



It's time  
to come  
home to  
Southwest  
Virginia  
for good...

[www.ReturnToRoots.org](http://www.ReturnToRoots.org)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Return To Roots welcomes partner who finds meaning in coming home.**

**RADFORD, Va., March 28, 2008-** It might have been the long way home, but Robert Weeks' journey brought him back to Floyd, and he's forever grateful. After attending Bridgewater College he left the region to find a job in his field of graphic design. After twelve years of living in Northern Virginia, upstate New York and elsewhere, the Floyd native returned to his roots. Why?

"I made a conscious decision to be a part of my community."

And boy, has he ever.

The list of Weeks' community efforts is humbling. It's hard to believe he works a fulltime job at Citizens' as business development manager, a fulltime-part time job at Slaughter's Tree Farm as a Christmas tree trimmer, and has the time to:

- Keep the clock at the local high school football games
- Help video tape the athletic events for the local television stations
- Work with Community Economic Development Organizations to bring businesses into the New River Valley
- Be treasurer, deacon, and trustee at Laurel Branch Church of the Brethren.

. . . and a host of other efforts.

And now he has a new role as a strategic partner with Return To Roots, a program managed by Virginia Economic Bridge whose mission is to help bring home Southwest Virginia's native sons and daughters ([www.ReturnToRoots.org](http://www.ReturnToRoots.org)).

"I truly believe Return to Roots is a great organization and opportunity for people wanting to locate back to SWVA. I am intrigued by its mission to entice people to return to Southwest Virginia. After I graduated from college and began my working career in Northern VA, I soon realized that the big city wasn't for me."

Robert spent twelve years trying to return home to Floyd County so that he and his wife Dawn could raise their family and experience community engagement. "It's nice to be a part of something bigger than yourself," says Weeks. "I longed for this. It's hard to understand if you haven't experienced it."

Citizens', whose parent company is Citizens' Telephone Cooperative, Inc., in Floyd is more than a job to Weeks. His employment represents the attainment of a goal and the continuance of a legacy becoming the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of a Weeks being employed at Citizens'. "I basically grew up with Citizens'", Robert chuckled. "My Dad was one of the first employees of the cooperative. He was an outside installer, and in those days they did everything. I use to ride in the line truck, and boy I'll tell you—that was a thrill for a little boy." His brother Paul also works for Citizens' in the outside plant construction.

One reason Weeks returned home was to be with his ailing father. "Citizens' is a great company. I set a goal. I knew I was going to work with them one way or the other. When I first came back, they didn't have any openings, so I worked a variety of jobs. But I kept at it. One day I cornered the general manager on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee. He told me at the time Citizens wasn't hiring. But not long after, the company called the copier business I had at the time, bought four copiers from me. Two weeks later they called and offered me a position as sales and marketing manager."

The day he started his long-awaited job at Citizens' was the day his father died. "He was waiting for me to get a good job", Weeks joked warmly.

What does he tell his friends who are thinking about returning to their roots? "You just have to do it. You come back home because of the life-style. Here, I don't have to go through thirty stop lights to get where I'm going. Fifteen minutes is fifteen minutes in Floyd County. Fifteen minutes is two minutes in Northern Virginia. I'm a people person. For instance, I like to wave. That's what you do in Southwest Virginia! You wave on the road here because you know people, right? In Northern Virginia, I started to do that, and it was like, man, I can't do this for thirty million cars!"

Weeks has a daughter in college studying to be a meteorologist. His other daughter, a senior at Floyd High School wants to be a lawyer. He worries that they could face the same issues of finding jobs in their industry that he did. "That's why the Return to Roots initiative is so important", says Weeks.

He admits, "It can be hard to give up the money you can make in Northern Virginia. But it's all relative. Here, you don't spend half your life in traffic. There's always something to do. Here, there's more possibility of doing what you want to on your own terms."

And here, when you wave, you get a wave back.

Return to Roots, a unique program funded by a Special Projects grant from the Tobacco Commission, finds Southwest Virginia native sons & daughters and Returns them to their Roots for career opportunities. The program reaches out to former residents of the area through the website [www.ReturnToRoots.org](http://www.ReturnToRoots.org), direct mail and the news media to inform them about employment opportunities available in Southwest Virginia. The site links these potential employees to regional companies with job openings.

The program is managed by Virginia Economic Bridge ([www.VirginiaEconomicBridge.org](http://www.VirginiaEconomicBridge.org)), a non-profit organization focused on creating an environment for economic growth in today's technologically advanced society. Virginia Economic Bridge promotes the economic vitality and external competitiveness of the Commonwealth by fostering business, industry and educational relationships between Southwest Virginia, Northern Virginia, as well as other areas of the Commonwealth.

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