

# THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Official Publication of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center  
A Small Business Incubator

*Shawn Utt/Doug Hudson,  
Acting Incubator Managers*

*December 2010 – January 2011*

All industries have buzzwords that are used daily but rarely understood. Brand is one of them in the marketing world. A brand isn't a logo, an advertising campaign, a slogan, or even a product. Instead, a brand is a gut feeling about a product, service or organization. It's a person's gut feeling because brands are defined by individuals, not companies, markets or publics. In other words it's not what YOU say it is, it's what THEY say it is.

**com • mu • ni • cate**  
*consulting*  
marketing | public relations | branding

## So Why Do Companies Need a Brand?

Brands do a number of things. Not only do they differentiate you from the competition and deliver your messages clearly and quickly, but if done correctly, they make people aware of your company, understand what you do, choose your products or services, and then keep coming back time and time again. That's the main goal of a brand – to generate strong customer loyalty.

## So What Do We Do?

At Communicate Consulting, we help businesses and non-profits increase their profits and build long-term relationships through strategic marketing and precise communication. So all that means is if you're going to say something, say it right the first time. That's why we tailor each message to the people you're trying to reach, and then follow-up by measuring the results. That way you know exactly what you're getting for your money and time.

## Our services include:

- Marketing strategy and planning
- Graphic design
- Advertising strategy in all media
- Web design and development
- Event planning and strategy
- Public relations and media campaigns
- Staff training and presentations
- Public speaking training

## How much will this cost me?

Whether it's a business card or a complete brand overhaul, we want to make sure that you are getting the most for your money. Sometimes you just need someone who can design your annual report or plan and execute a special event. And sometimes you need someone who can manage all of your marketing activities without the expense of hiring a full-time employee. Depending on your needs, we can either tailor a quote for hourly rates or create a monthly retainer program. Call us and we'll brainstorm ideas to see if it's a good fit!

*\*\*Communicate Consulting has been a tenant of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center since fall 2009. They can be reached at 540.267.3404, 6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 181 or online at [www.communicateconsulting.com](http://www.communicateconsulting.com).\*\**

## Bike Virginia to Tour New River Valley in 2011

Officials with BikeWalk Virginia have announced they plan to bring 2,000 bicyclists to the New River Valley in June 2011. It has been nearly a decade since they last visited the area, however that visit was largely



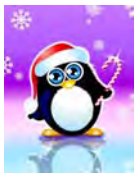
A Service of BikeWalk VA

anchored in the Wythe County/Bland County area. In past years, the tour has brought as much as \$3,000,000 in tourist dollars to the communities in which it visits. This coming year will be no different. If you have a small business related to camping (many of the bicyclists will be camping throughout the 5-day event), catering or food vending or anything that could remotely be used by 2,000 bicyclists during their 5-day visit, please stay tuned to the Bike Virginia website (<http://bikevirginia.org>).

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**LEADERSHIP NRV 2011** - The objective of Leadership New River Valley is to assist in the development of community leaders by providing participants from diverse backgrounds with an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and issues facing the community. The program will also foster the development of leadership skills and techniques in an environment that encourages the establishment of new relationships and communication networks between the participants.

Participation is open to all citizens of the New River Valley and classes will be held **March 2011-December 2011** at various NRV locations. Please call the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce at 540-552-2636 for more information or to obtain an application. Deadline for registration is January 31, 2011.



*The management and staff at the Competitiveness Center want to take this opportunity to wish you all a great Holiday Season and the best for the coming New Year!!!*



#### For Competitiveness Center information contact:

Shawn Utt or Doug Hudson, Acting Incubator Managers  
6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 302, Radford, VA 24141  
Phone: 540.633.6730 Fax: 540.633.6768  
[incubatormanager@nrfdc.org](mailto:incubatormanager@nrfdc.org) or [www.nrfdc.org/nrvcc.html](http://www.nrfdc.org/nrvcc.html)

