

## **30 Under 30: Loudoun's Young Professionals Climbing The Ladder**

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In our third year identifying some of the up-and-coming movers and shakers in Loudoun County, we received dozens of nominations for young professionals across all industries. While some have been blazing their trails since the single digits, others have recently found their passions and begun to excel. A common bond that links them all is their unwavering desire to contribute to the community in a positive way; an unbridled passion for what they do; and the near guarantee that these men and women will be the talk of the town in the coming years.

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### **A+ Dropouts**

**Liam Demmin, 15**

**Brendan Evans, 14**

**Erik Hagler, 14**

**Cheska Zaide, 13**

One young local band has seen more success in its first year and a half of its formation than many see in a lifetime.

A+ Dropouts was formed in November 2009 by lead singer and guitarist Cheska Zaide, using a name that is an oxymoron to the high grades the band members receive.

Although the band has had some turnover in the last year, Cheska remains the vocal powerhouse behind the group's sound and is its main songwriter. With a self proclaimed "popular punk" sound, A+ Dropouts is known for its high-energy shows and has built a following across state lines.

The band recently finished recording its first album, but is still spending some time on final tweaks in the studio. A preview party of four tracks of the CD was planned for early June and Rina Zaide, Cheska's mom, reports that the band's summer tour schedule is still in the process of being put together.

Rounding out the talent for the band are guitarist Erik Hagler; drummer Brendan Evans; and bassist Liam Demmin. The four all attend Loudoun County Public Schools.

**Bryant Bays, 25**

**Area Forester**

## **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Bryant Bays has always been an outdoorsy guy, so it's no surprise his professional life finds him outside with nature more often than not.

Bays is the VDF area forester for Loudoun and Prince William counties, and is a common sight at community and government meetings, helping others to understand the benefits and proper care of trees.

The Cincinnati, OH, native studied forestry at Virginia Tech, after realizing that a parks and recreation management major wasn't for him. When he interned for VDF, he saw a natural fit.

"I always enjoyed being outdoors," he said. "I knew I didn't want to sit in an office all day."

Luckily for Bays, his role as area forester has him out and about often. Daily tasks range from the infrequent wildfire assistance and timber harvest inspection to the more common tasks of public education, awareness and instruction. He often works with Loudoun County government staff, the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Leesburg Watershed Committee, the Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District, the Extension Office and others on community planting projects and other initiatives to engage the community in the health of their surrounding environment. Developing incentive programs for HOAs to plant more trees has also been another project on which Bays has worked.

With three years at his job under his belt, Bays hopes he can continue to bring awareness to the services VDF provides as the green consciousness of the surrounding community continues to grow.

### **Jonathan Brubaker, 29**

#### **Customer Solutions Manager**

#### **Best Buy**

Jonathan Brubaker has the rare distinction of working with the same company he started with as a part-time high school employee.

Now, 11 years later, Brubaker manages the entire sales floor operations of the Sterling store and has been involved with the grand opening of several other Best Buys in the community.

Brubaker said he has always enjoyed the energy and interaction involved in the retail industry.

"It's constantly changing, there's constantly new people," he said. "I made the decision early on this is what I wanted to do for a living."

Brubaker said he plans on staying with Best Buy throughout his career and hopes to one day be the general manager of a store and perhaps move to Minnesota to work on the company's corporate retail team.

Brubaker is also very active with the local community, and says he goes to any and every small business event he can get into.

"I want to help [local businesses] understand we're here to help them. Some people see us as this huge corporate machine but on an individual store basis we're residents and local people," the Leesburg resident said. "We want to be able to help and support them as much as possible."

In addition to participating in a slew of local charitable events, Brubaker said he takes any opportunity he gets to partner with local schools.

**Megan Carr, 28**

**Project Manager**

**Salamander Hospitality**

Megan Carr has seen her duties evolve over the five years she has spent working at Middleburg's Salamander Hospitality and her breadth of knowledge on a wide range of subjects grew with it.

Carr worked as a beverage supervisor at Dover Downs Casino out of college but soon felt the call home to Virginia and took a job with a small event planning company. After two successful years there, and a wealth of experience gained, Carr heard about Salamander, located near her hometown. Although she initially applied as an event planner, a position that was not open at the time, Salamander representatives would call her back five months later and instead offer her a job as executive assistant to corporate president Prem Devadas, a position she would hold for five years.

"As I continued on with the basic duties of being his assistant and helping out the executive staff I started adding on new roles," she said.

These would include launching Salamander's luxury gift shop, Salamander Touch; managing the company's human resources offices in Virginia; and starting the company's eCommerce website, Shop Salamander. As if that weren't enough, now Carr also serves as general manager of Market Salamander.

"Salamander Hospitality has been a great place to work, a great family; they encourage you to grow and learn and gain more experience," she said.

