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Richmond Times-Dispatch

Saturday, March 21, 2026

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THE BRIGHT SIDE



MIKE KROPP PHOTOS, TIMES-DISPATCH

Completed in 1893, the 13,000-square-foot Maymont Mansion was designed by architect Edgerton S. Rogers to be a blend of Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne. This year, Maymont celebrates 100 years as a public park.

Gilded gem returns

Maymont Mansion reopens after \$12M, two-year renovation

CHELSEA JACKSON
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Growing up on Hampton Street, just steps from Maymont, Sessa Joi Moon remembers childhood visits filled with family traditions and the quiet beauty of the park.

"As children, me and my sister, Enjoli, grew up on Hampton Street — just a stone's throw away from Maymont," recalls Moon. "One of my fondest memories was visits to the park with my family during the holidays, to include our dearly departed great-grandparents and father, to enjoy caroling alongside hot cider and ginger snaps."

The BrightSide

The Bright Side highlights uplifting moments from around our community. Visit our website to read more and suggest stories we should feature.

"And my best friend said 'I do' at the stables with the beauty of the Japanese Gardens just steps away," said Moon, Virginia's chief diversity officer who holds

Please see **MAYMONT**, Page A10



VIEW: Take a video tour of the renovated mansion and see more photos by pointing your smartphone camera at the QR code, then click the link.

NEWSVU



The updated Swan Bedroom at the Maymont Mansion was guided by historical paint analysis to ensure the space remains an accurate reflection of the era.

RICHMOND

Mayor cancels meeting with store owners

Yemeni merchants seeking dialogue with Avula after closures

SAMUEL B. PARKER
Richmond Times-Dispatch

A frustrated Mark Krudys on Thursday said that Mayor Danny Avula "must be accessible to his citizens more than just on Election Day."

After Krudys — a Richmond attorney representing dozens

of Yemeni American convenience store owners — sent a letter to city officials objecting to the mass closure of his clients' businesses, Avula abruptly canceled a planned meeting with the shop owners, according to emails obtained by The Times-Dispatch.

In the letter, sent March 9, Krudys wrote that officials had shut down more than 40 stores. Their pretext, he wrote, was "minor" violations of city building codes or business license

requirements that don't typically shutter local businesses.

The actual motivation, according to Krudys? A racist crackdown on increasingly unpopular convenience stores that sometimes sell vape products, and an endeavor ultimately aimed at clearing the way for richer, more powerful firms looking to venture into the coming legal marijuana market.

A week after Krudys sent that letter, he received a response from Deputy City Attorney Wirt

P. Marks, the emails show.

"We are reviewing your allegations and request that any further communications with the city are coordinated through this office," Marks wrote.

"The mayor had planned to meet with my clients and some of their representatives ... next week," Krudys wrote back on Monday morning. "Does he still intend to do so?"

"The current scheduled

Please see **VAPE SHOPS**, Page A4

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Greatest victory in history of VCU?

Case could be made after Rams rally from 19 down against UNC

ZACH JOACHIM
Richmond Times-Dispatch

GREENVILLE, S.C. — The greatest win in VCU history?

That's what Phil Martelli Sr. called it after Terrence Hill Jr.'s stepback trey off the dribble with 15 seconds left in overtime lifted the No. 11-seeded Rams to a heart-stopping, rip-roaring 82-78 overtime victory over sixth-seeded North Carolina in the NCAA tournament first round on Thursday at the Bon Secours Wellness Center.

The 19-point comeback was the largest in the history of the NCAA men's tournament first round.

Martelli Sr. might be a little biased toward his son, Phil Jr., with that analysis. Eric Maynor with his "is this the dagger?" jumper in VCU's 79-77 win over Duke in 2007, and members

Please see **VCU**, Page A11



VCU VS. ILLINOIS
South Region second round
Saturday: 7:50 p.m. **TV:** CBS
Where: Greenville, S.C.

Rams not mid-major financially

No football program gives VCU edge for spending on hoops

ERIC KOLENICH
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The men's basketball program at Virginia Commonwealth University is considered a mid-major, because its conference, the Atlantic 10, is not among the six largest that dominate men's college basketball.

But in terms of financial resources, there's nothing middling about VCU's basketball team. Its ability to pay players is likely above most schools in the country, and the absence of a pricey football team is a big reason why.

Now that schools can directly compensate their athletes, spending big can improve one's standing. It already happened

Please see **RAMS**, Page A11



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US deploys more troops; Iran threatens tourism sites PAGE A8

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Opinions	A6	Obituaries	A11	Marketplace
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				C6

Richmond Times-Dispatch Since 1850
THE RICHMOND NEWS LEADER 1896-1992



Maymont

From A1

master's degrees from VCU and Old Dominion.