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February – March 2011

## *Safe Water Inc., Looking on the positive side*

*By: Susan Mirlohi, Vice President, Safe Water, Inc.*

A tenant of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center since 2004, Safe Water Inc. recently completed a successful and comprehensive inspection of its laboratory facilities as conducted by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) in October 2010; DCLS accredits laboratories that provide testing for public water supplies under the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Providing bacteriological testing services to public and private water supplies since its start-up in 2004, Safe Water Inc. has successfully completed several of such inspections and remains hopeful to continue positively into the future. The administrative costs of accreditation and operation can be significant for a small laboratory, especially during a slow economy; however, what keeps a business going is always remembering its mission, as it is the case for all of us making it through every day life obstacles by having a purpose. For Safe Water, Inc., this mission has always been to provide an important and needed service to the community while informing customers about the nature of their drinking water, quality, maintenance, and safety requirements, regardless of any financial gains. As says Jay Mirlohi, President, "It is our goal to use our gathered knowledge and skills in sciences and engineering for the good of mankind and the environment, to the best of our abilities".



Staff of Safe Water Inc., standing by their office in the NRVCC; from left to right: Soheilla Mirlohi, Susan Mirlohi, and Jay Mirlohi.

In spite of the current slowly recovering economy, walking through the hallways of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center, it is easy not to get discouraged reading the words of wisdom displayed on the walls, upon which Safe Water, Inc. and many other small businesses have been built: "OPPORTUNITY, Where there is an open window, there is limitless opportunity; CHALLENGE, Greatness is achieved in the absence of fear. Courage and effort is not enough without vision; ATTITUDE, What happens to a man is less significant than what lies within; VISION, The best way to see the future is to create it; DETERMINATION, Determination gets you to the top; it takes character to stay there; TEAMWORK, When a team acts as one, sky is the limit; POSSIBILITIES, To discover possibilities is to reach beyond, into the impossible".

As with many other small business owners, Safe Water, Inc.'s endeavor has been less than profitable over the past few years. Nonetheless, the Company takes pride in knowing that it is making a positive contribution to the community by being there; whether it is through providing a needed service to the community, helping two local middle school students complete a science project about drinking water safety, providing timely and exceptional service to a public utility in the midst of a "boil water" alert, or to help ease worries and/or raise awareness of homeowners about the quality and maintenance of their drinking water systems.

Believing in its mission and inspired by these eloquent words of the late Mother Teresa, "We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something", Safe Water Inc. continues to look on the positive side as it moves through 2011. They can be reached at 540.633.6739 (office), 6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 108, online at [www.safewaterinc.com](http://www.safewaterinc.com), or by e-mail: [safewater@nrvc.org](mailto:safewater@nrvc.org) or [mirlohis@vt.edu](mailto:mirlohis@vt.edu) (Susan Mirlohi).



## Business Classes Offered



A series of business classes are being offered through Beans and Rice, Inc. and the Virginia Small Business Development Center at Radford University. They include First Step FastTrac Entrepreneurial Program as well as customer service and business basics programs.

The First Step FastTrac Entrepreneurial Program was first developed by the Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City and is now being offered through a partnership with B&R and the SBDC-RU. This program is conducted nationwide by facilitators trained by the Kauffman Foundation. Web site: <http://fasttrac.org>. The costs are \$52.00 for the First Step Fast Trac notebook and \$35.00 tuition (total \$87.00). Classes will be each Tuesday at the Beans and Rice Inc. office in Pulaski from 6:00pm to 9:00pm beginning Tuesday, February 8 and will continue for 12 weeks. The class has limited enrollment and applicants are accepted on a first come basis. For additional information, contact Eric Bucey with Beans and Rice, Inc. at 540-980-4111 or David Shanks at the Small Business Assistance Center at 540-831-7027.

The Business Basics and the Customer Service Workshops are both being offered through a partnership between B&R, SBDC-RU and People, Inc. (a non-profit organization serving southwest Virginia). These classes will be held at the Competitiveness Center in Fairlawn on February 17<sup>th</sup> with the Business Basics Workshop from 9am to noon and the Customer Service Workshop from 1pm until 3pm. Both workshops are free but advanced registration is required. For more information on the workshop and to register, go to [www.peopleinc.com.eventbrite.com](http://www.peopleinc.com.eventbrite.com) or call Eric Bucey at Beans and Rice, Inc. at 540-980-4111.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### New River Valley Job Fair Expo

Your company is invited to participate in the New River Valley Job Fair Expo which will be held on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, at New River Community College in Dublin. This is an excellent opportunity for you to engage with potential employees, technically trained entry-level employees, recent college graduates and experienced professionals. Space is limited so the registration deadline for employers is March 24 (or until all available slots have been filled).

