southwest Virginia. He is a 2014 graduate of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia. Said one nominator, “Notwithstanding his intelligence and wealth of knowledge, Adam conducts himself with integrity, honor, honesty and humility. He exemplifies the virtues of good citizenship; he has demonstrated ongoing initiative, leadership and dedication, devoted himself to voluntary service, earned the respect of his peers, and become a role model in his field.”

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Joseph Wigington

Wigington has served as an electric engineer associate with Erwin Utilities since 2012. His voltage reduction program has created a cost savings of approximately \$530,000 for Erwin Utilities. He also constructed and maintains EU's electric system model which facilitates the voltage reduction program without necessitating purchase and implementation of advanced metering infrastructure, thereby creating even more savings. He is an active member of First Christian Church, Erwin and serves as a church board member and musician. Wigington is also an active member in the young professional group RISE Erwin. Recently, he was appointed to the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence Board of Examiners for the third time.



Natalie Willis

Willis is the Access Control and Compliance manager, and the Classification officer for Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., in Erwin, Tenn. With more than 15 years' experience at the site, Willis has served in a number of areas within the Security Department. She currently manages a team charged with the development, implementation and maintenance of Department of Energy, Department of Defense, and Nuclear Regulatory Commission programs including computer security, classification administration, communications security, NRC licensing requirements, DOE Orders and Naval Reactor Office directives and policies. She is a member of Women in Nuclear, the American Society of Industrial Security and is Sigma Green Belt certified. She supports the Unicoi County School System Parent Teacher Organization, Unicoi County Little League and Unicoi County 4-H program. Willis is a 2016 graduate of the Unicoi County Chamber's Leadership Program.

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KIA dealership the first confirmed tenant at Tri-Cities Crossings

By Scott Robertson

The long-awaited first tenant in the Tri-Cities Crossings development at the intersection of Interstates 26 and 81 has been announced. Local automobile dealer Chantz Scott says he will open Tennessee's largest KIA dealership on the northwest corner of the intersection, across Interstate 81 from the area designated for retail development.

"We're looking at going through the permitting process here soon," Scott told *The Business Journal* in November. "We're thinking that our goal to get out there and start doing some grading is the latter part of January or early February. We anticipate a seven to eight month construction period. We're hoping to

"We'll probably have around 45 to 50 new employees at the location at the Crossings."

- Chantz Scott

design," Scott said. "We'll have all the inventory we can handle. We're probably looking at keeping somewhere in the neighborhood of 200 new vehicles and 100 used vehicles. At any given time we'll probably have between 300 and 350 vehicles. That'll fluctuate based on the selling season, manufacturer incentives and a lot of other factors, but if I had to give you a rough estimate, I would be confident

realistically get in there by the first of February, as I said. So that would lead to around an August completion.

"We're looking at roughly a 30,000-square-foot state-of-the-art KIA facility with all new



SEE DEALERSHIP, 40

Chantz Scott FILE PHOTO

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DEALERSHIP, CONTINUED



Architects renderings of the proposed dealership by Interbrand Design COURTESY OF CHANTZ SCOTT

with those numbers.”

The Chantz Scott Auto Group already employs around 75 people between the Stone Drive KIA dealership in Kingsport and a separate Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge dealership in Virginia.

Scott stressed he would not be abandoning the Stone Drive location. “The dealership on Stone Drive will remain open as mostly a pre-owned supercenter and service center,” he said. “We’ll probably have around 45 to 50 new employees at the

location at the Crossings.” Scott estimated the total capital investment in the new dealership at around \$5 million.

Scott has been contemplating opening a dealership at the site since 2016, he said. “It was sometime last year when Stewart (Taylor, the property owner) and I had gotten together with William (Roller, of Mountcastle Corporation) and had toured the site. It sparked some interest. It was a long process to think it through. Then we had to go through manufacturer

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approval. So we really started getting the ball rolling this last six months progressing to finalize this deal.”

Plans for an auto mall of dealerships on the site were rumored several months ago, and could still happen. Drawings for such a concept are visible online at the Mountcastle Corporation website.

Taylor first announced plans to develop Tri-Cities Crossings as a retail development in the December 2011 issue of the Business Journal. The project stalled for several years, however, after the planned anchor tenant, Bass Pro Shops, decided to place its Northeast Tennessee store a few miles to the northeast.

In December 2014, Taylor signaled renewed efforts to develop the property by placing a large sign visible from both interstates. Taylor, who declined in November to speak on the record regarding specifics, now says he is, “excited” about the possibility that the Chantz Scott dealership will be only the first of several announcements involving new tenants for Tri-Cities Crossings. **BJ**



The December 2014 cover of this publication featured Tri-Cities Crossings owner Stewart Taylor

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Financial Empowerment Network making \$2.25 million investment in Southwest Virginia

By Scott Robertson

In Southwest Virginia, nearly 59 percent of the population does not have high enough income to afford a basic household budget that includes housing, child care, food, transportation and health care, despite a statewide unemployment rate of only 4.5 percent. That means almost three in five southwest Virginians fall into the categories of “below the federal poverty line though employed” and “asset limited, income constrained, employed (or ALICE).” More than one in three Southwest Virginia residents falls into the ALICE category. While around one in four is working, but still making a wage below the federal poverty line.

