

# PREGAME: VIRGINIA TECH VS. OKLAHOMA STATE »

## (<http://www.roanoke.com/hokies/sports/football/camping>)

■ Joey Slye good to go for bowl game  
([http://www.roanoke.com/hokies/sports/football/hokies-notes-slye-good-to-go-for-camping-world-bowl/article\\_cace5d48-ea97-11e7-ab4f-639376e0af9e.html](http://www.roanoke.com/hokies/sports/football/hokies-notes-slye-good-to-go-for-camping-world-bowl/article_cace5d48-ea97-11e7-ab4f-639376e0af9e.html))



THU, DEC 28  
5:15 PM ET

22 Virginia Tech (<http://omaha.stats.com/cfb/teamstats.asp?report=teamhome&team=16>) (9-3) considered

■ Cam Phillips to miss bowl after surgery  
([http://www.roanoke.com/hokies/sports/football/hokies-s-all-time-leading-wr-cam-phillips-to/article\\_1edf4b5c-e4c3-11e7-9c57-6b0f2901ce5a.html](http://www.roanoke.com/hokies/sports/football/hokies-s-all-time-leading-wr-cam-phillips-to/article_1edf4b5c-e4c3-11e7-9c57-6b0f2901ce5a.html))

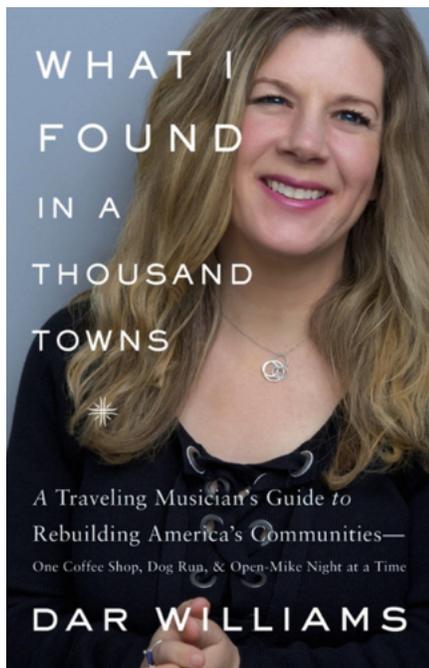


[http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/jackson-finding-roanoke-dar-williams-positive-proximity-at-work-in/article\\_4b66d929-7e21-5e58-bc06-974e987266b0.html](http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/jackson-finding-roanoke-dar-williams-positive-proximity-at-work-in/article_4b66d929-7e21-5e58-bc06-974e987266b0.html)

## Jackson: Finding Roanoke: Dar Williams' positive proximity at work in our community

Douglas Charles Jackson is a Roanoke-based writer and community coach. As a capacity development specialist at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, he assists communities revitalizing their downtown cores by building upon their arts, cultural and outdoor assets. He founded BOOK CITY ★ Roanoke to grow and promote the region's literary energy.

Oct 4, 2017



Musician Dar Williams now has a book about community-building.

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Roanoke's identity as a great place to live grows from the work of individuals and organizations. But how does it all come together? The answer may be 'positive proximity.' In a public conversation this fall, we're using Dar Williams' book, "What I Found in a Thousand Towns" (Basic Books; 2017) to understand, celebrate, and grow this very positive force at play in our community.

As a musician, Dar Williams is known for smart lyrics that evoke specific places and the emotions she's attached to them. Now the troubadour is revisiting communities in which she's performed over decades to learn what makes them work. She's watched local leaders dream and act and advance their towns. The book is subtitled, "A Traveling Musician's Guide to Rebuilding America's Communities — One Coffee Shop, Dog Run, & Open-Mike Night at a Time."

In nine chapters, Williams highlights familiar strategies. Communities reclaim waterfronts and histories. Residents open coffee houses and community dialogue. Towns promote some beloved places to visitors while defending others against development and overuse. All the while, they remember their heritage, refine a shared vision, and then bring it to life with individual efforts, through arts and cultural happenings, one step at a time.

Williams does an admirable job providing the detail that spins interesting stories, but she doesn't give so much as to hint that there's something special about the individuals driving change. Anyone can do their part. After all, Grandin Village may not have had Pete Seeger, as did Beacon, New York. But then Beacon, New York, doesn't have Mr. James Tarpley or Mr. Tarpley's Park, an awkward patch of land that grew under his care into a beloved neighborhood place for families and children.

Here's the takeaway: your specific interest is not only cool, but when you share it, it can make a difference. If you host a neighborhood tool swap, you're contributing. If you call numbers for Drag Bingo at the Roanoke Diversity Center, it matters. If you study, refine, and perfect the fermentation of apples, you're fostering more than the cider when you offer it to others. Install a disc golf course in your neighborhood. I may never play on it, but I'm glad it's there. I love that Soul Sessions hosts warmly welcoming spoken word nights. Our community is rich in people who invest with the entirety of their hearts.

These are impassioned contributions. For me it's books. (Nerdy, right?) But perhaps literacy, literature, and connections among bookish folks can make the region an even better place to be.

We're testing this in the form of BOOK CITY Roanoke, inventorying local writers (67!) and book clubs (26 so far!). We're interviewing librarians and local poets. Visit the website if you want to experiment with us, and come out this fall as we host this first discussion series. We'll use *What I Found in a Thousand Towns* as a guide to our own place; we'll use our own place as a lab.

The series kicks off with CityWorks (X)po on the evening of Oct. 5 for a public conversation on creating space for community with the owners of Sweet Donkey Coffee House. Other free chapter conversations will follow on topics such as local foods, partnerships, the arts, and outdoor recreation. We'll wrap up on Monday, Dec. 11, in a visit with author Dar Williams, sponsored by the Roanoke Arts Commission. She'll sing some songs and have a conversation with author Beth Macy. We'll reflect on the book with neighbors over a dinner of local foods.

Get more information and register for updates at [www.bookcityroanoke.com](http://www.bookcityroanoke.com). Purchase the book at a local Barnes & Noble store and read along. (We appreciate our bricks and mortar businesses; they support the community through retail taxes.) Plus with every book purchase, receive a ticket to the dinner.

We may not each yet know how our passions will contribute to a better community, how they might meaningfully connect us to those like us and importantly, to those seemingly unlike us. But we can figure it out by engaging in the public sphere. Williams calls this quality of interaction and possibility, 'positive proximity,' and it involves a bit of community magic.

We live in a place that has a good dose of this, and we can do even more. This fall, we'll dig deeper in what's happening around us, both in the Magic City and the communities beyond. Join us. I can't wait to learn more about what you do.