Those memories are threads in a legacy that stretches back more than a century.

This year, Maymont celebrates 100 years as a public park – a milestone that honors its transformation from a private estate into “Richmond’s backyard.”

The property was left to the city by philanthropist and lawyer James H. Dooley and his wife, Sallie May Dooley, who lived on the estate from 1893 until their deaths in 1922 and 1925.

Its name combines Mrs. Dooley’s maiden name and the French word for hill.

Completed in 1893, the 13,000-square-foot Maymont Mansion was designed by architect Edgerton S. Rogers to be a blend of Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne.

Inside the 33-room mansion, the first floor flows from 18th-century French drawing rooms wrapped in silk damask with hearthstones of white onyx to a mahogany-stenciled library and a living hall.

A grand stairway, anchored by a massive 15-foot Tiffany Studios stained-glass window, leads to the second-floor private quarters. The craftsmanship shines in the morning room’s painted satinwood and the world-famous Swan Bedroom, creating an eclectic “time capsule” of late-19th-century elite taste.

Beyond the mansion itself, the Dooleys invested heavily in the landscape, installing Italian and Japanese Gardens that remain among the oldest in the country. When the gates first swung open to the public in 1926, the city was instantly captivated.

“The residents of Richmond immediately flocked to Maymont,” Kathy Garrett Cox said. “In that first year, 55,000 people came through just the mansion, and we can only imagine how many more came to the grounds itself.”

Despite its initial grandeur, the estate faced trials. By the late 1960s, the mansion had fallen into significant disrepair as the city struggled to maintain the vast collections. The turning point came in 1975 with the establishment of the nonprofit Maymont Foundation.



The Blue Drawing room at the Maymont Mansion is seen earlier this month. The property was left to the city by philanthropist and lawyer James H. Dooley and his wife, Sallie May Dooley, who lived on the estate from 1893 until their deaths in 1922 and 1925.

“Maymont would not be here today if the community had not stepped up,” said Parke Richeson, Maymont Foundation’s president and CEO, pointing to the Thalhimer family’s support of the wildlife habitats and the community-led vision for the Robins Nature Center as proof that the park’s survival is a collective achievement.

“It’s an amazing staff, but it’s also the community. That’s been a big part of the 100 years.”

For Moon, childhood tours of the mansion left lingering questions that the park is now finally answering.

“I walked away from tours with a deep understanding of the Dooleys,” she says, “but there was always a gap on the contributions of Black Richmonders within the mansion’s four walls.”

Recognizing this, Maymont has spent the past decade expanding its narrative. Recent exhibits, including “African American Voices” and “In Service and Beyond,” aim to highlight the lives and labor of the domestic staff, offering a fuller, more honest picture of the estate’s history.

This commitment to the future is most visible in the massive \$11.75 million preservation project launched in 2025. In addition to restoring the mansion’s red slate roof to architect Edgerton Rogers’ original 1893 design, the project

includes new climate control and fire safety systems to improve visitor comfort and protect the historic collections.

While the artworks and furnishings were stored off-site, conservators completed several preservation efforts, including work on a painting that has not been displayed publicly for 50 years. The work also extended to the Swan Bedroom, where a detailed restoration was guided by historical paint analysis to ensure the space remains an accurate reflection of the era.

The project serves as a bridge between the Dooleys’ 19th-century vision and the 21st-century reality of a park that now welcomes more than 800,000 visitors a year.

Today, visitors can stroll the gardens, interact with animals at the farm, or practice yoga on the lawn.

“Whether you want to concentrate on the wildlife or the gardens or the history, there’s so much that you can do here,” director of programming Krista Weatherford said.

As Maymont enters its second century, it remains a foundational cultural cornerstone.

“I think what we do for the city of Richmond is just provide a beloved space. A common ground where everybody can just come,” Richeson says.

Chelsea Jackson (804) 649-6965
cjackson@timesdispatch.com

Maymont Mansion open house and garden party

When: Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Where: Maymont, 1700 Hampton St.

More info: Free to attend. maymont.org

Tours going forward

Self-guided and audio mansion tours will be available Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with guided tours available until 3 p.m.

Self-guided tours are \$10 and guided tours are \$15.

The Virginia Wildlife trails will reopen May 2 and a 100-year birthday bash is planned for June 6.



The dining room at Maymont Mansion is arranged as before, but with the addition of an ornate screen on the right side of the window, and with new minimalist spotlights in the overhead beam, to highlight details of the painted canvas wall coverings and ornate furniture pieces around the room.



The Library at Maymont Mansion is seen earlier this month. As Maymont enters its second century, it remains a foundational cultural cornerstone.

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