The United Way of Southwest Virginia announced Nov. 30 the creation of a Financial Empowerment Network (FEN) in partnership with the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board and Virginia Tech’s Virginia Cooperative Extension. Together, those organizations will invest more than \$2.25 million to provide mobile training centers to teach the region’s employees some basic financial skills they may not already have.

Area employers have already begun signing on to host training for their employees through the FEN.

Among the skills being taught are:

- Setting goals for planning and purchasing
- Saving for emergencies, bills and goals
- Tracking and managing income and benefits
- Paying bills and expenses
- Improving cash flow
- Dealing with debt
- Understanding credit reports and scores
- Choosing money services, cards, accounts and loans, and
- Protecting one’s money.

Regina Sayers of the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens has already signed up to have her 200+ employees have the opportunity to take part. “I was thinking about how this can serve our employees. The biggest family stresser is usually financial,

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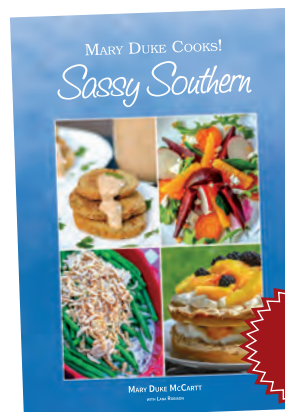
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Travis Staton

especially in rural communities where there are low-paying jobs. We need to give the skills, resources and tools to our employees to help them manage their finances. If we can help relieve those stressors, we have better employees. They'll show up to work and be there for us."

Another employer already signed up is Sykes in Wise County, which currently has around 800 employees. "We have worked with the major employers throughout this region," United Way CEO Travis Staton

said. "Some of the issues and concerns they have shared with us regarding the workforce – outside of having youth that have soft skills and know of the jobs and occupations available that we're addressing through our cradle to career initiative – was financial stability. Employers need their employees to know how to manage their own money."

The financial center serving Galax, Carroll County and Grayson County will be headquartered at the Gate Center, run by Virginia Tech in Independence, Va. The Southwest Virginia Workforce Investment Board will operate the other financial center at its One Stop Workforce Center in Richlands. [B](#)



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- 10:15am *Ran a virus check on the computers.*
- 10:45am *Checked inventory.*
- 11:00am *Rewrote our newspaper ad.*
- 1:30pm *Changed out light bulbs.*
- 2:45pm *Had to put off working on finances...again.*
- 3:00pm *Called Pete at First Tennessee.*



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ON THE MOVE

Mike Baker, CPA joined Citizens Bank in November. Baker will be working with the Commercial Lending staff providing underwriting and renewal support.

Baker joins Citizens Bank with more than 35 years of experience in the financial services industry including stops at First Tennessee Bank, Commercial Bank, and most recently HomeTrust Bank. He began his career with Home Federal Savings & Loan.

After a brief hiatus from banking during which he taught accounting and business classes at Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, Baker returned to the banking world where he worked in accounting until 2005. He again embraced a new challenge when he took on the role of Chief Financial Officer for Taylor Brands in Kingsport. In 2007, he returned and has remained in the banking industry.

Baker earned his Bachelor's in Business Administration in accounting from East Tennessee State University and is a licensed CPA in the state of Tennessee. Baker and his wife, Sondra, live in Kingsport and have two children, Katie and Andy. In his spare time, Baker enjoys watching the Atlanta Braves, listening to radio programs, and spending time with family.




Mike Baker

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Don Raines receives 2018 Spirit Award

Don Raines – the co-creator of the Niswonger Children's Hospital Radiothon – has been named the 2018 recipient of the Mountain States Foundation's Spirit Award. The Spirit Award is given to a person who has passion for his or her community, is recognized as a leader in the region, is highly respected among peers and has demonstrated support for Mountain States Health Alliance's mission while giving unselfishly of his or her time and talents.

The radiothon has raised in excess of \$1 million over its five-year history. It has funded several critical needs, including the addition of the Special Care Unit, a unit in Niswonger Children's Hospital dedicated to caring for babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome and other special needs. Raines is senior affiliate partner at Go Resources Group – a resource company for the broadcast industry – and has spent 33 years in broadcast sales. As an avid community volunteer, Raines has served as president of the Johnson City Lions Club, director of the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce and director of the Johnson City Chamber of Commerce, member of the ETSU Foundation, member of the board of directors for the Boys & Girls Club of Johnson City/Washington County and many other roles. 



Don Raines

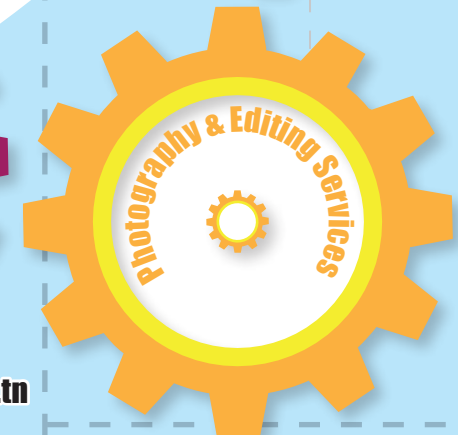
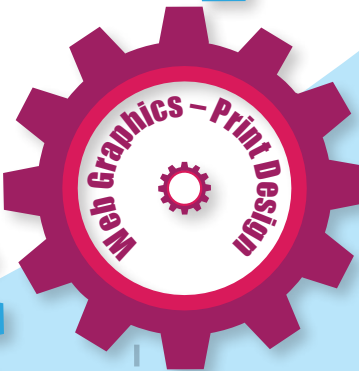
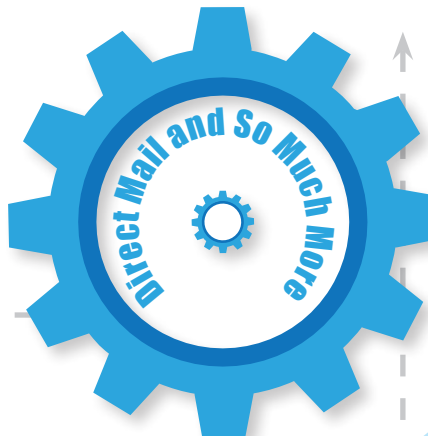


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Mentors are the Difference Makers

By Krissy DeAlejandro

As a second grader, I never thought about attending college. Neither of my parents attended college. In fact, my mom dropped out of high school to marry my dad. While not a college-going household, my parents encouraged my love of reading, fostered my curiosities and demanded academic excellence. They provided the foundation for me to break our family's cycle and attend college.



I applied to only one college, Sewanee: The University of the South. No one told us that this was risky and I might not be accepted. Thankfully, I got in!

Even though I would have qualified for federal funds, we did not complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). No one told us federal funds existed for students to attend college.

I could recount the many other missteps and missed opportunities, but in the end, we persevered. In many ways, when I graduated from college so did my parents! They were my cheerleaders. They were my support system. And their encouragement changed my life.

My second grader, Oliver, now lives in a home where college is discussed every day. The cycle in my family is forever broken. My parents impacted one life that created a ripple effect.

When Randy Boyd, Bill Haslam, Mike Ragsdale, Rich Ray, Tim Williams and I (and later Oliver "Buzz" Thomas) launched tnAchieves in 2008, we wanted to eliminate the barriers that kept students from earning a college credential.

While the last-dollar scholarship eased the financial burden, we understood that encouragement would also be a difference maker for many of our students. Like me, many first-generation students need someone in their corner – a cheerleader to offer words like, "We can do this together."

Mentors give one hour per month to not only provide encouragement but to serve as a resource. Higher education is often filled with confusing acronyms and jargon that very few understand. Mentors answer questions like, "What is a credit hour?"

They also assist our students and their families as they navigate the college process. At tnAchieves, we call this

being the student's task master. Reminding our students of critical deadlines is so important to their success. tnAchieves mentors find nudging via text message the most effective way to reach our students.

Ultimately, our mentors become the "someone" I was missing and so desperately needed when I began my journey to college. All students have the potential to graduate college but many need a local support system to boost their success. Our mentors fill that need.

When Governor Haslam championed Tennessee Promise, tnAchieves became the partnering organization in 84 counties across our state, serving more than 95 percent of the 60,000+ students who apply annually. My team is now tasked with recruiting 9,000 volunteers each year to ensure every student feels like college material, successfully navigates the college-going process and understands the importance of digging in when it gets tough and earning his/her college credential.

Tennessee Promise is now a national model. With more than 82 percent of our students completing a FAFSA, Tennessee continues to lead the country in FAFSA filing. Moreover, the first year of Tennessee Promise led to an unprecedented 4.6 percent increase in the state's college going rate which is more than the last seven years combined!

Tennessee Promise students are also outpacing their peers with college retention boasting a 63 percent fall-fall retention – well above a 50 percent national average. Tennessee Promise students are also outperforming their non-Tennessee Promise peers by more than 17 percent.

Thanks to Governor Haslam's leadership, General Assembly support and tnAchieves board of directors' vision, students no longer face the barriers that traditionally kept them from entering and remaining in college. The culture is shifting in Tennessee. Students and families are no longer questioning if the student can go to college, they are now discussing where the student will earn a college credential.

Our vision is to eliminate the pre-determined destiny of Tennessee's students based on their socio-economic status. We want to promise them a better quality of life and the ability to make a lasting impact in their communities.

I hope you will join us in our efforts to change our students' lives and ultimately transform our state by serving as a mentor. The statewide deadline is Dec. 1, but applications from Northeast Tennessee will be accepted through Dec. 15 via email at graham@tnachieves.org.

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Krissy DeAlejandro is the executive director of tnAchieves.



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