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OIA connect

HOME EDITION

JUNETEENTH

June 19 to be recognized as paid holiday

This week, President Tim Sands [announced in a message to the university community](#) that June 19, 2020, known as Juneteenth, will be a paid holiday recognized by Virginia Tech for all eligible faculty and staff.

President Sands' message follows an announcement from Gov. Ralph Northam that declared this Friday as a holiday recognized within the Commonwealth of Virginia and ordered all offices within the executive branch to be closed. As the governor stated in his announcement, "Juneteenth commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas, the last of the former Confederate states to abolish slavery, and recognizes the significant roles and many contributions of African Americans to the commonwealth and the nation."

Virginia Tech joins the governor in recognizing this important day in the history of our nation. In response to the governor's proclamation, Virginia Tech will close all offices and will not provide class instruction that day.

[Read more...](#)

Juneteenth & Beyond

Join the conversation as the Reynolds Homestead staff explores the origins of Juneteenth.

"In an effort to become better allies for our black friends and neighbors, the Reynolds



Homestead staff members are embarking on a mission to learn more about African American history, systematic and institutionalized racism, and what we can do to create a more unified community," Director **Julie Walters Steele** says. "We are inviting others in our community to learn and grow with us."

In a Zoom webinar on Friday, June 19, staff members will share what they have learned by researching the origin and traditions surrounding the Juneteenth holiday.

Participants will also be invited to continue on this journey exploring a set of [resources compiled by Autumn Gupta and Bryanna Wallace](#), and shared by the Graduate School. Over the next four weeks, the Reynolds Homestead staff will be reading and watching the recommended materials and facilitating a weekly discussion with anyone interested in learning with them. Others may choose to share the resources with their friends and family and create their own discussion groups using the materials provided.

[Click here to register for Friday's webinar...](#)

What is Juneteenth?

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Black Independence Day, and Cel-Liberation Day, is an American holiday that celebrates the emancipation of the last remaining enslaved African Americans in the Confederacy. On June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation — which had been issued on Jan. 1, 1863 — was read to enslaved African Americans in Texas by Gordon Granger. Formerly enslaved people in Galveston celebrated after the announcement and, the following year, organized the first of what became an annual celebration of freedom. Over the years, celebrations spread beyond Texas. Juneteenth is now recognized as a holiday in 47 states and the District of Columbia, with efforts underway for it to be made a federal holiday.

[Read more...](#)

AROUND OIA

Reynolds Homestead celebrating 50 years

Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Reynolds Homestead with a [virtual toast to its 1970 dedication at 3 p.m. today.](#)

Susan E. Short, associate vice president for engagement, will lead the celebration with remarks from Sally Ann Rodgers, daughter of Nannie Ruth Terry, who started a letter campaign to the Reynolds family to preserve the homestead; Ray Smoot, vice president for finance and treasurer emeritus, who worked with Nancy Susan Reynolds on the donation of the property; Richard S. “Major” Reynolds III, a descendant of A.D. Reynolds; and Janice Pendleton, a retired educator and longtime patron of the Reynolds Homestead.

[Join via Zoom.](#)



Vibrant Virginia hosts first virtual forum

Among the keys to lifting Virginia’s economy from the coronavirus pandemic: increased broadband access across the commonwealth and higher education partnerships with communities, nonprofits, and other universities and colleges.



Those were some of the points emphasized by panelists during the first Vibrant Virginia Virtual Summit. Organized by the Office of Economic Development, the forum examined Virginia’s economic recovery as well as higher education’s response and role in that recovery.

President Tim Sands and Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke helped introduce the forum, which was moderated by **Guru Ghosh**. Panelists included Thomas Barkin, president and CEO of the Richmond Federal Reserve Bank, and Stephen Moret, president and CEO of the Virginia Economic

Development Partnership, as well as higher education leaders from across Virginia.

Panelists discussed the effectiveness of teleworking in both business and education settings, which has encouraged leaders in Virginia to expand capacity for distance learning and teleworking by upgrading technology, regulations, bandwidth, and access.

