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A New Direction Retta Jackson, Town of Hillsville Manager

By Drew Menard

When the Town of Hillsville hired Retta Jackson as its Town Manager five years ago, they were looking for a fresh perspective. Then 23, Jackson was also changing directions, after acquiring credentials and experience in the healthcare industry.

“The job description matched up to everything I sought after in a career,” Jackson said. “I have always desired to be in the public service industry to help people live better lives.”

Jackson grew up in Wytheville, where she worked for Wythe Community Hospital as a high schooler. Her experience garnered her early admission from Virginia Tech to begin her Bachelor of Science in Human Development. Upon graduation she moved

to Richmond, working for the Hospital Corporation of America Doctor’s Hospital while simultaneously tackling a Master of Business Administration with a Healthcare Management concentration from Western Governors University.

Though she had maintained a steady, upward direction in her career path, Jackson found that the industry was veering off course. “I was unsatisfied with the direction [of the healthcare industry],” she explained. Then, a new path emerged.

“I was given the opportunity to try my hand at local government (in Hillsville),” Jackson said. “After all, what is the basis for healthcare if not a healthy community?”

Whether it’s facilitating better infrastructure or new health programming, Jackson’s new career is giving her plenty of opportunities to bring vibrancy and quality of life to people.

“I made the right choice in redirecting my career,” she said. “I am constantly searching for new health initiatives for Hillsville that will fit the community.”

In her own life, Jackson is an avid hiker and traveler. “I just love having interesting new experiences and love to explore,” she said. “You can learn so much from just interacting with people and trying new and exciting things.”

Jackson is also engaged to be married.



As Town Manager, Jackson takes pride in promoting healthy living, including starting a farmer’s market.

“We are one of only a few communities in the area that take ownership of their farmer’s market,” Jackson said. “It has been a wonderful, healthy addition to Hillsville where the community has been able to have access to fresh locally farmed produce, locally raised meats, local crafts, as well as a fresh seafood

vendor that makes a trip to the coast the day before the market.”

Jackson has also worked closely with Hurt & Proffitt on projects, including a major water plant revitalization project, which modernized a circa-1980 water plant.

“It has been an absolute pleasure working with Hurt & Proffitt,” Jackson said. “They have provided us with so much assistance and have met our ex-

pectations and more. We are so happy to have had the opportunity to upgrade our water plant and system because we were in dire need.”

The Town recently began another project with H&P to improve the water systems—replacing lines and upgrading meters.

Carmen Dunford Gearing Up For The Boston Marathon

What started as a renewed hobby for Carmen Dunford, a design technician at the Blacksburg Office, quickly gained traction as he set his sights on a lofty goal—to race in, and finish, the Boston Marathon. On his third try, Dunford managed to qualify 3 hours, 13 minutes— 12 minutes less than the qualifying standard for his age group—when he ran the Myrtle Beach Marathon last year. His second attempt, in Pennsylvania, was just two minutes shy.

Beating the standard helped ensure Dunford a slot in the race, which traditionally does not accept all who qualify.

Leading up to the big race, Dunford will run 60 miles per week for about three weeks. A yoga stretching routine and weekly ice baths help his body recover from the wear and tear of training.

When Dunford got back into running six years ago, Boston wasn't in his sights.

"I used to lift weights quite a bit, did some powerlifting," he said. "I was kind of tired of that scene so I started running again. I lost quite a bit of weight, started getting into the longer distances, and I just kind of fell into it, doing more and more and more."

As he improved, Dunford decided he "might as well" try to qualify for the Boston Marathon. Why Boston? "Everybody considers it the best of the best in the world," Dunford explained. "Even when I



Photo Credit: Andrew Peddy, Virginia
New River Trail 50K

ran in high school, the Boston Marathon was the race. It's [going to be] an accomplishment just to say I've done it."

Since qualifying for Boston, Dunford has run a 50K Ultra marathon. He also enjoys hunting, fishing and traveling with his wife, Melinda, of 22 years.

For 23 years, Dunford has been seeing municipal and civil engineering projects to fruition for H&P. He's involved in various stages from conception to completion, including drafting and inspections.

Starting out, Dunford wanted to be an architect. He studied architectural design at New River Community College. So, it's no surprise that one of the favorite parts of the job for him is drafting.

"I actually enjoy most of the design, drafting, where I get to actually sit down and think about what needs to happen for a design, how things are going to work, how they are going to end up," Dunford said. "I really enjoy coming in every day and trying to problem solve."

He takes pride in seeing the designs to fruition, like the Heron's Landing housing development and golf course in Pulaski.

Dunford grew to enjoy civil engineering during his time with Anderson & Associates, prior to joining the H&P team. He also worked as a maintenance ranger for Claytor Lake State Park in Dublin, where among other projects he helped with a major utility project installing water and sewer lines throughout the park.

"It was a fun job," he recalled, "being outside and around the park visitors."



Letter From the President



Spring has finally arrived! It is refreshing to have warmer temperatures, greenery poking out from all directions and flowers beginning to bloom. Children are outside playing, spring sports have started and exercising outside is easier.

