

fact sheet



What is Return to Roots?

Return to Roots is a campaign aimed at the estimated 15,000 alumni who have graduated from Southwest Virginia's high schools in the last 20 years and may have moved away from the region.

Return to Roots is an information portal highlighting the exciting job opportunities that exist today in Virginia's Great Southwest region.

Return to Roots hopes to create a central network between employers and potential employees who are native to the region, may have moved away and are unaware that these jobs exist. These targeted potential employees have furthered their education and have developed attractive and useful skillsets that are needed in the job opportunities becoming available in southwestern Virginia.

What jobs?

With the recent announcements in Russell County calling for the creation of more than 700 Information Technology jobs and the nearly 2,000 job vacancies that existing Southwest Virginia employers are trying to fill, the employment scene is changing fast. A sampling of job opportunities:

- Software developers, engineers, IT consultants
- IT help desk/customer service professionals
- Technical supervisors, CNC operators, technicians
- Laboratory technicians
- Project managers
- Electrical engineers, industrial engineers
- Nurses, physical therapists
- Physicians, pharmacists

The region has changed dramatically in recent years, and Return to Roots is reaching out to our former residents and letting them know what their home region is like now. The website - returntoroots.org - is the key communications vehicle for developing an extensive database of potential employees and linking them with southwestern Virginia companies with jobs.

Returning to Southwest Virginia, these employees will have made a quality of life decision - not just an employment option - to come back home to raise their families and to enjoy their careers.

Who is involved?

Even before the announcements last year by CGI-AMS and Northrop Grumman, the Great Southwest region was seeing an increase in job vacancies. In many areas across the region, unemployment rates have improved significantly in recent years.

Community leaders in Southwest Virginia saw the potential in bringing back the "brain drain" that we all hear so much about.

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These leaders joined together with others in the region and applied for a Special Projects grant from the Tobacco Commission to kick-start their ambitious concept they called - Return to Roots. This initial phase of the Return to Roots campaign is aimed at the southwestern Virginia coalfield counties, plus Smyth and Washington counties. With additional funding, a second phase of Return to Roots could expand the outreach region to include more southwestern Virginia counties.

The Return to Roots committee includes:

- Ed Whitmore, County Administrator for Smyth County
- Ron Flanary, Executive Director of LENOWISCO Planning District Commission
- Shannon Blevins, Project Manager, Workforce Services Division of Virginia Department of Business Assistance
- Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
- Jessica Horne, Public Information Office, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority
- Sally Morgan, Economic Developer for Smyth County
- Heather Porterfield, Business Development Director for Anderson & Associates, Blacksburg, VA
- Susan Copeland, President, SCOPE Marketing
- Carl Mitchell, President Virginia Economic Bridge

returntoroots.org

The Return to Roots website – returntoroots.org – is vital to reach out to the estimated 15,000 alumni in this first phase of the Return to Roots campaign. It is the information portal and a network for employers and potential employees. It's a work in progress.

Website highlights:

- **Career Opportunities:** Job postings & links to employer websites
- **Career Seekers:** Create a free account, post/edit resumes; seek careers
- **Employers:** Post company job openings & search resumes
- **Higher Education Opportunities:** Links to regional colleges & universities
- **Regional Attractions:** Links to recreational, arts, cultural, festival sites
- **High School Reunions:** A place to list upcoming high school reunion details
- **Unique continuing education** programs throughout Southwest Virginia
- **Featured profiles** of Southwest Virginians who left the area and have returned to the region for exciting careers
- **Profiles of new companies** that have come to the region
- **Feature stories** on successful existing businesses
- **Job profiles:** What are companies in the Great Southwest looking for?

For further information, please visit the website www.returntoroots.org. Contact us by phone: (540) 831-6389. Or contact us by mail: Return to Roots, VEB, P.O. Box 7035, Radford, VA 24142.

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