

A night of perfection

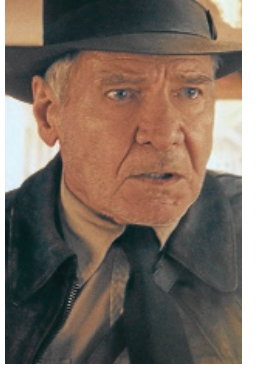
Yankees P Domingo Germán throws perfect game **SPORTS, B1**



'Indiana Jones' movie review

Harrison Ford gets swashbuckling sendoff as Dr. Jones

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THE ROANOKE TIMES

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Schools told to disregard race

Divided Supreme Court outlaws affirmative action in college admissions

MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday struck down affirmative action in college admissions, declaring race cannot be a factor and forcing institutions

of higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies.

The court's conservative majority effectively overturned cases reaching back 45 years in invalidating admissions plans at Harvard and the University of North Carolina, the nation's oldest private and public colleges, respectively.

The decision, like last year's momentous abortion ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade, marked the realization of a long-sought

conservative legal goal, this time finding that race-conscious admissions plans violate the Constitution and a law that applies to colleges that receive federal funding, as almost all do.

Those schools will be forced to reshape their admissions practices — especially top schools that are more likely to consider the race of applicants.

Chief Justice John Roberts said for too long universities "concluded, wrongly, that the touchstone of an individual's identity is

not challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned but the color of their skin. Our constitutional history does not tolerate that choice."

From the White House, President Joe Biden said he "strongly" disagreed with the court's ruling and urged colleges to seek other routes to diversity rather than let the ruling "be the last word."

Besides the conservative-liberal split, the fight over affirmative action showed the gulf between the three justices of color, each of whom wrote separately and

vividly about race in America and where the decision might lead.

Conservative Justice Clarence Thomas — the nation's second Black justice, who had long called for an end to affirmative action — wrote that the decision "sees the universities' admissions policies

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INSIDE: *Western Virginia colleges respond to Supreme Court affirmative action ruling.* **A4**

SWVA WEATHER



DAVID HUNGATE, SPECIAL TO THE ROANOKE TIMES

A thick haze caused by smoke from Canadian wildfires has caused some to experience watery eyes, respiratory issues and dramatic sunsets. Here, riders on the swing ride at the annual Salem Fair are silhouetted against Thursday evening's sunset. A shift in winds and chances of storms on Friday should decrease the smoke throughout the region.

Heat, humidity returning

As June closes, it will mark the end of a two-month period with temperatures consistently near or below normal, and Virginia is about to rush headlong into a weather pattern that is typical for the first two weeks of July.

May and June have not been cold by any stretch, but over the last two months, Roanoke has averaged about 2 to 3 degrees below normal. And the first 90-degree day did not come until June 25, with no temperature exceeding 90 de-

grees for the first four weeks of the month.

Even so, Roanoke is having its second warmest calendar year so far, trailing only 2012, the year of the infamous derecho.

An unusually persistent wind from the north and northwest have kept heat waves away from Virginia, but it also kept it drier than normal until the last cou-

ple of weeks of the month.

The recent rains have managed to erase any semblance of a developing drought in Southwest Virginia, as rainfall amounts for the month have recovered to near normal over the past couple of weeks. Roanoke had five consecutive days with measurable rain from June 19-23, bringing streamflow back toward normal, and sending drought retreating northward to the Washington suburbs and the lower Rappahannock Valley. It is all about to change.

The next couple of weeks will be much closer to normal with several days above normal. While a blistering heat wave is not in the offing, temperatures are headed for the upper 80s to lower 90s for most of the first half of July.

Normal highs are in the middle to upper 80s, so that is not much of a shock, but until recently, we have missed any extended periods of especially humid weather. That high

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Council called to address building

Report about condition of Blacksburg's Odd Fellows Hall is being discussed

YANN RANAIVO
The Roanoke Times

BLACKSBURG — The town is facing calls to address the preservation of St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall, with a number of people questioning whether the historic building is a legitimate priority.

Concerns over Odd Fellows came to the forefront this week when a number of speakers, including well-known poet and activist Nikki Giovanni, came before the Town Council to call for stronger attention to the building.

The comments come in light of a recent report that issues recommendations for museum collections and maintenance and improvements to both Odd Fellows and the Alexander Black House.

Odd Fellows, located on Gilbert Street, is the only remaining structure from New Town, northern Blacksburg's historic Black community. Some of the speakers who addressed council voiced fears that a failure to preserve the building would lead to the further erasure of local African-American history.

Blacksburg resident Toni Pitts said the building is not just a

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Roanoke offers arts pitch

Marketing package gives fresh economic development angle

JEFF STURGEON
The Roanoke Times

Roanoke's experts in attracting new businesses are

examining a fresh premise that local arts and culture can help score more jobs.

This month, a local arts and cultural partnership premiered a multimedia presentation that intrigued Roanoke's lead municipal economic developer.

A newly created video features a song about creativity

and art, performed from the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge and other downtown spots. Viewers of "It's Here" see rolling footage of dancing, singing, parades and shows, plus a street-level look at outdoor murals and

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Bryan "Harvest Blaque" Hancock in a screen capture from the new video promoting arts in the Roanoke Valley, "It's Here." **SCREENSHOT**

Striped bass size limit lowered

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Countdown to America's 250th kicks off July 4

NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press

It's three years until the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary, but festivities are already starting.

The anniversary push will formally launch July 4 with an event during a Major League Baseball game between the Milwaukee Brewers and the Chicago Cubs at American Family Field in Milwaukee. The organization spearheading the celebration, known as America250, will start recruiting people to share their stories of what the country means to them.

The country is headed toward the anniversary date as it remains riven politically, its citizens divided over how to view the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol and whether President Joe Biden was legitimately elected. Even decisions on where to shop or what beer to drink have been caught up in political fighting.

Before the U.S. reaches its semiquincentennial — try saying that out loud — it will have to survive the 2024 presidential election, which is shaping up to be as divisive as its prior two contests.

Times also were fraught in the run-up to the country's 1976 bicentennial celebration, which came two years after Richard Nixon resigned his presidency over the Watergate scandal and convulsions over the end of the Vietnam War. It followed a decade that saw the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

But Rosie Rios, the former U.S. treasurer who heads America250, has fond memories of that celebration as an 11-year-old in Northern California. She watched old-fashioned sailing

ships gather in Boston and New York harbors on her family's black-and-white television, and she visited the national Freedom Train exhibit when it stopped in Oakland. And, of course, she remembers the fireworks.

"I couldn't have been more proud than that evening to be an American, and I want my kids to feel the same way," Rios said in an interview.

Rios said she hopes the 2026 celebrations have a similar effect, regardless of national fights.

"I feel like we'll be successful

if as many Americans as possible feel like this is the land of opportunity," Rios said.

The July 4 event will be the formal kickoff for planning for the celebrations. America250, a nonpartisan organization created by Congress in 2016 to mark the anniversary, will oversee that process. It has already enlisted the neighborhood app Nextdoor and the YWCA as partners.

"We certainly have ideas," Rios said, "but we'd like to hear ideas from students. We'd love to hear ideas from all parts of the country."

Weather

From A1

humidity is coming back.

This also means the chance for showers and thunderstorms will stay with us, likely keeping us away from a drought, but it also means the cooler nights we had in June will take a back seat for a while. We had been fortunate these last few weeks, as from a climate perspective, summer nights have been trending warming over the last half-century.

Return of the haze

The last couple of days have brought hazy and smoky skies to Virginia. Just like a few weeks ago, the smoke is coming from the wildfires burning across Canada.

