

# fact sheet



## What is Return to Roots?

**Return to Roots** is a campaign aimed at the estimated 30,000 high school and college alumni who have graduated from Southwest Virginia in the last 20 years and may have moved away from the region.

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

**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 skill sets that are needed in the job opportunities becoming available in Southwestern Virginia.

## What jobs?

With job vacancies growing everyday in Southwest Virginia that employers are trying to fill, the employment scene is changing fast.

A sampling of job opportunities:

- Computer and Software Specialists
- Healthcare; Practitioners and Technicians
- Engineering
- Insurance
- Manufacturing and Production
- Sales and Advertising
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Education

The region has changed dramatically in recent years, and **Return to Roots** is reaching out to our former residents and even "want-to-be" residents to let them know what the region is like now. The website - [www.ReturnToRoots.org](http://www.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 Virginia's Great Southwest, these employees will have made a quality of life decision to return to their roots to raise families and balance a higher quality of life with a great career.

## Who is involved?

With the recent additions of CGI and Northrop Grumman, there has been a significant 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 addressing 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**. Phase I of the **Return to Roots** campaign was aimed at the Southwestern Virginia coalfield counties, plus Smyth and Washington counties. Now in Phase II, the region has expanded to include the counties of:

Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Montgomery, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and Wythe, and the cities of:  
Bristol, Galax, Norton and Radford

The **Return to Roots** Executive Committee includes:

- Ed Whitmore, County Administrator for Smyth County
- Ron Flanary, Executive Director of LENOWISCO Planning District Commission
- Shannon Blevins, Director of Economic Development, University of Virginia College at Wise
- Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
- Daniel F. Drummond, Senior Vice President, Director, State and Local Public Affairs of Powell Tate/Weber Shandwick
- Stephanie Taylor, Project Manager for Virginia Department of Business Assistance
- Carl Mitchell, President Virginia Economic Bridge

## ReturnToRoots.org

The **Return to Roots** website – [www.ReturnToRoots.org](http://www.ReturnToRoots.org) – is vital in reaching out to the estimated 30,000 high school and college alumni of the **Return to Roots** campaign. It is the information portal and a network for employers and potential employees.

The website is continually upgraded and optimized.

### Website highlights:

- **Career Seekers** able to create a free account, post/edit their resumes & seek career opportunities
- **Employers** can post company job openings & search resumes
- **Career Opportunities:** Job postings & links to employer websites
- **Higher Education Opportunities:** Links to regional colleges & universities
- **Regional Attractions:** Links to recreational, arts, cultural, festival sites
- **Featured profiles** of Southwest Virginians who left the area and have returned to the region for exciting careers
- **High School Reunions:** A place for upcoming high school reunion details.

### Coming soon!

- **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](http://www.returntoroots.org).

Contact us by phone: (540) 731-6809. Or contact us by mail: Return to Roots, P.O. Box 3768, Radford, VA 24143.

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