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# The Roanoke Star-Sentinel

August 22, 2008 Community | News | Perspective TheRoanokeStar.com



## Volunteer Work

**P4-**Volunteers build a picnic shelter for the Grandin Court Elementary community.



## Joe Kennedy

**P9-** Joe Kennedy admits that he's not quite the handyman around the house.



## World Traveler

**P15-** Eric Fitzpatrick travels abroad to teach in Italy, but loves returning to Roanoke.



## Helping Kids

**P7-** U.S. Kids Care participants gather bags and sort school supplies for their peers in need.

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## YMCA leader visits Prague

It was the trip of a lifetime, building upon a lifetime of experiences, and giving shape to a new vision for a lifetime's passion.

Cal Johnson, Executive Director of the YMCA of Roanoke Valley, the corporate umbrella organization for all the YMCAs in the Valley region, has just returned from the week-long YMCA Europe Youth Festival, held in Prague the first week of August.

Johnson, who has been part of the Y his whole life, said, "it was an



**Cal Johnson**

that in Europe, "most Ys are very driven by programming, especially youth programs, rather than being facility-based like we tend to be in

eye-opening, an affirming, and exciting experience all rolled into one."

There are twenty-nine different YMCA national organizations throughout Europe, representing almost every European nation, with the European YMCA headquarters located in Prague, in the Czech Republic.

Johnson noted that in Europe, "most Ys are very driven by programming, especially youth programs, rather than being facility-based like we tend to be in

the US. Each approach to Y work has its strength, and the reason for our attendance at their Youth festival was so that we can learn more from each other."

According to Johnson, over 7,000 participants attended the Youth festival, most of them high school youth. Five hundred of those attending were teens from USA YMCAs.

Johnson was one of 16 YMCA Executives, who were chosen by the YMCA of the USA to represent USA Ys, and to bring back lessons **▶ CONTINUED P3: YMCA**



Photo by Xxxx Xxxx

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## ARB welcomes off-leash dog park

The Architectural Review Board, though not unanimous, voted 3-2 in favor of the stage area location for an off-leash dog park in Highland Park. Dissenting votes were Board members, Bob Richert and Bill Bestpitch. Barbara Botkin, Alison Blanton, and Derek Cundiff approved.

Prior to the start of the meeting Mr. Richard Conley Edwards, 62, of Walnut Avenue elaborated on his opposition to the dog park location. Mr. Edwards lives directly at the entrance to the park. Though he is a dog owner himself and his wife, Shari, breeds and shows dogs, his opposition was parking availability and concern for his property value. He asked, "who will buy my house". Shari Edwards spoke later in favor of an alternative location, option "B", near the Gish House.

All who spoke in opposition fell along the same lines as Mr. Edwards - lack of parking - on street parking - dog refuse - unmanageable dog interaction - child safety - grass sustainability - proximity to the stage - interference with winter sledding - overuse with there being only one dog park for the entire city.

All who spoke in favor fell along the lines of Jeff Campbell, President of Old Southwest, who said that "a great deal of thought has been given to accommodate the concerns" referring to handicapped accessibility, water and electricity availability, and adding that the closest homes **▶ CONTINUED P2: Dog Park**

### [Economic Development]



Photo by Stuart Revercomb

**Roanoke has tried a lot of different approaches to marketing itself as a progressive region that works together. But efforts have yielded modest to little fruit and the valleys' economic development leaders now seek to learn from the pitfalls of the past as they reinvent how Roanoke is marketed in the future. RSS Contributor James Sawyer says they need a compelling story to tell.**

## Roanoke searches for its economic development identity

It's been 25 years since the governments of our region saw the wisdom of working together for economic growth. Since forming the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership in 1983, the theory of working together has been tested in virtually every conceivable combination. In the late 90s, a group of leaders proposed that all of the economic development entities in the region join forces and truly work together as one staff. That proposal met swift resistance and failed. Soon after that, the Roanoke

Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission helped broaden the scope of collaboration with neighboring economic development groups and formed NewVa. It, too, met resistance and withered.

Now, the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership has changed its name to the Roanoke Regional Partnership, complete with a new logo and new executive director. This time, the organization is shooting for a happy medium that encourages cooperation without a merger and encour-

ages regionalism without a formal alliance. The Partnership also boasts a new \$7 million, five-year budget that matches private sector donations with public funding.

The Partnership will continue to spend more than half of its time and money recruiting new businesses to the area. However, these efforts will include a new emphasis on retail recruitment. As the Partnership focuses more on attracting **▶ CONTINUED P3: Development**

## West End Center meets new challenges

In his syndicated column titled, "We know what works -- now let's do it," Leonard Pitts, Jr. writes:

*I asked Geoffrey Canada of the Harlem Children's Zone why anyone should pay to help him help poor kids in crumbling neighborhoods. He told me, "Someone's yelling at me because I'm spending \$3,500 a year on 'Alfred.' Alfred is 8. OK, Alfred turns 18. No one thinks anything about locking him up for 10 years at \$60,000 a year."*

*Amen. Forget the notion of a moral obligation to uplift failing children. Consider the math instead. If that investment of \$3,500 per annum creates a functioning adult who pays taxes and otherwise contributes to the system, why would we pass that up in favor of creating, 10 years later, an adult who drains the system to the tune of \$60,000 a year for his incarceration alone, to say nothing of the other costs he foists upon society?*

Kaye Hale, the executive director for Roanoke's West End Center would



Photo by Pam Rickard

**West End Center Executive Director Kay Hale chats with one of "her kids," during a recent day at the Center's Summer Camp.**

echo that "Amen."

Established in 1979 by West End Presbyterian and West End Methodist churches and neighborhood organizations, the center now serves some 140 children each year who live in many

of Roanoke's disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Hale describes the Center's current program base as its strongest ever. We are using purposeful, research-based curriculums, focused on the 40 Devel-

opmental Assets," she said. "Our goal is to equip children with what they need to become productive, responsible adults. To do this, we offer a comprehensive program in accordance with the best practices in the field of youth development, community-wide needs research, and the needs of the families served." Hale has witnessed everything from the grim to the miraculous over the 24 years that she has led the almost 30-year-old organization.

She credits her longevity to her belief in developing long-term relationships with "her kids." Hale recalls one of her most poignant memories when she tells the story of a young man who came to visit just as he was about to leave for college in North Carolina. "He just sat right there on that couch and cried. He told me that if it wasn't for the [West End] Center, he knows he wouldn't have made it."

Hale says that stories like that **▶ CONTINUED P2: West End**

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