



**Note to Media:** Images and artist quotes accompany this release. For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Rachel Spencer, 540-798-6278, [rachel@visitaccess.com](mailto:rachel@visitaccess.com)

## **Awareness Through Art: Roanoke City Addressing Pedestrian Safety with Signal Box Art Installations**

**Roanoke, Va. (July 21, 2021)** – A picture may be worth 1,000 words but Roanoke City officials hope art can remind people of only four – *No Need to Speed*®. Admissions are now being accepted from artists of all ages for the second annual Color Your Corner Contest, part of the 2021 Roanoke Pedestrian Safety Campaign to raise awareness of speeding as a pedestrian safety issue and reduce speeding and speed-related crashes in Roanoke.

Five artists will be selected to have their artwork installed on a signal cabinet at key locations across the City where speed has been identified as a critical issue. Initial submissions are due August 31, and winners will be selected by the Roanoke Arts Commission following the campaign. Details on submission requirements are available at [www.planroanoke.org/pedestriansafety](http://www.planroanoke.org/pedestriansafety).

“Art is a wonderful way to engage the community in a positive way on a public awareness and safety issue,” says Andrea Garland, Traffic Engineer, Roanoke City Transportation Division. “We had a tremendous response to this initiative last year. It’s been a joy to watch art go on display across our city to share a positive message of pedestrian safety and the power of community.”

This is the second art initiative by Roanoke City to raise awareness of pedestrian safety issues. Earlier this month, five signal boxes in Roanoke were the first to receive an artistic makeover with designs by 2020 contest winners focused on drawing attention to crosswalk safety.

- Carly Almarez – “Cross Your Way” (Bullitt Avenue and Jefferson Street)
- Renae Dower – “Downtown Diversity” (Williamson Road Library)
- Molly Kernan – “Bear Crossing” (Grandin Road and Memorial Avenue)
- Hannah Wheeler – “Downtown Diversity” (19<sup>th</sup> Street and Orange Avenue NW)
- Sunni Purviance and Eliza Kraus – “Stop in the Name of Love” (9th Street and Jamison Avenue SE)

To be considered, artwork submissions must be original, incorporate the message “No Need to Speed” in a positive way while also highlighting the diversity of Roanoke’s neighborhoods and people. Submissions may not mimic a regulatory sign, and may not include offensive wording or images, nudity or violence, or contain any promotions for a business or product.

The Color Your Corner Contest is one of several public awareness activities initiated by the City as part of it's No Need to Speed campaign. Other ways to get involved include:

1. [Become a Community Ambassador](#) to help to spread the word about the campaign through yard signs and peer-to-peer advocacy.
2. **Share your story by creating a** short video about why you love walking in your neighborhood, and why it's important for drivers to obey the speed limit. In thanks for sharing your story you'll be entered to win one of five Grandin Theatre prize packs (two passes + Grandin theatre swag)
3. **Follow the City of Roanoke on social media** and share posts about the campaign. [Facebook](#). [Instagram](#). [Twitter](#). [YouTube](#).

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### RENEE DOWER

I was shocked by the number of people who get hit by cars in Roanoke [and feel] the more you can do, in a positive way to include art in a public message is always a good thing.

I think humans are very visual creatures. A lot of times people don't want to stop and read statistics or read text...but if you see a piece of artwork, I think especially in Roanoke people notice them, they appreciate them...they're more likely to listen.

I really wanted to make this piece as inclusive as possible. It's personal, a lot of the people in it are based on people I know or relate to aspects of my own character I like. It's also important to be aware of the people around you – just because you might look different, act different, be different, doesn't mean you are any less part of the community. I think that's especially

important for people to remember, especially in the divisive times we're in now.

I would ask people to make sure to look at all sides of it and look for the uniqueness of each person. I tried to put a lot of different ethnicities, backgrounds and cultures – I think my favorite is the skateboarder, who is an amputee.



### CARLY ALMAREZ

Be bold in whatever your art is because it will resonate with somebody.

I saw the contest in my neighborhood, it was in the middle of quarantine and I was excited to have something to do! I am very inspired by colors and hand lettering and went in that direction. I thought it would be fun to have a really bright piece in the middle of Downtown.

To draw attention to the crosswalk location using a signal box is a really smart idea.



### **HANNAH WHEELER**

My goals were to portray everyone in Roanoke to make it feel like everyone has a place here. Roanoke is a pretty diverse place and I see all sorts of people when I'm walking around, and it felt like everyone should be included in the message.

I was excited to participate because I go downtown a lot and there are some cars that don't really follow the message.

I go to Northside High School. I am very interested in art and plan on going to college where I can pursue art as a major. I love how big and blown up it is. It's great to see your work in a public space.



### **MOLLY KERNAN**

For this piece the first thing I heard in the crosswalk title brought up the image of The Beatles walking across the street – and when I moved to Roanoke it was the first time I saw a black bear, it was exciting, so I thought 'Let's make The Beatles black bears' and make it a Roanoke thing!

This is my first public art, and this is really exciting. I hope when people see this piece, they think about pedestrian safety. It seems people drive a little fast around here and [that message] really matters. I hope when people see this, it just jogs their memory a little bit. That image [of The Beatles] is kind of burned in people's minds already so now they have another version of it.

Art makes people think about things. It gives them a reference to pull from their mind. I hope that seeing a fun image can make a serious issue something to think about.



## **SUNNI PURVIANCE**

The traffic box art project was in my back pocket if I could get in touch with the right people. Andrea with Roanoke City was the right person and she agreed the idea would work for this campaign and was willing to share the idea with the community.

The inspiration for this piece came from the 'I HEART SE' campaign that is promoted on t-shirts, yard signs and events in Southeast. It's a message about loving where you live and showing love for your SE neighbor and neighborhood.

Showing love for our neighbors is a key pillar for our campaign – the 'STOP in the Name of Love' idea for this traffic box sends a message to show love for your neighbor, slow down!.