



EXTRAORDINARY EMPLOYEES

Compassion and creativity drive Roxanna Link in all aspects of life

by KATIE HUGER

A glistening winter sky is the backdrop to two deer nestled among a snow-covered forest. Perfectly placed gems frame the edges, gleaming in the light. This breathtaking scene isn't found hung on wall. Rather it lies within an egg that can fit in the palm of a hand and was carefully crafted by Virginia Tech employee Roxanna Link.

At work, Link provides desktop IT support for the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

In her free time, she fosters cats and hones a craft most people aren't aware exists—eggery.

▲ A CREATIVE SIDE

For many years, Link admired the handcrafted eggs created by a local crafter she affectionately called Granny Margie. In 2000 under Granny Margie's guidance, Link began working to master the craft.

Now sixteen years later, Link has crafted hundreds of her own intricate creations, is a member of the International Egg Art Guild, and frequently participates in workshops and conventions to refine her skills.

"I like taking things that are broken or don't matter to anyone else and turning them into something new," she said.

Eggery incorporates many techniques including painting, decoupage, dioramas, and carving. Link's specialty is creating elaborate dioramas within the eggs, which involves meticulously placing backgrounds, miniatures, trim, and other decorations. The more elaborate designs sometimes include lights, music boxes, and moving objects.

She says her art is more about perseverance than patience and that the most difficult designs are often her best work.

Link uses egg shells as small as bantam eggs, which are slightly larger than a quarter, to as large as ostrich eggs. Some pieces take days, while others take months to complete.

She finds joy in giving away her creations. Every Christmas she creates dozens of picturesque ornaments out of chicken, duck, and goose eggs for friends and family.



Link's specialty is creating dioramas within the eggs, particularly winter scenes.

▲ A UNIQUE PATH

Link grew up on a farm in Elliston, Virginia. She attended Shawsville High School and went to Christiansburg High School for vocational training in health occupations. After spending two years as a nurse's assistant for UpJohn Health Care, Link decided to leave the medical field.

She said that while she enjoyed helping people, she was ready for something different.

She went back to school and reinvented herself as a computer aided design (CAD) technician. Ten years later, Link was again ready for a change.

It didn't take her long to look for a position at Virginia Tech. Her husband Roger (a computer systems engineer for the physics department) had been at the university for more than fifteen years and loved it.

▲ AT WORK

Link began her career at Virginia Tech in 1999 as a computer lab tech for the interior design program. She remained in that position until 2003 when she began working in IT for what was then the Office for Multicultural Affairs and later transformed into the former Office for Diversity and Inclusion.

In September 2014, she began her current position in the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Her day-to-day responsibilities include reinstalling computers, replacing parts, computer maintenance, software assistance, and managing several websites across the university, but what she says she loves most is helping her colleagues.

"Roxanna sees what needs to be done and does it, whether it is her responsibility or not," said her supervisor, Tod Whitehurst, director of information services. "She is incredibly helpful in all situations. If you need a job done, and done right, you can count on Roxanna."

"Roxanna is a pleasure to be around," said Nate Smith, IT specialist. "She is always bubbly and encouraging. She cares a lot about people and wants to see them do well."

On campus, Link is also a champion of diversity. During her time with the Office for Diversity and Inclusion she often helped with preparations for diversity workshops. She pursued her desire to learn more about diversity and recently earned the Diversity Ally Certificate and is one class away from the Diversity Advocate Certificate.

About this series

The Extraordinary Employee series highlights the achievements of Virginia Tech employees who go above and beyond, making a difference in the lives of others on campus and in the community.



The Links have fostered more than 30 cats and kittens over the last four years for Wythe County Humane Society, Giles Animal Rescue, and Animal HOPE Alliance.

▲ IN THE COMMUNITY

In addition to Virginia Tech, issues of diversity, and eggery, Link is also passionate about animals. She and her husband foster several pregnant cats and their kittens every year.

"I heard that when a pregnant cat is taken to a kill shelter it is most likely euthanized," she said. "I thought it was tragic and decided to foster."

In 2012, while adopting a kitten the couple decided to foster a pregnant cat.

Over the past four years, the Links have fostered more than 30 cats and kittens, allowing rescue groups to find suitable homes for the animals. Link says the main reason why she fosters is the help she provides.

"It's tenfold," she commented. "Fostering helps an animal; it helps a person; it helps the organization; and it helps the community."

Through Animal HOPE Alliance, Link also volunteers at the PetSmart cattery. Trained volunteers, such as Link, sign up for shifts to clean the space and care for the cats.

Link is also actively involved with her church and served as a Sunday school teacher for 25 years- something she believes fits perfectly with her compassion for animals.

"I see a relationship between my faith and animals," said Link. "Animals are a direct connection to God and have taught me that no one is a lost cause."

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