Numerous wildfires continue there, from the Rockies of British Columbia to the Atlantic province of Newfoundland. But specifically for Virginia, the smoke is coming from the fires in Quebec and Ontario.

Movement and density of the smoke overhead change as large-scale wind patterns shift.



DAVID HUNGATE, SPECIAL TO THE ROANOKE TIMES

The annual Salem Fair's midway has a backdrop of smoke and haze Thursday evening.

When our winds a few miles up in the atmosphere are from the north or northwest, we get waves of that smoke. Sometimes

it will be worse than others. Most of the smoke will be gone by this weekend in Virginia as our winds aloft turn from the

west and southwest. But that will probably not be the end of it. The fires are large and most

of them are in remote areas of the Canadian wilderness, away from populated areas. As a result, they will be allowed to either burn themselves out or extinguish naturally by a soaking rain. Some may burn most of the summer, so don't be surprised if we get smoky skies at least a few more times before the fall.

Fires are naturally occurring events in Canada, but this spring was especially hot and dry for most of the country, making the ground more susceptible to fire and more importantly, primed for the rapid spread of fire.

Fully attributing the smoky skies in Virginia directly to climate change is dicey. However, as the climate warms, vegetation does dry out faster, and wildfires can spread more rapidly, regardless of the ignition source.

And as we have seen, smoke travels hundreds of miles away from the fires themselves, so we should probably expect another smoky spell or two before the end of the summer.

But for this Friday through the Fourth, it will be more about the heat and the humidity.

Building

From A1

town institution, but also part of Virginia history. She said the town has a responsibility to preserve the structure.

"It would be immoral to disregard and neglect a building that meant so much to African-Americans in the area surrounding New Town," she told council.

Odd Fellows, which the town restored and officially reopened in 2009, currently serves as a museum of African-American culture and was once a social gathering spot for the Black community.

The Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation, which oversees Odd Fellows, is currently not doing tours of the building. Access to the second floor has also been blocked off for some time due to both structural and capacity concerns, said Jim Rakes, chairman of the foundation's board of directors.

The foundation has stopped tours for now because it needs some time to assess the report and

its recommendations, Rakes said. However, Odd Fellows was briefly opened and allowed some people in during a recent gospel singing event that occurred just outside of the building, he said.

There have also been some other challenges with events at Odd Fellows, Rakes said. In addition to the impact of the pandemic on attendance, the new and neighboring Virginia Tech Foundation building has led to parking issues, he said.

The report issues a number of recommendations for Odd Fellows and the Black House, which is located on Draper Road and houses the Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation.

The report categorized recommendations as immediate, short-term and long-term, with the latter being fixes to be made within six months to a year.

Among the immediate recommendations for Odd Fellows are security improvements as the report points out that the first and second floor windows are not secured with locks and that the double entrance doors and single entrance doors at the north elevation have locks "that



MATT GENTRY, THE ROANOKE TIMES

St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall is located at 203 Gilbert St, Blacksburg.

don't provide sufficient security?"

The report recommends a laundry list of long-term improvements which include the installation of a security system that would include exterior and interior cameras. Other recommendations include the designation of the space for multiple uses, including serving as a meeting place for African-American programs such as the Black

College Institute.

The board found some good things in the report, but there were also certain points that weren't quite correct, Rakes said.

The foundation and board needs to further assess the report, but there is a general willingness to make improvements and support preservation efforts, Rakes said. "And I'm sure the town feels the

same way," he said.

Town Manager Marc Verniel addressed the report.

"The town's public works department has already completed some of the recommended maintenance items. Many of the other recommendations are already underway or are planned in the future," Verniel wrote in an email. "There are also some suggested longer-term building improvements in the report that the town will discuss with the BMCF board to determine if they are needed."

Giovanni was among those who questioned the prioritization of Odd Fellows. While she voiced some general praise for the town and the progress it's made over the years, she said there seems to have been neglect when it's come to some other areas.

Giovanni asked why the town seems to "not be incredibly proud of what we have built here?"

