



Brian Counihan shows off giant paper mache art.

# Puppet Krewes, Coming Through!

written by Sarah Riddell

The Daisy Art Parade will take place on World Art Day on April 15.

**A**rtist and high school teacher Brian Counihan views art as an outlet that can help us share ideas and see the world in exciting new ways. On April 15, 2023, the community will see this philosophy come to life through giant puppetry at the city's first Daisy Art Parade.

Counihan, the event's founder, says he was drawn to puppet making because "it's intuitive" and appeals to people of all ages and backgrounds. He also hopes that this medium will "make people feel a little more comfortable when being confronted by" unfamiliar topics and contrasting viewpoints.

Inspired by medieval pageantry, the hour-long parade will showcase giant paper mache puppets designed and constructed by over 10 different "krewes," or groups. While the parade is an excellent opportunity to showcase Roanoke's artistic talent, it also gives residents a chance to contribute any other skills they might have to aiding their fellow Roanokers in sharing what's important to them.

"I think you can help out a neighbor in a way that is rewarding by having everyone build this art together," says Counihan. "And if there's enough people doing it, and the parade is an attraction, it becomes a vehicle for people to express themselves and things they care about

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MARCH/APRIL 2023 21



# THE GIST



Counihan hopes this art provides joy and a chance to laugh.

and communicate [those things] with the region.”

Before the event begins, all participants will receive raffle tickets. The parade will start at Virginia Western’s culinary school located in the Claude Moore Education Complex and will end at the Taubman Museum of Art where raffle tickets will be drawn and parade goers will have the chance to win items donated by local businesses. Krewe’s will also be awarded prizes based on subjective categories like “Most Socially Engaged” and “Best Local Identity.”

When this year’s event comes to an end, Counihan is optimistic that the community will start to see art as a craft meant to connect people and spark conversation. He is also hopeful that the parade will infuse the city with a little extra joy along the way.

“I hope everyone says, ‘That was a lot of fun’ and we have a chance to laugh. It’s great when art does whatever that is, you know?”

The parade is being funded in part by a Roanoke Arts Commission Art Matters grant. For more information about the event and how to get involved, visit the Daisy Art Parade website at [daisyartparade.com](http://daisyartparade.com). ☆

## Unique Municipal Leadership Training

written by Laura Wade

Women are learning more about becoming leaders in Virginia government.



**T**he Virginia Women’s Municipal Leadership Institute (VWMLI) was created to cultivate a pipeline of women leading government in Virginia. A partnership between Virginia Women Leading Government (VWLG) and the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center, the intent is to help women learn leadership skills and create networks and relationships in order to thrive as local government leaders.

According to Local Government Diversity Dashboard, only 17% of top appointed offices in the Commonwealth are women. By providing skills and networking along with confidence, VWMLI Institute Coordinator Bonnie Svrcek hopes that number increases to better represent our communities.

“It is important to build confidence skills among women to even apply for the jobs,” says Svrcek. She noted that the program is the first in the southeast and only the fifth in the country to focus on female municipal leadership.

The first cohort in 2022 was made up of 24 women from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Institute limits participation to 25 women aspiring to fill leadership positions in local government. The 2023 cohort launches March 23 at Hotel Roanoke and concludes there in October. Eight

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VWMLI creates more women leaders in statewide government.