There is a registration fee of only \$95 which includes lunch and afternoon snacks for up to two company representatives, an exhibit booth and paid advertising prior to the Expo. Register by February 17 and save \$25. For additional information, contact Patricia Ryan at [pryan@nr.edu](mailto:pryan@nr.edu) or 540-674-3600, Ext. 4352.

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**For Competitiveness Center information contact:**

Shawn Utt or Doug Hudson, Acting Incubator Managers  
6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 302, Radford, VA 24141  
Phone: 540.633.6730 Fax: 540.633.6768  
[incubatormanager@nrvc.org](mailto:incubatormanager@nrvc.org) or [www.nrvc.org/nrvcc.html](http://www.nrvc.org/nrvcc.html)

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*April – May 2011*

## Blue Ridge Satellite

*(Joined the New River Valley Competitiveness Center in 2008)*

Entertainment is something that we all enjoy! Do you realize that you have a local satellite provider in your area, someone that you can come in to talk to or call without having to speak to an automated system? Blue Ridge Satellite is a locally owned company that was started in 2003 by Greg McCracken. It is an authorized retailer for Dish Network, DIRECTV, HughesNet Satellite Internet and Wildblue Internet. They offer the same services as the National companies but with local customer service.

In 2006 Tracy Shelton became part owner and in 2010 Justin Reece was added as an Installer/Sales Associate. Their success has been built on excellent customer service with the understanding that people want and need quality care. They have greatly benefited from their quality in Customer Service due to the continuous referrals they receive from current customers.

They currently are in Dish Networks Summit Advantage program which means they receive referrals directly from the national company. This has provided extra revenue and given them room to grow. They are extremely proud of the fact that to participate in this as a retailer the company can only lose less than 1% of their customers! It pays to be a local company that cares about local people.

The staff of Blue Ridge Satellite has recently attended trainings that will help expand their market. Soon they will be offering solar panel solutions for whole house power and hot water. They are very excited to get into the green energy business and look at it as an avenue to further business and continue the quality customer service they provide.

Blue Ridge Satellite can help you choose what service provider is the best choice for you and your family. They understand the challenging economic struggles we are dealing with. Blue Ridge Satellite wants to help you receive the entertainment and services you desire without paying a fortune. If you or someone you know is interested in satellite television or internet services they can contact Blue Ridge Satellite at 540-633-0797 or by email at [blueridgesatellite@gmail.com](mailto:blueridgesatellite@gmail.com).

## NEW RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A CUSTOMIZED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUR BUSINESS

NRCC's Office of Workforce Development offers a wide array of training programs for local businesses and industries. But, did you know that they also provide customized training?



They are happy to sit down with you and discuss your organization's unique training needs. They'll listen to your goals, questions and concerns and create a specialized training program just for you. Whether its communication and leadership skills, teamwork, safety or any of dozens of other topics, they'll work with you to craft targeted training activities dedicated to achieving your desired outcomes.

The main question you'll be asked to answer is "your place or theirs?" They can provide a comfortable, functional training environment at NRCC's campus in Dublin or bring your custom training program right to your door!

Call 540-674-3613 for information.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### CHICK-FIL-A LEADERCAST

The Crossroads Institute in Galax, Virginia will be presenting the Chick-Fil-A Leadercast. The Leadercast is a nationally renowned leadership development series and will include a wide range of speakers, including: Seth Godin and John Maxwell (Leadership Experts), Mack Brown (University of Texas Football Coach), Robin Roberts (ABC's "Good Morning America") and Dave Ramsey (money-management expert), among others.

Build your team culture, strengthen relationships with business professionals in your community, generate revenue, and introduce leadership training that will inspire and strengthen the business leaders in your city.

The seminar will be held Friday, May 6, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the cost is \$49 per person. Visit [www.chick-fil-a-leadercast.com](http://www.chick-fil-a-leadercast.com) for more information. Seating is limited so sign up early by calling the Crossroads Institute at 276-236-0391.