Carr is equally gracious about Devadas and Salamander Hospitality CEO Sheila C. Johnson, both of whom she says have been fully supportive of her growth in the business world.

The next challenge on tap for Carr is self-imposed. With a desire to begin dabbling in event planning again, coupled with entertainment production, she is hoping to soon be able to grow that sector of Salamander's business.

"I'm absorbing all the experience I can when I can," she said. "I like to call myself the Mad Hatter-I'm always doing a lot of very different things."

**John Choi, 28**

**Master**

**U.S. Tae Kwon Do Academy**

For John Choi, Tae Kwon Do isn't merely a hobby, but rather a lifestyle. Choi's journey with the art began when he was two years old, when his father Eung Gil Choi introduced him to the sport. Fast-forward 26 years and Choi is now Master of the United States Tae Kwon Do Martial Arts Academy in Leesburg, while his father is Grand Master.

Choi attributes his success to his father, who he said taught him the value of life through Tae Kwon Do.

"I am who I am because of him," Choi said about his father. "He pretty much paved the way for me. At 15 years old, he sent me to Korea every summer on my break from school, and I would train with Olympic athletes. I learned from the best of the best and would come back to teach our students to become the best."

At the same age, Choi ceased serving as a competitive student in Tae Kwon Do and began coaching-a decision that has been difficult but rewarding.

"When you are 15, you are thinking coaching has got to be easier than actually competing, but it has definitely been much harder," he said. "For me to help students achieve their goals and help them overcome fear to not only compete locally or in the state, but also internationally and at the national level-you can't top that. When you can help others achieve their goals it's just priceless."

Choi has brought what he has learned from his father and Olympic trainees to his own teaching. At age 15, he was the youngest person to train and create a Tae Kwon Do competition team that participated in a national championship in Virginia at the time. The team's name is C-Crew, which still exists today.

Despite his success, Choi said he truly enjoys just working with people, ranging from two-year-olds to 60-year-olds and up. "Every day presents a new goal, a new challenge," he said. "You can't teach everyone the same way, so when the students come in for class, it is always a fresh challenge for me."

But that doesn't mean his competitive instincts have run dry. In the future, he said he hopes to help a student represent Leesburg in the Olympics for Tae Kwon Do and win a gold medal. In the meantime, however, Choi continues to train students, help run the business and see his father as an inspiration.

"What he does now at his age, and for him to do what he has done for so long-to have that drive and energy to keep on-is just amazing to me," he said about his father. "If I can be half as good as him, I will be successful."

### **Lauren Riddlough Clement, 28**

#### **Interior Decorator/Owner**

#### **Decorating Den Interiors**

To the untrained eye, it would seem that Lauren Clement has followed in her family's footsteps. Both her mother and father have been in business with Decorating Den since 1984; however, she initially was planning to go in an entirely different direction. When she was younger, Clement was not involved at all in her parents' business and went on to pursue a graduate degree in clinical psychology. "During grad school I had a change of heart and realized that what I wanted to do was interior design," Clement said.

In March 2006, Clement purchased a franchise from Decorating Dens Interior, an international interior design company. She started and continues to run her business out of the basement of her house. Every room of the basement is fully furnished and serves a purpose for her company. "Having the company be home-based allows for low overhead," Clement said. More important than the costs was the flexibility it allows her. "Working at home allows me to be available to my clients and family around the clock." As a mother of one with another on the way, the location of her business allows Clement to cater to whatever issue is most pressing at the time.

Realizing she isn't the only person who would rather have things done at home, Clement does all of her business at her customers' places. "We bring it all to them, which makes it really efficient," Clement said. She drives her white van with a big logo of her company on both sides, filled with presentation boards, to her customers' homes. Clement offers a complimentary initial consultation and helps her clients design their homes the way they want within their budget.

Recently Clement returned from Phoenix, AZ, where Decorating Den's annual Dream Room contest took place. She walked away with first place in both the "Family Room" and "Children's Room" categories and received second place for the teen study room she designed in the "Miscellaneous" category, which includes "something that is not a main living space in the home," according to Clement.

Her company is continuing to expand throughout the Loudoun County region. Through her strong rapport with clients, Clement has enjoyed many return customers when they need other rooms designed as well as having gained new contacts through word of mouth. "Clients become long-term clients and great friends," Clement said. "When I had Finley [her daughter] many of my previous clients wanted to see her and were there for me."

Along with advancing her own company, Clement is helping others who are pursuing a career in interior design through different avenues such as her blog. To follow along, visit <http://decdenleesburgva.blogspot.com>.

### **Chazz Clevinger, 26**

#### **General Consultant**

### **Patricia Phillips for Senate**

Chazz Clevinger's career is ever changing-after all, he is in the political field, serving as a general consultant for Patricia Phillips, a Republican running for State Senate in the 33rd District.

The 26-year-old said he is constantly on the go, juggling that position along with a company in North Carolina called Costal Political Strategies, which provides consultants to various campaigns, that he founded a few years ago.