Despite gains in employment over the past month, the economic fallout from COVID-19 has negatively affected many parts of the nation and revealed both economic and racial disparities in America.

Black Americans, particularly black women, saw unemployment increase; small businesses are struggling; and tourism, international trade, and energy sectors have been hit the hardest.

“It is not so much the distance between the urban and rural locations, it is in fact the distance between the individual Virginian and the opportunity and access to education, to health care, to economic activity, and to justice,” Clarke said.

“With the [Vibrant Virginia](#) program, we are committed to continuing our collaborations with universities and communities and building a more economically prosperous Virginia,” said **John Provo**, director of the Office of Economic Development.

The next Vibrant Virginia Virtual Summit will take place in August.

— Julia Kell

Preston’s and Continental Divide open for takeout

Preston’s Restaurant and Continental Divide Lounge at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center are open and offering [takeout options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner](#).

Breakfast is available daily from 7–9:30 a.m. with lunch and dinner available daily from 11:30 a.m.–7 pm.

Seating is available on the Great Lawn patio and in the Continental Divide for patrons to enjoy their takeout options on-site.

Orders can be placed by calling 540-231-1020.





IPM adapts services when farmers need them most

To protect already fragile livelihoods amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a Virginia Tech team is swapping in-person meetings with radio and virtual communications to help farmers in the developing world address crop problems.

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Integrated Pest Management operates nine projects in Africa and Asia, aiming to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers by implementing sustainable farming methods. Many farmers in developing countries already face constraints, such as limited access to information and productive technologies. Quarantine measures have further limited productivity, leaving developing nations at even greater risk of food insecurity and motivating the IPM Innovation Lab to ensure farmers have continued access to the resources they rely on.

“The farmer trainings, field work activities, and laboratory experiments we had planned have been delayed due to the virus,” Director **Muni Muniappan** said, “but farmers working on less than one acre of land cannot afford to stop working completely. This moment of restriction opens up an opportunity for us to find new ways to reach these rural farmers, which is always a priority.”

Amid the stay-at-home orders in Nepal, teams are sending targeted radio

messages out to rural communities to help farmers address the pest. The messages include such information as how to identify the fall armyworm in the field, as well as instructions for its sustainable management.

[Read more...](#)

— Sara Hendery

CIREC Connect

The COVID-19 pandemic is having profound and devastating impacts on CIREC's partners and project staff, according to Executive Director **Van Crowder**. "Yet, amid the turmoil and uncertainty," he says, "they are dedicated to meeting the immense needs of the people and communities they serve."

Read more about how COVID-19 is impacting projects and activities around the world and how CIREC is responding in [the center's latest newsletter](#).

Kayla Goodwin joins TRIO Programs

TRIO Programs has welcomed **Kayla Goodwin** to its team of advisors. Goodwin started last month as an Upward Bound project advisor.

After earning a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of New Hampshire, Goodwin completed the college student development in higher education master's program at the University of Maine. As a graduate student, Goodwin worked at the Office of Student Financial Aid, the Student Wellness & Counseling Center, and TRIO Upward Bound.



"All three offices emphasized the importance of persistence in the age of emerging adulthood and taught me how to help navigate students to 'success' — whatever that may look like," she said.

This summer, Goodwin will be proctoring a Nucleus Robotics course with Upward Bound students. "I'm eager to start the new school year with creativity and flexibility during these ever-changing times!"

— Diane Deffenbaugh

Steger Center donates food to neighboring charity

At the end of May, the Steger Center for International Scholarship in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland, made a large donation of perishable food that would have otherwise gone unused when the university suspended its programming at the center.

The donation was made to the [Istituto San Pietro Canisio](#), which shares a rear property border with the center. This foundation provides services to children and adults with mental and physical challenges. While it is a Catholic-based enterprise, it is nondenominational in its services and the community it serves.

In memoriam: Artis Wash, former controller at the inn

Artis T. Wash III, a former controller for The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, died June 2, 2020, at the age of 47.