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*June – July 2011*

## **INTER Materials LLC Awarded 2011 Army Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Achievement Award**

INTER Materials LLC, a tenant of the Competitiveness Center, announced that the company is a recipient of the 2011 Army Small Business Innovation Research Achievement Award for its innovative low cost manufacturing technology of high ballistic performance helmets. The Achievement Awards were presented by Dr. Scott Fish, US Army Chief Scientist, at a ceremony May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Pentagon Conference Center in Washington, D.C. Dr. Francisco Folgar and his wife Mila Folgar accepted on behalf of INTER Materials. INTER Materials technology was one of eleven SBIR Phase II projects selected by the Army out of 649 eligible companies for this prestigious award that recognizes companies for their significant contributions to the Army mission and potential for commercialization.

“INTER Materials is honored to receive this recognition by the US Army. The success of this program is attributed to the hard work and dedication for our INTER Materials team, the support received from the group at the US Army Research Laboratory in Aberdeen, the efforts of our Contracting Officer Technical Representative Dr. Shawn Walsh and Dr. Brian Scott, the guidance of Dr. James Zheng, Chief Scientist at PEO Soldier, and the assistance of MILCOM Venture Partners. We are proud to be a part of the Army’s objective in lightening the load carried by the Warfighter,” said Dr. Francisco Folgar, President of INTER Materials.

INTER Materials has pioneered a manufacturing process suited for thermoplastic matrix composite materials that provides superior ballistic performance and significant weight reduction to ballistic helmets at a production rate comparable to the current process used for the incumbent Advanced Combat Helmet. This technology utilizes 70-80% of the current helmet manufacturing infrastructure, resulting in a reduction of the investment risk when adopting a new helmet system and increasing the potential for transition to commercialization. “INTER Materials technology will allow the US Army to combine superior ballistic protection with significant weight reduction at competitive manufacturing costs for their next generation to Enhanced Combat Helmets and Light Weight Advanced Combat Helmets,” continues Dr. Folgar.

The Company appreciates the opportunity given to mature its technology through the Army’s Commercialization Pilot Program after its technology was identified by MILCOM as having strong potential to transition to the Warfighter. This helmet technology also offers potential for the use of thermoplastic matrix composite materials in other Department of Defense armoring applications including military vehicles, aircraft, and personal protective equipment.

A separate SBIR Phase II Program was successfully completed in 2010 for the development of technology to increase the abrasion and scratch resistant properties of large polycarbonate and acrylic windows for helicopters using plasma coatings. The company engineered a surface coating process by incorporating an innovative multiple layer film coating using plasma deposition processes to custom design the adhesion, hardness, and erosion/abrasion resistance properties of metals, glasses and transparent plastics such as polycarbonate and acrylics. For more information, email [info@intermaterials-usa.com](mailto:info@intermaterials-usa.com).

## New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund

The New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund (NRVRLF) is available for small businesses and business start-ups in the New River Valley. The primary advantage of taking out an NRVRLF loan is that interest rates are often more competitive than commercial banks in the area. The interest rates on RLF loans are based on the Treasury Rate which are currently near historic lows. The NRVRLF works with businesses to provide financing that may not be available elsewhere. With a business friendly loan structure, the NRVRLF can help strengthen businesses in the New River Valley. Following are points regarding the basic structure of the loan:

- Revolving Loan Fund will provide no more than 40% of the total project with a maximum of \$10,000 per applicant
- Loans in excess of \$10,000 or greater than 40% of the project would require 2/3 vote of the Board of Directors of the New River Valley Development Corporation
- Anticipated loan structure: 50% from commercial or other type of lender, 40% Revolving Loan, 10% equity injection
- Interest rate will range from 3% below the five (5) year Treasury rate to 1% above the Treasury rate determined by the perceived risk

The goal of this fund is to support local businesses in their pursuit of becoming a successful and sustainable business within the New River Valley. For more information on the New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund, visit <http://nrvc.org/dcfinance.html> or contact Brad Mecham of the New River Valley Planning District Commission at [bmecham@nrvc.org](mailto:bmecham@nrvc.org) or 540-639-9313, ext. 206.

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## NRV Competitiveness Center Welcomes New Tenants:

### Enertronics

Enertronics is working on next generation electronic products for renewable energy and utility grid applications. At its initial R & D stage, prototypes of utility scale transformer and electric vehicle fast chargers have been developed for field testing. The Company has teamed with major utilities and equipment manufactures to continue the development and testing. For further information, please contact [enertronics@comcast.net](mailto:enertronics@comcast.net).

