

June 1, 2007

**Visit Virginia's Juneteenth Celebrations for a
Weekend of Heritage, Music and Culture**
*-Four centuries of African American heritage make Virginia a top
destination for Juneteenth-*

Media Only

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RICHMOND, Va. – On June 19, 1865, African slaves in Texas finally received word of freedom, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Virginia marks this important day, now known as Juneteenth, with vibrant celebrations across the state featuring reenactments, music and incredible food. Virginia's four centuries of African American heritage, dating back to 1619, make the state a top destination for Juneteenth celebrations.

One of Virginia's most talked about Juneteenth celebrations will be June 16 at The Booker T. Washington National Monument in Hardy, near Roanoke. Visitors to the birthplace of this important African American leader will enjoy reenactments of the moment of emancipation in 1865, as the audience plays the role of slaves. Gospel groups will belt out old-time gospel music that will bring visitors to their feet. After enjoying fried fish, chicken and homemade ice cream, visitors can stroll around the beautiful gardens. The event is free and open to the public.

At the Rappahannock Regional Juneteenth Celebration in Fredericksburg, Ms. Vella Joy, a descendant of Harriett Tubman, will provide words of inspiration to the audience. Guests will enjoy free, hand dance instruction by the musical group, Poetry in Motion. As gospel choirs fill the air with music, art of all varieties will be displayed and available for purchase in a silent auction. The free celebration will be held on June 16.

Visitors do not want to miss the Juneteenth Freedom Festival in historic downtown Newport News on June 16. Costumed interpreters will tell the story of how slaves in Galveston, Texas did not get word of their freedom until two years after the end of the Civil War. During the celebration, visitors will want to get a second helping of great local barbeque and enjoy special tours of Newport News historic sites.

In Roanoke, a Juneteenth celebration on June 16 will kick off with a parade starting at the Martin Luther King Bridge and will end in Washington Park, where guest speakers will address the importance of Juneteenth while visitors enjoy gospel music and a cookout.

The annual Juneteenth celebration at the Black History Museum in Alexandria on June 16 will feature toe-tapping musical performances. Visitors can get artistic with hands-on art and craft demonstrations and shop at the African American market place. The celebration begins at 1:00 p.m. and is free of charge.

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Historic downtown Lynchburg will host the Juneteenth Freedom and Heritage Celebration on June 16. This free, family-friendly event will showcase African American culture with choirs, dancers, poetry and storytelling and will include a health fair.

Virginia's Juneteenth celebrations are surrounded by rich African American heritage and cultural sites and make for an excellent weekend getaway. For a complete list of Virginia's Juneteenth celebrations, information about African American heritage sites and to start planning a trip to Virginia, go to www.Virginia.org or call 1-800-932-5827.

For low-resolution Juneteenth image,
<http://www.vatc.org/PRMediaKit/Assets/Images/JunteenthLR.jpg>

For high-resolution Juneteenth image,
<http://www.vatc.org/PRMediaKit/Assets/Images/JunteenthHR.jpg>

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