"What are we afraid of in saving a building?" She said. "It's something we should be proud of."

Yann Ranaivo (540) 381-1661
yann.ranaivo@roanoke.com

Arts

From A1

sculpture from the city's public art collection.

Roanoke boosters commonly pitch expansion-minded industries with data about building sites, incentives and lifestyle amenities such as hiking and beer, yet with less said about the arts. The new presentation gives city officials a ready-to-use media package to plug this gap.

"This is the sort of angle that's been missing from a lot of our promotional stuff," said Marc Nelson, who directs the Roanoke Department of Economic Development.

Nelson said in an interview that his office will begin studying ways to incorporate the arts and culture in its marketing of the city as a place for business investment. A new website page about arts and cultural is live at bizroanoke.com/about-roanoke/living-in-roanoke/arts.

The project grew from a conver-

sation between Shaleen Powell, who directs the Roanoke Cultural Endowment, and Doug Jackson, Roanoke's arts and culture coordinator, about fashioning a promotional project.

"The outdoors have been branded beautifully," Powell said. "Let's package the arts. Because we have such a strong concentration, such a high concentration of arts for a city of our size, but it's never been packaged and said, 'Hey, check this out!'"

She added: "I feel like the arts has always been one of those bullet points under quality of life. Something that needs to be demonstrated even stronger, or brighter, or louder is that the arts are just as important."

Powell turned to TV producer and nonprofit marketer Michael Hemphill. Hemphill's firm, Buzz4Good LLC, produces the TV show "Buzz," which features nonprofit organizations from the Roanoke and New River valleys and elsewhere in half-hour weekly segments that air on Blue Ridge PBS. In conjunction with each show,

the featured nonprofit receives pro-bono marketing services to attract more donors, volunteers and clients to their cause.

The upshot: Hemphill has been working on six episodes tied to arts and culture, a \$60,000 project, with the endowment paying half from pandemic relief funds the endowment received from the city and Buzz4Good raising a like amount from corporate and other sponsors.

To catch what you might have missed, the shows are available free on the web, including at <https://buzz4good.com/episodes>.

The project intersects with the issue of economic growth in the city in the Buzz episode of June 21, which explores the proposition that Nelson's shop can take greater advantage of the arts and culture as a business attractant and engine of economic activity and growth. Arts and culture generate \$64 million of local economic activity a year and support 1,775 jobs locally, according to research.

The Buzz audience heard from the director of the Fralin Biomed-

ical Research Institute in Roanoke. "The arts is an extremely important part of the lives of scientists as well. Most people I don't think know that," Michael Friedlander said. "Without it, we would not be nearly as successful."

During creation of the June 21 segment, Hemphill's team lined up J.P. Powell, a musician and restaurateur, and actor, poet and hip-hop performer Bryan "Harvest Blaque" Hancock to come up with a song and video. Dan Miroli, the director of photography and editing at Buzz4Good, hit the streets in early May and brought back footage of numerous arts and culture events going on at the time.

The video is a striking, three-minute survey of culture and art as it unfolds year-around in the city. Powell's music and Hancock's lyrics and performance tie it all together.

It's "about the power of creativity and art, and the symbiotic relationship between the artist and the place the artist calls

home. Roanoke both inspires artists and is inspired by them in return, in ways that often go undefined and unexplored," Hemphill said by email. "Art gives a community meaning and beauty and identity, and we all prosper because of it."

Hemphill captured Nelson's first reaction to the video in a Zoom call that has since been made public.

Nelson, a longtime economic department employee who became its chief in 2021, said his office does not incorporate the arts and culture in marketing the city as a place to do business. But he sounded intrigued by the possibility of doing so.

"We often say if we could just get them here and they could see what life is like here," Nelson said. "Now we have a video that can serve as that piece, that, 'This is why you should come' rather than us trying to convince you to come."

Jeff Sturgeon (540) 981-3251
jeff.sturgeon@roanoke.com