Sometimes it's hard to keep track of the seasons when we stay so busy but our team always stays on track and stands by our "Inspired. Responsive. Trusted." tagline.

In fact, H&P's Lynchburg Office received a call on Friday, March 22, 2019 around 11 a.m. by Martins Construction Company. The George Washington Parkway (I-495) in McClean, Virginia had been closed that morning due to a sinkhole. With recent rains, there was a question of whether the nearby storm piping had a break in the line that allowed nearby soils to migrate through the pipe. Our CCTV crew immediately left for the northern Virginia site. We discovered that the pipe in question did not have any issues; however, there was a definite blockage in the line below and beyond the roadway. The immediate assessment allowed construction to get in place to make the fix in the roadway without having to replace the storm sewer. This meant a sooner opening of the Parkway back to traffic. The blockage could then be dealt with outside the traffic area. H&P provided the answers the same afternoon of the emergency call. Now that's "Responsive!" Thanks to our pipeline crew Josh Justus and Chase King.

We welcome our new employees, Adam Tester, in our Lynchburg Geotechnical Department and Adam Thompson in our Wytheville Survey Department. We also continue our internship program this summer, welcoming back several interns and looking forward to meeting some new ones.

Enjoy your Spring and the joy of the Easter season for hope, renewal and new life.

Bif

H&P's GIS Services: The Power of Mapping & Database Information

H&P's GIS Team has been around for a while. In fact, we have been providing GIS related services before the internet had a reliable connection.

Back then, GIS software was limited. We would convert data from paper maps and forms into digital mapping layers. We developed a stand-alone mapping platform to help users view and query this data. As items were updated, we would snail mail a CD containing the newly updated information to our clients to share internally. This method was very crude by today standards but it provided the power for our clients to grow more efficiently, and, energized our drive to create useful GIS services.

Our GIS services cover a full range of what localities will need during their GIS journey. Our services include GIS data development/management, asset collection, data analysis, custom programming and consulting. Most of these services are done behind the scenes as our clients collect information from outside sources

such as surveyors and engineers. Most of this information, if not all, is entered into a GIS to aid in future planning and decision making. Our involvement in these tasks



varies from client to client. In some cases we are an on demand extension of their GIS Department and in some cases they rely solely on our GIS Team to provide all of their GIS needs.

Fast forward 25 years, our humble beginnings are still with us. H&P knew the power of having mapping data and database information readily available to share. Technological advances such as reli-

able broadband connectivity and mobile devices have made this much easier. This is why our stand-alone mapping platform grew into WebGIS, a web-based mapping software system that allows anyone in the world to access our client's information. We currently provide both public and private WebGIS sites to 30 clients with unique needs.

Through our WebGIS partnership, each client is utilizing our 25 years of experience gained through client and user feedback. When visiting any of our WebGIS sites, the site understands the device you are using and modifies to make it useable on any device. This responsive design concept is completed without downloading any software to the device. Just go to the site, and start searching information.

A few of our recent projects include creating a stand-alone asset collection application for H&P use. Several of our survey crews will be using this application to locate and evaluate a condition score of on the ground assets. At the end of the day, an automated process compiles the survey teams' data into one database for our client to consume. This data will help



the client better understand the overall health of their infrastructure.

We are helping several of our clients in meeting the state required standards for

the new E911 technology, Next Generation 911. This involves ensuring property boundary coverages for E911 dispatch, proper error checking of the underlying

data and standardizing fields within the various NG911 databases.

H&P has also been providing GIS Needs Assessments for localities as they evaluate their current GIS hardware, software, workflows and skillsets. We compile our findings in a report and offer guidance influenced by their GIS goals and future industry projections.



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Virginia Smart Roads Rural Expansion Facility

Hurt & Proffitt is currently working with the Virginia Tech Foundation, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) and VDOT on the design and permitting of the Virginia Smart Roads Rural Expansion (SRRE) facility. The Rural Road Expansion will include 3.5 miles of narrow rural roads complete with 4-way intersections, short sight distances, bridges, soft grass shoulders, natural foliage and blind curves - conditions that many drivers face on rural roads today. The Rural Road Expansion facility will offer a unique opportunity to test and optimize the performance and reliability of next generation vehicle technologies, particularly crash warning, avoidance, and automation.

In 2000, VTTI and VDOT collaborated to

create a 2.2 mile highway testing facility (the Smart Road) which allows researchers to create various highway scenarios that simulate real driving conditions such as varying traffic volumes and weather conditions such as rain, snow and fog. The closed network keeps testing off of public roads and offers evaluation of countless real-world applications. Surveillance cameras and embedded sensors allow researchers to evaluate traffic, equipment and driver performance. In 2017, the Smart Road was expanded to include the Surface Street Expansion, to simulate reconfigurable neighborhoods and other city traffic conditions. Different building configurations, bus stops, motorized cutout pedestrian figures and cross walks

provide the backdrop to test low-speed, stop-and-start traffic conditions. These testbeds are some of the world's most advanced testing facilities for transportation technology and safety research. More than 30,000 hours of research have already been conducted at the facility. Construction of the Smart Roads Rural Expansion facility will begin this year.



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