Center helps businesses succeed, grow
The Business Technology Center (BTC) at Virginia Tech helped Virginia businesses with 277 projects during 1999-2000, resulting in 176 new jobs, 14 new businesses, and an increase in revenue sources of nearly $23 million.

The BTC helps technology businesses with marketing functions, company operations, legal support, and financial funding concerns. It also helps establish new firms and matches clients with experienced consultants.

As another service to businesses, the center recently added links to investment and senior management job opportunities on its website. "By displaying links to these client needs on our website, we are expanding BTC's matchmaking activities in its role as an economic development and outreach support program," said Herb Cork, center director.

The center is sponsored by the Center for Innovative Technology; the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg; Montgomery County Industrial Development Authority; and Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center, Pamplin College of Business, College of Engineering, Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties Inc., and University Outreach.

For information on services or securing assistance, call 540/231-2730, send an e-mail message to btc@vt.edu, or access the center's website at www.cob.vt.edu/btc.

New gap financing to preserve Virginia's affordable rental housing
A new preservation tool announced in October 2000 was predicted to increase affordable housing options in the commonwealth.

Known as the Virginia Foundation for Housing Preservation (VFHP), the tool was founded as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to attract private lending capital for gap financing to developers who want to preserve the affordability of rental units. Creation of the foundation resulted from a legislative study and the vision of the Virginia Housing Study Commission.

Since developers require a positive cash flow before they can attract new financing, it is difficult for them to borrow funds at current interest rates and keep rents at a below-market level while maintaining positive cash flow. The VFHP borrows private, below-market-rate capital and then invests the funds in high-yield securities. It utilizes the proceeds to make zero percent loans and grants to developers, allowing them to offer units at affordable rates.

According to John Gallagher, chair of VFHP, "This foundation is just one example of how those in the affordable housing industry—both in the public and private sectors—can work together to preserve housing options for those who need assistance."

For additional information on the Virginia Foundation for Housing Preservation, call 804/343-5605.

Commonwealth cuts crab harvests
Virginia has curtailed harvests of both the horseshoe and blue crab fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay.

Threatened with closure of its horseshoe crab fishery, Virginia agreed in October 2000 to slash its harvest of horse-shoe crabs, an important bait in the commonwealth's valuable conch fishery.

According to the Bay Journal, Virginia officials agreed to a quota on the crabs after then U.S. Commerce Secretary Norman Mineta said he would close the state's horseshoe crab fishery "if it did not adopt the catch limit assigned by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission." ASMFC, which had asked Mineta to impose a moratorium on Virginia for not complying with the commission's catch limits, agreed to amend its horseshoe crab management plan to allow other states to transfer their unused quotas to Virginia.

During 1999 Virginia exceeded the ASMFC's 152,495 crab limit by nearly 500,000 crabs.

Environmentalists have become concerned in recent years that the horseshoe crab was being overfished and that declines of the ancient sea creature had led to related declines in migratory shorebirds, which eat crab eggs during their long migrations.

In actions related to another crab fishery, the Bay Journal reported that both Virginia and Maryland recommended a catch limit for blue crabs, the most commercial species in the Chesapeake Bay. The two states proposed the limit on the eve of poor—and perhaps record low—crab harvests.

Institute established to help resolve environmental conflicts
The University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and the Virginia Department of Forestry have joined together to form the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute to help resolve disputes over environmental issues in Virginia.

Funded in part by the Kellogg Foundation, the institute began holding a series of six seminars in November to explore issues such as water pollution, waste management, uses of the Chesapeake Bay, timber harvesting, tobacco, chip mills, growth and land use, endangered species, large-scale animal operations, and land conservation. The seminars, which include case studies and field trips, will run through early June.

Correction
Harold W. Wisdom, who wrote the feature article—"The chip mill conflict: A wake-up call for a comprehensive Virginia forest policy?"—in vol. 7, no. 1, was incorrectly identified as a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech. Rather, he is a professor of forest economics and policy at the university. VIA apologizes to Dr. Wisdom for the error.
World celebration of flight scheduled in Virginia

Officials have already started preparing for Aviation World's Fair 2003, the global celebration of the centennial of flight that will be held April 7-27, 2003, at the Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport.

According to Commerce Quarterly, the fair will include displays of the past, present, and future of aviation as well as the technological products, equipment, and services of aerospace manufacturers. It will incorporate thematic halls, national pavilions, and static aircraft parks. And it will provide a forum for Virginia to present its capabilities and future plans for applying aerospace and related technology.

The fair will open during the first week to worldwide aerospace industry leaders, marketing executives, and national economic strategists from countries across the globe before opening the final two weeks to the public. Organizers predict a daily attendance of 35,000 people.

VIA...the Internet

You can now read Virginia Issues & Answers online at www.unirel.vt.edu/via. To access the table of contents of a particular issue, simply click on the cover of that issue.

VIA takes state, national awards

Since publication of the last issue of Virginia Issues & Answers, the magazine has won first place in its category in the National Federation of Press Women communications competition. The award was announced at NFPW's national conference in Anchorage, Alaska.

The magazine also took a first place award in the Virginia Press Women communications contest. Only first-place winners at the state level are entered in the national competition.

Letters to the Editor

I found Jesse J. Richardson Jr.'s article, "Sprawl in Virginia" (vol. 7, no. 1), to be a most interesting and informative analysis of the Dillon Rule, and I must agree with him that "the Dillon Rule is not to blame for sprawl in Virginia."

Dillon allows local government considerable leeway in zoning and rezoning. Growth, on the other hand, is the result of the provision of water, sewer, and roads.

I have written for years that "you grow to the capacity of your toilets."

Once the capital facilities are provided and the land rezoned, the decision as to the size of growth is left with the marketplace as to where and how many.

Dillon doesn't build sewers. Local governments build sewers.

Frank Raflo
Former chair, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors