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# THE ROANOKE TIMES

Sunday, October 6, 2024

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**HEATHER ROUSSEAU, THE ROANOKE TIMES**

As part of an ongoing initiative of the Roanoke Arts Commission to connect artists with their communities murals are popping up around Roanoke. The recently completed Gainsboro YMCA mural is seen facing Orange Avenue and was designed by Bryce Cobbs and painted by Cobbs and Cameron Stallings.

## Israel expands bombardment in Lebanon

**BASSAM HATOUM, MELANIE LIDMAN AND BASSEM MROUE**  
Associated Press

**MASNAA BORDER CROSSING**, Lebanon — Powerful new explosions rocked Beirut's southern suburbs late Saturday as Israel expanded its bombardment in Lebanon, striking a Palestinian refugee camp deep in the north for the first time as it targeted both Hezbollah and Hamas fighters.

Thousands of people in Lebanon, including Palestinian refugees, continued to flee the widening conflict in the region, while rallies were held around the world marking the approaching one-year anniversary of the start of the war in Gaza.

Strong explosions were reported near midnight after Israel's military called on residents to evacuate areas in Beirut's Haret Hreik and Choueifat neighborhoods. Associated Press video showed blasts illuminating the skyline of the densely populated southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence.

Earlier in the day, Israel's military said it killed two senior officials with Hamas' military wing in Lebanon. Israel killed several Hamas officials there since the Israel-Hamas war began, in addition to most of the top leadership of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

Israel's attack on the northern Beddawi camp killed an official with Hamas' military wing, his wife and two young daughters, the Palestinian militant group said. Hamas later said another military wing member was killed in Israeli strikes in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley.

Residents confronted the aftermath: smashed buildings, scattered bricks and

Please see **ISRAEL**, Page A7

■ **Inside:** More coverage, **B13-14.**

## Inspiring change through art

Public art used to empower artists as agents of community development

**LUKE WEIR**  
The Roanoke Times

Where most people pass by a blank wall, some artists envision a canvas.

A previously unadorned tunnel along Roanoke's Lick Run Greenway is transforming into a colorful homage to neighborhood history, where the creek trickles beneath busy 10th Street Northwest.

With brush and paint, Katrina Legans carefully creates a mural at Brown-Robertson Park. The work-in-progress title is 10th Street Tunnel of Love.

"What I'm doing is community based," Legans said. "The goal of this whole

thing is to bring together people, and celebrate community, diversity, culture, abundance ... celebrating what we have."

Legans, a northwest native, said she spent about a month researching and interviewing people around the neighborhood for ideas to combine into her mural design.

"The mural is dedicated to Dorothy Brown and Hazel Robertson," Legans said. "They were two public figures here in the northwest neighborhood."

Brown was a taxi driver who would give free rides during emergencies, even for people just stranded in the rain, ac-

**VIEW:** For a video about the public art mural projects in Roanoke, point your smartphone camera at the QR code and click to connect. **NEWSVU**

ording to a placard at the park. Robertson was a daycare attendant known to provide free child care to families who needed it, the sign reads.

Both women died during historic flooding brought by Hurricane Juan in November 1985. Brown-Robertson

Please see **ART**, Page A4

## A week without driving

Proponents say it's an exercise in empathy

**LUKE WEIR**  
The Roanoke Times

At the end of this year's national week without driving

challenge, Roanoke accessibility advocates hope it gets easier to walk, bus, bike and roll around the city in years to come.

Cyclist Ken McLeod said he participated in the nationwide event to try a week without driving from Monday to Sunday. But he acknowledged be-

fore the week began that it's truly a challenge in Roanoke.

"For a lot of people, a week without driving is like going straight to running a marathon," McLeod said. "Think of the people who can't drive, and how they have to get around

Please see **DRIVING**, Page A6



Bikers make their way along Memorial Bridge on Friday afternoon in Roanoke.  
**HEATHER ROUSSEAU, THE ROANOKE TIMES**

**Hokies win at Stanford**  
SPORTS, B1

**Musicals headed to the screen**  
EXTRA, D1

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Partly sunny  
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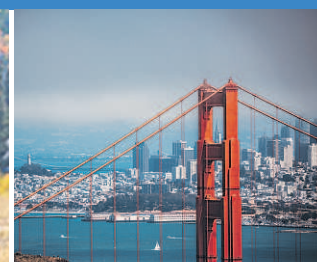




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**Art**

From A1

Park, established in 2002 where houses once stood, is named in their honor.