Clevinger has provided his services, including hiring polling firms and opposition researchers, to many candidates. But he said no campaign is the same.

"I love the adventure of not knowing what unique circumstances and problems will arise," he said.

"There is no cookie cutter approach that can be used. There are experiences that I can take from one situation to another, but I constantly find myself having to learn and evolve in each situation."

Campaigns have been familiar territory for Clevinger since he was a high school student. At the time, he said there were two attorneys in his hometown in North Carolina who were running for Senate, and he volunteered on the campaigns. "I got bitten by the bug early," he said. "And I have liked campaigns every since then."

However, Clevinger admits his job is not always easy. "It is definitely a mixed bag," he said. "You win some, you lose some. You have to know your market and what kind of clients to go after. I enjoy it and love doing it, but it can certainly be stressful at times."

It wasn't until Clevinger landed a job assisting in legislative and communication research at Justice Fellowship, a Christian public policy organization that advocates criminal justice reform, that he moved to Northern Virginia.

He said he decided to stay in the area when he later found a position with Phillips after his job at Justice Fellowship came to an end. Working in Virginia, he said, will help him expand his business' clientele.

Clevinger's future seems open-ended; however he said he wants to continue working in political consulting in some capacity. "I may or may not go to law school to get even more experience that would lend itself to adding a lobbying component to what I do," he said, "because there is only so far you can go in relations and lobbying work without a law degree these days."

## **Creative 2**

**John Felts, 28**

**Shawn McGuinn, 27**

**Steph McGuinn, 28**

In the two years since its birth, Creative 2 has seen some incredible growth.

John Felts had been running his own Web design company since 2005 and friend Shawn McGuinn, who at the time worked on marketing and publicity for "America's Most Wanted," admits it was his dream at the time to have his own business and control his own destiny.

"John had that and I was jealous," he jokes.

It was a perfect marriage between the two, with McGuinn contributing his marketing/PR acumen to Felts' already robust Web business. McGuinn's wife, Steph, would later join as brand director and the three have been moving in lockstep, full steam ahead ever since.

"It was a chance to take it to the next level," Felts said of the combined efforts of the group.

In addition to the three full-time employees, Creative 2 also boasts one part-time employee, an intern and between two and three dozen contractors. The company works with everyone from individuals and

small businesses to large corporations, churches, nonprofits, politicians and everything in between.

Although Shawn McGuinn said the company's cash cow continues to be "anything to do with Web," Creative 2 is expanding its reach into all things marketing and the trio is also looking to soon move their home-based business into an Ashburn office space, with the possibility of additional satellite offices in the future.

"The sky's the limit," Shawn McGuinn said. "Are we going to be the next Google? I hope so."

### **Chris & Amanda Gauldin, 25**

#### **District Managers**

##### **Arbonne**

It's been an all-in-the-family endeavor for Chris and Amanda Gauldin, as they climb the ladder through Arbonne's ranks.

The husband and wife team has been selling Arbonne beauty and skincare products for several years now, and the duo holds the title of district managers.

The two didn't exactly stumble on to the direct selling opportunity; it's been more of a "way of life" for Chris Gauldin, his wife explained.

Chris Gauldin's mother has risen through the ranks of the company herself and now holds the title of regional vice president. The couple saw firsthand mom's success in their 10-year-long relationship and soon aspired to do the same.

Although the pair also hold down full-time jobs in addition to their work with Arbonne, Amanda Gauldin said she hopes Arbonne will one day become her full-time job. With a personal love for the products that have given a boost to her skin and confidence, Amanda Gauldin said Arbonne seems to attract a "quality kind of person," and she has been pleased with the other representatives with whom she has met and trained.

"I've seen firsthand that you can be successful," with Arbonne, she said.

Recently, the two have begun to become further involved with the community. Amanda Gauldin has begun attending several Loudoun Young Professionals mixers and helped organize the inaugural Run Me Home 10K/5K/Fun Run benefiting Loudoun County foster care.

### **Alicia Green, 24**

#### **Business Analyst**

##### **Middleburg Bank**

"I welcome every opportunity to learn." This is Alicia Green's mantra. While she was in high school, Green worked at Susan Brantley Salon and Spa where she became a certified nail technician. In the winter following her high school graduation, Green went into Middleburg Bank to do some business for

the salon she worked at when one of the customer service representatives seemed to realize her potential and offered her a job that would strongly influence her life.

At age 18, Green began working as a teller at the company that continues to give her opportunities to be successful as she can, Middleburg Bank. She proved her worth to the company as a teller and within a couple of years advanced to a job as a customer service representative at the Leesburg branch. She continued to work there until June 1, when she officially became the business analyst. The new position allows her to constantly work with numbers through research, data input and chart trending, which is an aspect Green enjoys.

