

GUEST COMMENTARY

By Dana C. Ackley, Ph. D.
on behalf of Roanoke Collaboration Project

Executive Summary:
The Roanoke Collaboration Project is a new initiative with an emphasis on respectful dialogue and idea-sharing for progress.



Imagine a collaborative community

Actually, we don't have to just imagine one. We can see the fruits of human collaboration all around us, here in the Roanoke Valley and across the country. Locally, collaboration between Carilion Clinic and Virginia Tech brought us the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC. The Roanoke region now draws world class scientists and medical faculty that do cutting edge research and attract talented students to one of the most selective medical schools in our nation. On a broader scale, the collaboration of tens of thousands of people created something we all carry and rely on, our smart phones.

This sort of collaboration distinguishes humans from other species. Other species collaborate well but only in their own group. Bees, for example, don't organize hundreds of hives to accomplish broad goals for the good of beedom. Wolves in a pack collaborate beautifully with each other but aren't too keen on wolves in other packs. The complex problems humans face today don't get solved by packs. They get solved by diverse people and organizations sharing their experience and talent for the greater good.

The Roanoke Collaboration Project (RCP) is a group of civic volunteers with the mission of preserving and enhancing collaboration in our community. Our deep concern about the drumbeat of toxic divisiveness that seems to be everywhere these days led us take action. The human collaborative spirit must be protected. It is vulnerable to fear and hate. There are people who seek to divide us into separate packs, a sure path to community destruction. Losing our capacity for collaboration would be a disaster for commerce and for our citizens.

The good news is that research demonstrates that 86% of Americans want collaboration and reject extreme voices. But the 86% just are not very visible. They don't get much press.

RCP seeks to change that. Our goal is to give voice to the vast majority of people who are brave enough to listen to and learn from people who think and look different from them. We just need to get organized.

RCP is an all-volunteer, grass roots organization with no legal structure. It is 100% non-partisan. Members of our steering committee were recruited to include people across the political, religious, gender, and racial continuums. On June 26, 2022, we published a commentary in the Roanoke Times, which responded with an editorial of its own on July 3, 2022. As a result, over 300 people have signed our Collaboration Pledge, which simply asks people to engage in respectful dialogue when seeking to solve the highly complex, challenging problems we face today. We know that when people listen, they learn and come up with ideas that otherwise would have been missed. (Think world class research and cell phones.)

On October 3, forty-five people shared their time and talents to explore how RCP can take further steps to enhance the Valley's ability to create collaboration. The meeting used a process that encouraged everyone to have their say in respectful, passionate, and constructive ways. We learned a lot from their voices and are committed to advancing this initiative.

Our Call to Action: We invite you to add your voice for collaboration. We'd love to have you share your unique experience and talent with our group. The first step is to sign the Collaboration Pledge, which you can do here: www.communitycollaboration.us. That will give you access to our website where we have resources people can use to build trust and collaboration. Our site will share stories and examples of what real people in our community are doing to contribute to this essential movement.

You don't have to wait for us. You can act on your own, starting right now. Take actions that bring different people and groups together for constructive dialogue and collaborative problem solving. Visit people, restaurants and stores in different neighborhoods. If you want, please let us know what you are doing and we'll share your stories. The bottom line? If we want to improve our community we should expect and demand better from our leaders, from our press, and from ourselves. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 36

I am absolutely grateful for philanthropic gifts and support that comes from outside of the trenches. We can be such a generous people, nation, region, community. However you can support our nonprofit and community service organizations, your gift and resource is a beautiful thing.

Let's all keep the faith. Believe you me, the NPOs thank you. 



The complex problems humans face... get solved by diverse people and organizations sharing their experience and talent for the greater good.



We should expect and demand better...

Valley Business FRONT

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL

ISSUE 170

NOVEMBER 2022

Radford University's
Nursing Program

LewisGale:
Alan Fabian

Blue Ridge
Partnership

Rural Nursing

vbFRONT.com

My Holistic Approach

Meredith Novak
GLOW Healing Arts