Wash started at the inn in 2014 and worked there for almost six years. In his capacity as controller, he worked with a wide range of people across the university, including those in the Office of Budget and Financial Planning, the Controller's Office, and the Procurement Department.



Former colleagues recall him as extremely hardworking, highly principled, and a loyal friend.

“In the past five years, I came to know Artis as a man and a leader of integrity, loyalty, and faith. He will be greatly missed,” **Jenny Orr** said.

“Artis was a wonderful manager. He was supportive and encouraging and always expected the best work from each of us,” said **Sherri Keir**, accounts payable agent. “Not many people can say when they wake up in the morning they look forward to going to work, but I did, because Artis made the workplace such a joy to be in.”

Lisa Mink, accounts receivable lead, said Wash was a talented financial manager who excelled in supporting and directing his colleagues with integrity and commitment. “He had an even-tempered approach to management and a great way of putting situations into perspective. As he fought the final battle of his life, he remained strong in his faith. He was and continues on as an

inspiration to me and to so many who were blessed to know him.”

Wash is survived by his wife, Roylette, and children Arlyse, Aryena, Arlette, and Artise.

A private memorial was held last week in Roanoke.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the college fund of his children via Zelle (atwwash@yahoo.com).

NEWS TO USE

Latest from Virginia Tech

- **FSA GRACE PERIOD:** Participants will get extra time to spend down any remaining funds from the previous plan year.
- **HUGGING IN A PANDEMIC:** Researcher Lindsay Marr discusses [the safest way to hug](#) during a viral outbreak.
- **PLANS FOR FALL 2020:** You can find the latest information from the university on [the Ready site](#).

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...



Allie Oberoi

*Apart from serving as the assistant director for global safety and risk management with the Global Education Office, **Allie Oberoi** also serves as an officer in the Army National Guard in Virginia. Her dual roles have brought her to the forefront of emergency response and support efforts for COVID-19. Oberoi took a brief break from National Guard duty and joined us from the woods of Fort Pickett in Blackstone, Virginia.*

[Watch her video...](#)

— Rommelyn Coffren

Robyn Smyth

***Robyn Smyth** started with Outreach and International Affairs at Continuing and Professional Education in 2011, before moving to the Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement as a project manager in 2013. Robyn helps “make dreams come true through personal and professional development,” managing programs that include Business of Brewing, School Leaders Institute, and Coach Approach.*



What is your favorite thing about your current job?

I've been doing event/meeting planning since college. My favorite thing is to hear back from participants that what they learned truly helped them.

What hobby would you dive into if time and money weren't an issue?

Archaeology.

What books are on your nightstand?

Historical fiction. Currently I am rereading “Timeline” by Michael Crichton, which is about archaeologists who go back to medieval times.

What is your most prized possession?

A 5,000-year-old arrowhead. I actually have over 30 projectile points, both arrowheads and spear points, as well as some scrapers. They range from at least 5,000 years old to more recent 300 years old. The father of my high school boyfriend in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, found them in different locations in southern Mississippi when he was younger. They didn't have a lot of sentimental value for him and, because I wanted to be an archaeologist, he gave them to me. I've honestly been carrying them around in a box for the past 30-plus years. Thinking about the people who made these, and their lives, and

quite literally holding history in my hands is almost a spiritual experience for me.

What's the best piece of advice you ever received?

If you don't know the answer, say so and then find it.

— Diane Deffenbaugh

UPCOMING EVENTS

STEM ideas for family summer fun

With kids at home this summer, you need a game plan. [Tech on Tap](#) has invited two Virginia Tech STEM education specialists to guide us through outdoor and indoor activities in which families can have so much fun they won't realize how much they're learning. They will also share strategies that help adults get to know and better understand what their kids are thinking and how they think and learn.

The webinar will start at 4 p.m. on Thursday, June 18.

[Registration](#) is required to receive the streaming details. [Submit your questions](#) for the experts in advance.



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