Since joining Middleburg Bank, Green has begun to pursue her bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Strayer University's Loudoun campus. Despite the fact that her current job has little to do with criminal justice, Green continues to expand her knowledge. "I was pretty far along in school and I do not quit anything I start," Green said.

Continuing to pursue her degree while working hasn't been the most difficult task for Green. "I take a lot of night and online classes, which allows me to manage working and school," Green said. "A lot of adults here have been in the same situation as me and allow me flexibility when it comes to school." Green is close to completing her degree, but does not intend to stop her education there. "I plan on pursuing a MBA after I graduate," she said.

For most people going to school and working a full-time job would be overwhelming or at the very least, they wouldn't attempt to take on any additional activities-this isn't the case with Green. When she is not working at her job or on her academics, Green is doing volunteer work for foundations like March of Dimes, Relay For Life or Loudoun Interfaith Relief, to name just a few.

Outside her normal work duties, she helps train staff and works with banking software user groups to help further other employees' education within the company. For all her hard work and dedication, she has received several awards, especially when it comes to training. On top of all this, Green is also about to graduate from a management development course.

Through eight years working for Middleburg Bank, Green values all the experiences she has had and plans to have a long career with the company. "They have supported me through school and the steps of my career," Green said. "They have watched me go through the stages and let me grow into adulthood. From day one it's been like a family here."

**Rachel Harris, 7**

**Founder**

**Let's Help Kids**

Rachel Harris, a rising second grader at South Riding's Little River Elementary, appears to have been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug years ahead of many.

After announcing to her mother, Jen Sterling, after school one day that she wanted to be a "big boss"

like both her parents, Sterling inquired as to what exactly young Rachel wanted to do.

Responding that she wanted to "help people," Rachel soon decided the next critical piece of forming her business was coming up with an acronym. The "Let's Help People" domain name was already taken, so the two quickly decided that Let's Help Kids was a good alternative.

The year-and-a-half old nonprofit was born almost entirely out Rachel's ideas and 100 percent of all donations benefit needy local children. The goal of the nonprofit is to achieve Rachel's dream: giving toys to kids whose families can't afford them.

Rachel has been an active force in the community, making presentations to individuals and groups on her nonprofit and talking up the good it's done. In addition to providing needy children with birthday presents and other gifts, Let's Help Kids has partnered with other local charitable organizations to send disadvantaged children to summer camp and provide other individual gifts and/or experiences.

Sterling says her daughter is thrilled with the growth of Let's Help Kids, and doesn't show any signs of slowing down.

"She gives her business cards out to everyone who will stand still long enough," her mom gushes.

**David Horton, 26**

**Co-Founder**

**iAppTrust**

To say David Horton took the road less traveled may be a huge understatement.

Now the co-founder of a quickly surging app company, Leesburg's iAppTrust, Horton didn't exactly pick a traditional path to find his success.

Horton began dabbling in computer programming when he was five, producing websites when he was 10 and, by the mature age of 14 had written his first 3,000-4,000 lines of code. It was at that age that he dropped out of high school, not finishing the ninth grade.

He would work on Web technology on his own, until he snagged a job as an intern at 16. By starting on his career and passion for technology early, "it gave me an interesting insight. I was able to soak up like a sponge all the stuff they don't teach you in school."

Horton took a hiatus from the tech world when he was 18 to try his hand at being a professional musician. He soon found out, he jokes, there was no money in that endeavor.

He would then settle down with family and work as a consultant for companies across the nation. Last year, Horton joined up with John McWilliams to launch iAppTrust, which builds applications for smartphones and debuted its first company-branded app earlier this year.

"We wanted to do something that was going to set us up for the rest of our lives," Horton said of his company's founding. "We knew we wanted to do technology; we knew we were good at it. We're not

good at conforming to the status quo of what's out there now and there was a huge need for someone that had some ideas to jump in and start doing things beyond the norm."

Horton calls iAppTrust "a 100-year brand, like Gillette or Apple."

"And that's where we want to go....everything that goes with it: all the charity that Bill Gates does and Steve Jobs, starting other businesses and having a heavy hand in the community and charity and, really, at one point I'd say I just want to retire and play golf."

### **Matt Lucas, 23**

#### **Solutions Consultant**

##### **TML**

Matt Lucas likes to talk, but when it comes to math, he isn't as enthusiastic. So after graduating from Ferrum College with a major in business administration and a minor in economics, he decided to enter the marketing field, combining his business and public speaking savvy.

But Lucas' career path has taken some twists and turns, eventually leading him to become a solutions consultant for TML, a Xerox company in Manassas that provides its customers with business products and service.

As a solutions consultant, Lucas, 23, finds new customers and maintains current ones by presenting them with equipment, software and assistance. Lucas has been working for TML since April.

Prior to that, he was living in Seattle, WA, helping a friend build a franchise. And before that, he worked at another marketing company in Tysons Corner where he sold products to businesses such as Costco and Best Buy.