### New River Security Investigations

New River Security & Investigations, Inc. (NRSI), a diversified outsourcing services company based in Wytheville, Virginia, was formed in 1986 expressly for the purpose of providing a variety of quality security support and investigative services for personal, corporate, non-profit and government organizations. NRSI professionals are specifically trained in state of the art surveillance equipment to obtain and document the evidence their clients require. Their services include:

- Employee/Employment Background Investigations
- Internal Covert Investigations
- Vehicular Accident & Reconstruction by Court Certified Experts
- Civil Wrong Doing, (Malpractice, Negligence, Product Liability)
- Corporate Protection/Investigations
- Fraud & Financial Investigations
- Workers Compensation Investigations
- Employee Theft
- ID Theft & Cyber Crimes (Terrorism & Espionage)

For more information, please contact Frankie Scott at [FScott@nrsiinc.com](mailto:FScott@nrsiinc.com), ( 276) 228-7632 or visit [www.nrsiinc.com](http://www.nrsiinc.com)

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6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 302, Radford, VA 24141  
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August – September 2011

## How to Hire the Right Employees?

It all starts with a good job description. To craft an accurate, detailed job description, spell out what tasks are involved in the position, what tools and methods are used, the general responsibilities of the job, and any qualifications needed.

At the same time, the Small Business Administration recommends keeping job descriptions fairly flexible so that workers on your employee payroll software are able to grow and develop within their positions and expand their contributions to the company.

So, what constitutes a good job description?

- ***Job title and objective.*** This will tell prospective employees what the broad purpose and scope of the role is
- ***Tasks and duties.*** Spell out the regular tasks and responsibilities of the job, from most significant to least important. There is no need to be exhaustive, but make sure all typical duties are mentioned
- ***Roles and relationships.*** Discuss who the employee will report to, whom they will work with, and if they will have responsibility for any other staff members
- ***Qualifications.*** Spell out the educational level you are seeking, plus any other qualities necessary to perform the job that you have already determined
- ***Location and equipment.*** Mention where the job is located and what type of equipment will be used to perform it, including computer systems
- ***Salary.*** You may also choose to include a pay range in your job description, so people know what to expect after you add them to your employee payroll

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## NRV Competitiveness Center Welcomes New Tenant

**Northview Media Group**, publishers of *New River Parent*, a regional parenting magazine for the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, and the City of Radford moved into the Center in July. Owned and operated by Mike Wade, Northview Media Group also offers services in the areas of graphic design, photography and writing, as well as marketing and public relations consultation. For more information, contact Mike Wade at 540-257-0678 or via e-mail at [mwade@newriverparent.com](mailto:mwade@newriverparent.com). You may also visit the website for *New River Parent* by going to [www.newriverparent.com](http://www.newriverparent.com).



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October – November 2011

## NRV Job Fair Expo

The New River Valley Job Fair Expo, which will be held on October 27<sup>th</sup> at New River Community College in Dublin, presents an ideal opportunity for companies and organizations to survey potential employees including seasonal workers, technically trained entry level employees, recent college graduates, and experienced professionals. To maximize the success of your recruiting results, interview rooms will be available. This option provides you the opportunity to meet and briefly interview many outstanding candidates to fill any and all open slots.



Registration deadline for employers is October 17 (or until all available slots are filled). The \$95 registration fee includes a meal for up to two company representatives, an exhibit booth, and interview room. There will be a \$20 charge for any additional company representatives to cover the meal.

For additional information or to register online, visit [www.nr.edu/nrvjobfairexpo](http://www.nr.edu/nrvjobfairexpo).

## Introducing the NRVapp

Every Business has a free listing . . . or you can Enhance your Listing

Google maps your exact location!

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Get an action item in the hands of your customers with a Coupon
- ✓ More Information  
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[nrvapp@gmail.com](mailto:nrvapp@gmail.com)

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Appears at the top of your category  
Additional Web links (Specific Pages)  
Add Listing to an additional subcategory  
Includes all the Enhanced Features

\*These spaces are limited and available on a first come first served basis.

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