

# COLLEGIATE TIMES

## 'Up on the Roof' provides networking opportunities

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The security cameras that line the top level of the Kent Square parking garage witness an unusual event at 5:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of each month.

This is when almost 300 young adults gather on the rooftop to eat, drink, socialize and network during a program called "Up on the Roof."

"It's a creative professionals event that caters to young professionals and locals of Blacksburg," said Krisha Chachra, town councilwoman and an organizer of Up on the Roof. "It's an event that wants to bring together those creative professionals — they're not undergraduates but they're not necessarily settled with families. We wanted to create a space for them."

Chachra and others in the community had been working to make an event like this happen for over eight years with varying success. One reason she mentioned that these earlier events catering to young professionals fizzled out was constantly changing venues, which confused and frustrated participants.

Town councilwoman "Leslie Hager-Smith originally contacted a few people who had experience putting on these kind of events. She suggested having it on top of Kent Square," Chachra said.

This will be the third year for Up on the Roof, which occurs on the final Thursday of every month during the spring and summer.

According to Chachra, the event had only about 40 attendees the first year, most of whom were friends of the organizers.

"Now we have over 300 attendees. We're really proud of that," Chachra said.

Emily Reineke, a regular attendee of Up on the Roof, is not a Blacksburg native but grew up in New York. She is recent graduate of the graduate school at Tech and now works with the Virginia Tech Police Department.

"Up on the Roof is my most favorite event of the month," she said. "I meet a lot of people there who I normally wouldn't interact with."

Reineke said she initially heard about the event last year when she was in a class with Chachra, also a graduate student at Tech. Chachra invited everyone in the class.

"This is the kind of creative programming that gets people excited about living in Blacksburg. You're less likely to leave when your network of friends are here," Chachra said.

“Up on the Roof will help people have more of an investment in the town and become more enmeshed in their community.”

The event aims not only to help these young adults network and get to know their town, but Chachra believes it will assist in the creation of social networks in the community that will help the town as a whole.

“It’s a really good way to make contacts not only in my personal life but also in my professional life,” Reineke said.

Several local business owners also attend, and frequently sponsor, the event.

For the most recent Up on the Roof, PK’s Bar and Grill provided hot wings and beer.

A five-dollar donation is optional to attend the event, and this money goes to cover its costs.

“We cover all our costs through these donations and through local sponsors,” Chachra said.

In addition, Downtown Events Inc., the group that helps organize Up on the Roof, does not need to pay to rent out the space at Kent Square.

“It doesn’t cost us a dime,” Chachra said. “The owners and property managers of Kent Square have generously donated that space.”

The next Up on the Roof will be on June 24.

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