Lucas said his past experience has made the transition to TML smooth. And with the help of a senior representative serving as his mentor, Lucas is staying on track and developing as an employee. "As a whole, we are in a growth stage," he said of TML. "It lets me grow with the company as we move up to the next level."

TML is filled with both young and more experienced employees, according to Lucas. The hunger and drive from newer workers, along with the vast knowledge from older employees, makes for a "good combination," he said.

Through his work with TML, Lucas has become a member of the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce. As a Heritage High School graduate, he is familiar with the area and wants to stay involved. He said he hopes to join a committee in the near future.

Lucas, displaying his team-player attitude, said he also wants to work his way up at TML to a management role and higher. As the football team captain at Ferrum and playing at Heritage as well, Lucas said he always works with and helps others-a quality that translates into the business world.

"Getting everyone on the same page as an organization is what I aspire to-looking at the bigger picture

and trying to work my way up," he said. "It's about more responsibility."

**Megan McKee, 22**

**Membership Director & Event Sales Coordinator**

**Stoneleigh Golf & Country Club**

Megan McKee is a people person, so it's no surprise that she is the membership director and event sales coordinator at Stoneleigh Golf & Country Club in Round Hill, where she works with others every day.

"I like that members come to have a great time," McKee said. "And I love being able to give them a good experience. I like to make people happy. I love making a difference that way."

In fact, McKee chose to work at a club because of the relationships she builds with its customers. At hotels and restaurants, she usually never sees them again. "You get to get involved with their lives," she said of working with club members.

The membership side of McKee's job requires her to network, follow up on referrals, recruit new members and handle all membership responsibilities.

She also handles event sales by arranging parties, weddings and member affairs such as golfing, while getting the word out about what the club has to offer.

"I like the sales because every day is different," McKee said. "You get to meet with people and talk with people all the time, which is nice."

Although young, the 22-year-old James Madison University graduate had a clear career path she wanted to follow. In college, she majored in hospitality and tourism management, providing her with a knowledge base to work at a venue like the Stoneleigh Club.

And McKee doesn't see herself leaving the sales arena anytime soon. "I would like to stay there and do even more training to get better at what I do," she said.

**David Nichols, 26**

**Owner**

**Lawn Boy**

David Nichols hasn't let the economy get in the way of his landscaping business.

Five and a half years ago, Nichols took over ownership of Lawn Boy, a lawn service, landscaping and hardscaping business. Throughout that time, he has kept the quality of his work top-notch.

"My motto is don't cheapen labor and sell yourself short when times are tough," Nichols said. "If you always deliver a good product, people will stick with you."

And Nichols' idea has seemed to pay off—he said the company's total yearly sales are between \$250,000 and \$350,000. At least 50 percent of Lawn Boy's income can be attributed to BNI International's

Northern Virginia chapter, Nichols said, which is a business networking organization that consists of one company per industry. All companies included share ideas and contacts, and refer one another.

Lawn Boy earns about \$10,000 of its income per month solely with the help of BNI. Nichols said a friend from Loudoun Deck and Fence Company told him BNI didn't have a company like Lawn Boy on board, and he jumped at the opportunity.

But business hasn't always been successful-Nichols said the past two years were difficult. However, he said this has been the "best year yet." Once a company reaches its five-year mark, business starts looking up, he added.

The 26-year-old gives his wife Meghan credit for his success as well. Mainly he said she provides him with moral support, but she also takes on some of the company's office work, which can be a burden. And he said she accepts it when the couple cannot take vacations.

Despite the challenges Nichols has faced, he said his true passion is working outdoors and getting his hands dirty. But what he loves most is seeing the finished products and building relationships with clients.

With his company making strides, Nichols said he wants to see Lawn Boy grow even more-it currently consists of six workers who make up two full-time crews. But he stressed he doesn't want to let the quality of his work slip. "We don't get jobs done just to get jobs done," he said.

**Victoria Rawlings, 28**

**Director of Client Services**

**ARGroup**

A recent Virginia transplant, Victoria Rawlings has quickly made her mark on the community.

Rawlings received her undergraduate degree in security management and found herself on the operations side of two Los Angeles-based security companies, as their San Diego County district manager.

Joining up with Sterling's ARGroup one month ago, Rawlings has quickly thrown herself into her new role and shown her business acumen. She and CEO Brian Chavis quickly hit it off, growing their business and professional life via networking.

With Chavis looking for somebody who had experience on the operations side, as well as someone with capable customer service ability, Rawlings' background was right up ARGroup's alley.

"In the IT industry when you are dealing with companies it's in the reactive mode," she said. "Coming from the security industry I have a lot of experience dealing with clients essentially freaking out and learning how to handle them well and remain diplomatic to keep people calm."

Rawlings said she hopes to move up the company ladder and one day become Chavis' vice president. In the mean time, she is confident that ARGroup can double where it is right now as a company within the

next five years.

