

20 Under 40



BLUE RIDGE
**BUSINESS
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What happens to members of this little club?

By Dan Smith

If you ever had any doubt about the value of the Business Journal's 20 Under 40 recognition as a tool for rooting out the region's emerging leaders, consider this: From the first list in 2002, Jerry Falwell Jr. of Liberty University and his own law firm (at the time) was named the 2006 Business Person of the Year in the Blue Ridge Region. He was the first member of this group to be named to that lofty position, but you'd have to place a stiff wager he won't be the last.

• From that same initial list lawyer-developer Ed Walker has emerged as one of the leading developers of housing in downtown Roanoke (and his rehab job on the former Grand Piano building is spectacular).

• Bob Summers of nanoCom Corp., in Blacksburg, continues to emerge as a leader in nano technology nationally; • William Fralin of Medical Facilities of Virginia, is Roanoke's representative in the General Assembly;

• David Diaz, assistant Roanoke City Manager at the time, has since

Name	Age	Business	Location
Eunice Austin	34	Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore	Roanoke
Jason Bingham	39	Trane	Roanoke
Kimberly Blair	39	Roanoke College	Salem
Aric Bopp	32	NRV Economic Dev. Alliance	Radford
Melanie Cook	35	Azdel Inc.	Lynchburg
Matt Crisp	24	Third Security	Radford
Dereck Cunningham	36	Lynchburg Grows	Lynchburg
Laura B. Godfrey	30	Claire V	Roanoke
Coleman Gutshall	25	Exemplum	Roanoke
Michael Hemphill	36	Mt. Valley Charitable Fndtn.*	Elliston
Cameron Johnson	22	Cameron Johnson Inc.	Roanoke
Kevin Keigley	32	Cable 12	Rocky Mount
Mike Lucado	39	Brownstone Commercial Prop.	Lynchburg
Allison Mease	27	First National Bank	Christiansburg
Terrri T. Mitchell	38	Virginia Tech Foundation	Blacksburg
Scott Perkins	38	Faulkner & Flynn	Roanoke
Naren Ramakrishnan	35	Virginia Tech	Blacksburg
Christopher Stevens	37	Woods Rogers	Roanoke
Gregory M. Terrill	35	Frank Chervan	Bedford/Roan.
Allen B. Whittle	34	Thor Inc.	Roanoke

* Also The Roanoke Times, Civil War Weekend

become director of Downtown Roanoke Inc. and left to do the same thing in North Carolina;

• Paul Story's Blue Ridge Copier has become one of the most successful businesses of its type in the region;

• John Phillips, economic development director at Tech, bought Premier Transfer and Storage;

• Tony Pearman's Access ad agency was

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recently named the Best Place to Work in the region;

• And, of course, you see Joel Shepherd and his red shirts and khaki pants advertising Virginia Home Furnishings on TV all the time.

Some of the other now-familiar names on that list are John Lugar, whose stature is growing daily, of Virginia Varsity Transfer; Lyons Davidson, a Lynchburg CPA; Jason Adkins of KMC Telecom; Alfred Dowe, whose job has changed a couple of times since, but who remains a steadfast member of Roanoke City Council; Jack Avis of Avis Construction; Cynthia Lawrence of Design Marketing, one of the most significant female leaders in the region; and on and on.

Since that first list, 20 Under 40 has included such leaders as architect Greg Lewis of C2C fame; Micah Gaudio who recently sold The Laker magazine to The Roanoke Times; Andre Whitehead, a rising TV star; Daniel Barchi of Carilion Bio-Medical Institute; Nanci Hardwick of AVID, who graces the cover of this issue; Scott Martin of Franklin County's economic development department; Katherine Walker of the Batten Institute; Thomas Becher, who has formed his own ad agency; and Kris Hodges and Erika Johnson of FloydFest, one of the most successful festivals in Virginia. This year's group is as solid as any of the past collections and has the added specter of child star Cameron Johnson, the 22-year-old entrepreneur who is already a business veteran. Cameron began his business career as a literal child and has been so busy making money (and writing a successful book) that he has not even come close to finishing college. On the more conventional level, Naren Ramakrishnan of Virginia Tech has been named to a similar "Under 40" national list for his on-the-edge science. Greg Terrill recently expanded his Frank Chervan manufacturing company into Roanoke (from Bedford), saving a closed factory in the process. Laura Bradford Godfrey of Clair V has set a standard for ethical business that would be hard for anybody to equal, hiring mine victims in Southeast Asia to make her women's purses, which are the rage of Hollywood. There's even a stay-at-home dad in the group in Michael Hemphill, whose resume hardly would lead to the conclusion that he has little of value to contribute to the business world. Study the names on this list and read the resumes. Look at them as potential board members, clients or vendors. These are good people and you'll be hearing a lot about them in the coming years.

Dereck T. Cunningham

Age: 36.

Business: Lynchburg Grows.

Location: Lynchburg.

Type of Business: Organic farming and workforce development for the disadvantaged.

Title: President and market manager.

Background: Native of Altavista, graduate of Altavista High School and has a diploma from Stratford Career Institute in computer programming. Working towards an associate's degree at Central Virginia Community College. He began a stained glass apprenticeship in 1992 at



Jennings Stained Glass **Cunningham** in Gladys, became a supervisor, and now is president of Stained Dreams in Lynchburg, creating custom-made pieces of art using stained glass. One of the founders of Lynchburg Grows, organized in 2003. In charge of production, processing and weekly sales at the local

farmer's market and the weekly Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA) subscription program.

Involved in church and other community affairs, especially those aimed at enabling individuals with disabilities. Born with Spina Bifida, he was not expected to live past the age of 12. In 1982, he was a poster child for the March of Dimes campaign. In 1998, he was awarded the Building Bridges Community Award from his church to recognize his work with the youth program and community service. Has been a Sunday School Teacher and Youth Minister at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Gladys.

Business Philosophy: "You can't expect to succeed by always looking forward to the day off."

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