“It’s all about the people and love, and supporting each other, nurturing each other, caring for each other, and building on that,” Legans said. “This is for them. This is a community-based project.”

Legans, who also paints portraits and clothing for friends, said she welcomes anyone to come paint alongside her while she’s working on the mural.

“People have been very encouraging,” Legans said. “I’ve had some children and parents stop by and help me paint.”

She’s done a few indoor murals around town, but this is her first solo foray into public, outdoor art.

“Art brings people together,” Legans said. “This is just a way, and a tool, for us to utilize to be able to bridge the gap with all communities. Not just northwest. Southwest, southeast and northeast.”

Legans’ mural is one of a handful of public art pieces in the works this year. Murals have appeared around town and along greenways in recent years through funding from the Roanoke Arts Commission and Pathfinders for Greenways.

Roanoke Arts and Culture Coordinator Doug Jackson said the arts commission is using money it gets from the city’s percent-for-art resolution, which provides 1% of the city’s capital project funding to be used for art projects.

This year, the percent-for-art amount was \$200,000, he said. The local arts commission further leverages that money by applying for National Endowment for the Arts grants.

It’s enabled the arts commission to start a resident artist program for city parks, neighborhoods, and even the bus system. Further, the commission provides grants for art projects, and commissions murals like Legans’ work at Brown-Robertson Park.

“We may not always be in the

mural business, but it’s a terrific space for us right now,” Jackson said. “One of these murals is a really good investment.”

Depending on the size of the canvas, a mural costs anywhere from \$8,000 to \$20,000. All the new public art — there are eight murals slated for this year, each in varying stages of completion — is part of an effort to empower a learning community in the city, Jackson said.

“My question was, can we train artists as community development agents, and engage very intentionally that way?” Jackson said. “The past few years in Roanoke, it’s really been one big experiment.”

He said everybody is or can be creative. And creativity is a key to problem solving.

“If we can align our creativity in making the community a better place, something big is going to happen,” Jackson said. “But we need models to show us how to do that.”

Which is where the mural artists come in. Artists are creative people who are willing to take risks, and in the case of mural painters, they’re taking those risks in a public setting, he said.

“We’re seeing great responses. The community loves murals. They can get out there and help in every part of the process,” Jackson said. “It’s very hands-on, and people feel connected to it.”

The murals provide an intersection for people in the community who are curious about history, justice, environment, and making things better, Jackson said. In that way, the artists are setting an example to show how some risks are worth taking to improve your neighborhood.

“People are curious, and they’re willing to try,” Jackson said. “We think artists are kind of standing in for everybody, and we can look to them as models.”

It’s not just murals on the sides of walls or under bridges where art can make an impact. A pedestrian safety project completed this year on Salem Turnpike incorporated street art as a method to slow the roll of traffic outside the Roanoke Redevelopment



HEATHER ROUSSEAU PHOTOS, THE ROANOKE TIMES

Local artist Rachel Anne Morris works on her abstract mural stretching across the facade of the West End Center For Youth facing Patterson Avenue Southwest in Roanoke. The art represents the Roanoke River and area mountains.

Housing Authority headquarters.

For the larger-than-life murals made with meaning, the hope is to inspire people to pursue further improvements in their neighborhoods, wherever they see fit.

“I’m convinced that where we’re really going to see change is in the person-to-person aspect,” Jackson said. “It takes time, it builds trust, and it creates a foundation to do work together.”

The idea has origins in the “End Racism Now” street mural that dozens of artists contributed to on the 200 block of Campbell Avenue downtown in 2020. Legans, the 10th Street Tunnel of Love artist, contributed to that piece as well.

“We have a great, diverse group of individuals who are participating actively in the arts here, and that that excites me. I want to see more of it,” Legans said. “I’m just excited for what’s happened already, and what’s to come.”



Katrina Legans painted a mural under the 10th street bridge at Brown-Robertson Park along the Lick Run Greenway.

**Luke Weir** (540) 566-8917/luke.weir@roanoke.com

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