When she's not at her day job, Rawlings is anything but idle. She is involved with Loudoun Young Professionals and Women in Technology and also does a good bit of consulting work.

"I help counsel people on how to interview, write their résumé and learn to use networking to leverage themselves into a great position," she said. "I'm working on turning it into my own consulting business."

**Nadia Saghafi, 25**

**Internet Services Director**

**Dulles Motorcars**

It seems like Nadia Saghafi, still young at 25, has been working in her father and uncle's car showroom from a young age-and that's because she has.

Saghafi started at Dulles Motorcars as a young child, answering phones and filing paperwork. When she graduated from college she took a job with another car dealership, but soon felt the lure of familiar territory calling her home when the Leesburg dealership was undergoing some changes.

"Venturing out made me realize how nice it is to be here," she said.

Now, she shares the showroom floor with many other family members and friends, all of whom were personally recruited by the dealership owners. Currently, about 15 family members work at Dulles Motorcars and that is one indicator of the kind of business the family runs.

"We're based on people, not profit," she says.

In her current role at Dulles Motorcars, Saghafi deals with customers looking for cars over the Internet and for many hers is the first voice they hear over the telephone when considering a major purchase. She says educating customers and delivering an honest but competitive price is key, as many in the community have had less than positive experiences when buying a car.

Saghafi is beginning a Master's degree program this summer and aims one day to be an attorney. She adamantly states her desire to stay within the family business and grow, bringing the skills she learns in the classroom to the showroom.

**Amanda Sanderson, 25**

**Business Development Manager**

**GeoConcepts Engineering, Inc.**

Only four short years ago, Amanda Sanderson was graduating from Virginia Tech with degrees in art history and Spanish, about to begin a summer internship at GeoConcepts Engineering, Inc., a company providing geotechnical engineering design and construction phase services in Ashburn.

Although her majors don't quite coincide with her career, Sanderson's decision to work at GeoConcepts

isn't a surprise, considering her interests. "I thought I wanted to be an architect when I was younger," she said. "So I have a fascination with buildings."

After Sanderson's internship, GeoConcepts hired her as the company's business development manager. On the marketing side of her position, Sanderson, 25, provides materials to clients when GeoConcepts is pursuing a project, responds to business' requests and writes proposals for public sector clients such as Loudoun County and the towns of Purcellville and Leesburg.

And on the business development side, Sanderson builds relationships with clients and nurtures those with existing ties to the company, while identifying new opportunities for GeoConcepts and its customers.

Because GeoConcepts is trying to promote itself to college students seeking future jobs in marketing and business, Sanderson also has spoken at George Mason and American universities to generate interest in the company. "I feel like I have had several opportunities at this age to go out there and create an entire network," she said.

Sanderson said the company has encouraged her as a young professional. "They really push you and provide you with a lot of training opportunities," she said. "I constantly feel like I have their support whenever I want to try new things."

And she stressed the bond she shares with her co-workers, as well as GeoConcepts' positive work environment and culture-aspects that drive her to work even harder.

"The company is amazing," she said. "I want to go out there and market and develop business for them because you want the business to succeed because it's like your family."

Sanderson's efforts haven't subsided either. She said she hopes to eventually get her MBA and continue working on the business side of the company, moving up to a director position.

### **Alyssa Travers, 27**

#### **Marketing Coordinator**

#### **Reston Limousine**

When a limousine cruises by, most onlookers wonder what glamorous people are riding inside. But they most likely don't think about who works to keep the stretched vehicle's company in business-Alyssa Travers is one of those behind-the-scenes people.

Travers, the marketing coordinator for Reston Limousine and Travel Service, Inc., maintains the company's image. She controls its email marketing campaign, print and radio advertising and sponsorships. And she ensures that the business' advertisements and logos are consistent.

She also maintains the company website by working directly with a Web developer. Travers has learned how to update the site on her own.

"My work is ever changing," Travers said. "It is never boring. It is really interesting to watch what I do

and how our company is growing."

But Travers, 27, has not always held the same position. She initially started working in 2006 as an office manager-duties she still maintains-before her promotion two and a half years ago.

It is obvious Travers has settled into the position well. Last year, she prepared the company's portfolio submission that won Reston Limousine the Image Award, which honors the best overall marketing presentation, at the Limo Digest Show in Atlantic City.

And Travers said she wants to continue to improve the company's outreach efforts. She hopes to complete an eMarketing graduate certificate at the University of Virginia, Travers' alma mater. The three-semester accelerated course would help her give the company better online exposure by being ahead of social media trends.

However, Travers attributes her positive experience at Reston Limousine to its CEO and President, Kristina Bouweiri. "She is a great influence," Travers said. "She is willing to do anything for our employees."

**Ashlie Vickers, 28**

**Event Coordinator**

**Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce**

Anyone who has been to a Loudoun Chamber of Commerce event within the last few years has come to find the smiling face greeting them at the registration table as customary as the good networking that comes with Chamber events.

That smiling face and cheerful demeanor belongs to the always beaming Ashlie Vickers, who has served as the Chamber's events coordinator since 2006.

Vickers, a speech communications major in college, knew she wanted to do something "high energy" and work with people while she was still in school. Coming to Northern Virginia from a small town in south Georgia, she admits she was slightly overwhelmed with the change and didn't know where to start her job search.

She remembered advice from college professors that chambers of commerce were great places to look for internships and entry-level public relations positions and she soon flooded the regional Chambers with her resume.

She would soon get a call from Tony Howard, then director of communication for the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, who conducted a profile interview with her in December 2005. Although there was no position available at the Fairfax Chamber at the time, the face time with Howard that day would prove to be invaluable.

Vickers would take a job with a government contractor, one she admits she was close to quitting out of unhappiness when she got another call from Howard. The Fairfax Chamber had a position open,

Vickers took it and she has teamed with Howard ever since, including when he came to Loudoun as the Chamber's CEO.

Vickers said she loves working for Howard and also enjoys the fun and flexible nature of her work with the Chamber and what the job has given her in return.

"The Chamber has generously allowed me professional development and leadership opportunities from the very start," she said. "I count it a privilege to work for an organization that supports its staff on a regular, ongoing basis, in professional development training and gives you, as an individual, the chance to speak out and be the face of the Chamber on so many levels."

Vickers feels she has evolved both in her duties and the breadth and depth of what she does. Saying she believes there's "still room for more," Vickers leaves the future a bit open-ended. She may choose one day to focus on priorities at home but would love to keep her feet wet with the Chamber.

"I'm passionate about what I'm doing with them," she said.

**Sarah Vining, 23**

**Marketing Manager**

**The National Conference Center**

Sarah Vining puts her customers first-an action that has moved her up the working ladder in less than a year. The 23-year-old originally started working at the National Conference Center in Lansdowne as a marketing assistant in July 2010. But this April, she was promoted to marketing manager.

"The hospitality industry is about delighting and not self serving," Vining said, "but serving others before you serve yourself-that is what I enjoy most."

As marketing manager, Vining said she handles the company's social media efforts, blogs, oversees trade shows, plans special events, works with public relations and advertising agencies and brainstorms plans to obtain new business.

But Vining didn't always want to enter the marketing field. After graduating from the College of Charleston with a degree in corporate and organizational communications, she was looking for job in public relations.

"Now that I am doing [marketing], I actually like it a whole lot more," she said. "There are actually more structured goals you are working toward. I enjoy it more than I thought I would and more than public relations."

With next month marking her one-year anniversary with the National Conference Center, Vining said she will continue to grow with the company and marketing industry to bring more business to Loudoun County. As social media continues to change, Vining said she plans to keep up with the trends.

"[I look forward to] always surprising myself in exceeding others' expectations," she said.

**Autumn Wacker, 27**

**Executive Director**

**Ride-On Ranch**

Autumn Wacker has seen the so-called impossible happen-autistic nonverbal children speak, partially immobile people improve their walking-through equine therapy.

Wacker, 27, is the executive director of Ride-On Ranch, an equine assisted therapeutic facility that provides rehabilitation to people with cognitive, physical and psychological disabilities.

"I love watching the students be totally different people in this environment," Wacker said. "They aren't an autistic child. They aren't a person with PTSD. They are just people who get to ride a horse. The smiles on their faces-it is just amazing what the horses do for them."

Wacker was previously a physical education teacher and is a third generation horse farmer who owns the ranch, which is in Lovettsville. She said she decided to combine her love for horses with her desire to reach the disabled.

Therefore she opened Ride-On Ranch and became a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association therapeutic riding instructor. NAHA is an organization that promotes safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding.

As an instructor, Wacker said she uses the natural environment and horses to facilitate learning and growth, which carries over into a child's schooling or an adult's daily activities.

While riding a horse, Wacker said students, who range from 5-year-olds to 70-year-olds, complete a variety of different activities, such as steering through different apparatuses and retrieving items. She also said students "learn different life skills that they might not have a chance to learn otherwise."

Mainly, students learn how to react in different situations by seeing how their actions affect horses, Wacker said. "The horse just opens up so many doors for these people," she said.

Wacker is expanding her opportunities as well. In December, she will graduate from Shenandoah University with an occupational therapist degree. Once she is a health services professional, Wacker can provide therapy to those who pay for it through insurance, rather than out-of-pocket funds.

Post-graduation, Wacker said she will continue to expand Ride-On Ranch and be available full time to reach more clients.

"It has been an amazing experience. I truly believe it is my calling," she said. "I have been so blessed to be able to do this with our farm and with the horses."

**Officer Kevin Zodrow, 28**

**Police Academy Trainer/Emergency Response Team**

**Leesburg Police Department**

Originally planning on getting his degree in graphic design, it was a career development class that turned Officer Kevin Zodrow's eye toward law enforcement-and he has never looked back. He began the year named Officer of the Quarter for the first part of 2011.

For the last year Zodrow has been the Leesburg Police Department's officer at the training academy in Ashburn-a regional academy that sees recruits from the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority police force, Purcellville, Middleburg, Alexandria, Arlington and Falls Church come through. After three and a half years in the patrol division of LPD, Zodrow was drawn to the training academy post by a drive to prepare recruits for the realities of 21st century policing.

Zodrow says he loves teaching and working to take the Leesburg Police Department to the next level and preparing it for the future.

"I have a passion for research and development. With that constant delivery of relevant and recent information, training and tactics, my goal is to ensure the LPD maintains its status as a leading agency in the national capital region in all facets of policing," he said.

At the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy, Zodrow works with recruit classes that can range in numbers from around 25 to more than 100 potential officers and deputies. In addition to basic training of the recruits, Zodrow, a certified personal trainer, is an academy physical fitness instructor, co-leading the functional fitness program for the recruits. He also is an Emergency Vehicle Operations driving instructor.

In addition to working on patrol and at the academy, the Maryland native has had the opportunity to taste a lot of different aspects of the police department-something for which he is grateful.

"There are so many things to do within law enforcement," he said. "If I had to sit behind a desk and push a keyboard for the next 20 years I don't think I could do that."

When he was out for the birth of his daughter, he received an offer to join the criminal investigations unit on a temporary assignment. In July 2009, he decided to cut his leave short and join the unit, which was seeing an extremely heavy caseload. Zodrow was the department's liaison to the NAACP for two years before being assigned to the academy. And when he was sidelined with an injury, he was invited to be a recruiter and background investigator, where he did three separate assignments, the latest between the two annual recruit classes at the beginning of the year.

Zodrow also is a member of the department's Emergency Response Team and has been for the past three years. Even as a part of the emergency team-where he was one of the officers who responded to the July 2009 hostage situation in Leesburg-Zodrow has taken on a leadership role when the team gets together twice a month for training.

"I've gotten to do a lot of things within the team that have made me a better police officer, whether it be tactically or increasing my knowledge and ability," he said.

The married father of one who has another baby on the way says he sees no limit to the things he can do in law enforcement.

"I think it all goes back to what you put in is what you get out of it," he said.

**Adam Zuckerman, 23**

**Legislative Assistant**

**Sen. Mark Herring (D-33)**

For James Madison University graduate Adam Zuckerman, being selected to work as legislative assistant to Sen. Mark Herring (D-33) was a homecoming.

Zuckerman, who will turn 24 June 25, grew up in Cascades and graduated from Potomac Falls High School in 2005. After receiving his bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in political communications from JMU in 2009, Zuckerman went to work on the lieutenant governor campaign for Jody Wagner. When that campaign was winding down, Zuckerman learned that Herring was looking for a legislative assistant. He had volunteered on Herring's re-election campaign in 2007, and was eager to return to his home county.

"I love this area. It has been very good to me. I enjoy helping my neighbors and the people who live in my community," he said. "We get constituents contacting the office all the time with a variety of challenges. Any time I am able to help somebody with whatever problem they're facing, that's really gratifying."

Entering the political and government arena came naturally to Zuckerman, whose parents emphasized the importance of keeping up-to-date on important issues.

"My parents are both very active people. My mom ran for the School Board in 1999, so that was really my first exposure to what campaigning was like," Zuckerman said. "My parents always impressed upon me the value of good citizenship."

Working in Herring's office has been a valuable learning experience, he said, one that he believes has laid a good foundation for his future in politics and government.

"It's been a really good experience to be able to work in state government and learn about the law and all the different issues that Virginia faces," he said.

The job has taught him not only how to address problems facing people in the 33rd District, but how to work within the political system. Zuckerman finds himself continuously working with the legislative assistants for all of Loudoun's other state representatives-regardless of their political affiliation.

"We work together to solve problems for the same constituent. And it's not political at all," he said.

"People don't realize that one call to their state rep can result in pretty immediate results."

And that is the most satisfying part of his job.

"I think it is important for people to know that they can get good customer service from the their government, especially at the local level," he said. "Those are the ones who are supposed to be helping you with the everyday issues you face."

When he looks toward the future, Zuckerman sees many directions he could take his career. He has his eyes on federal campaigns, Capitol Hill and eventually political consulting. "With my degree and the experiences I have had, there are a lot of opportunities for the future."

But for now, Zuckerman is pleased at where life has taken him and that he can make an impact on those around him.

"I am really happy with where I am now. I have met a lot of people and made a lot of really good connections that will open up a lot of doors for me in the future. Even though it is an uncertain time in terms of the job market, I am pretty optimistic."