

KEYS TO THE CITY **OF ROANOKE**  
**DID YOU KNOW?**  
 BY MARTHA-PAGE ALTHAUS



**1** Often referred to as the “Star City of the South,” Roanoke’s nickname comes from its beloved icon, a gigantic **neon star** perched atop Mill Mountain. In November 1949, Mayor A.R. Minton first illuminated the star at Christmas. Made of clear neon tubes, it weighs 10,000 pounds, measures 88.5 feet tall, and presides over the city at 1,045 feet.

**2** Roanoke may be the Star City, but the nearby town of **Salem** is called “Championship City.” This town of 25,000 has hosted more than 50 NCAA sports championships (Division II and III). Notable events include the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl (Division III football championship), as well as basketball and baseball championships.

**3** Quiet gardens, vast plazas, and large sculptures depict scenes from the 1944 invasion of Normandy Beach at the **National D-Day Memorial** in Bedford. The small community suffered the country’s worst per capita losses during D-Day fighting, prompting officials to construct the memorial. In June, thousands of veterans and their families are expected to gather to pay tribute to the 65th anniversary. It will be the memorial’s largest event since former president George W. Bush dedicated the site in 2001. [dday.org](http://dday.org)

**4** **Advance Auto Parts** was founded in Roanoke in 1929 and is still headquartered here, with about 2,000 employees in the region.

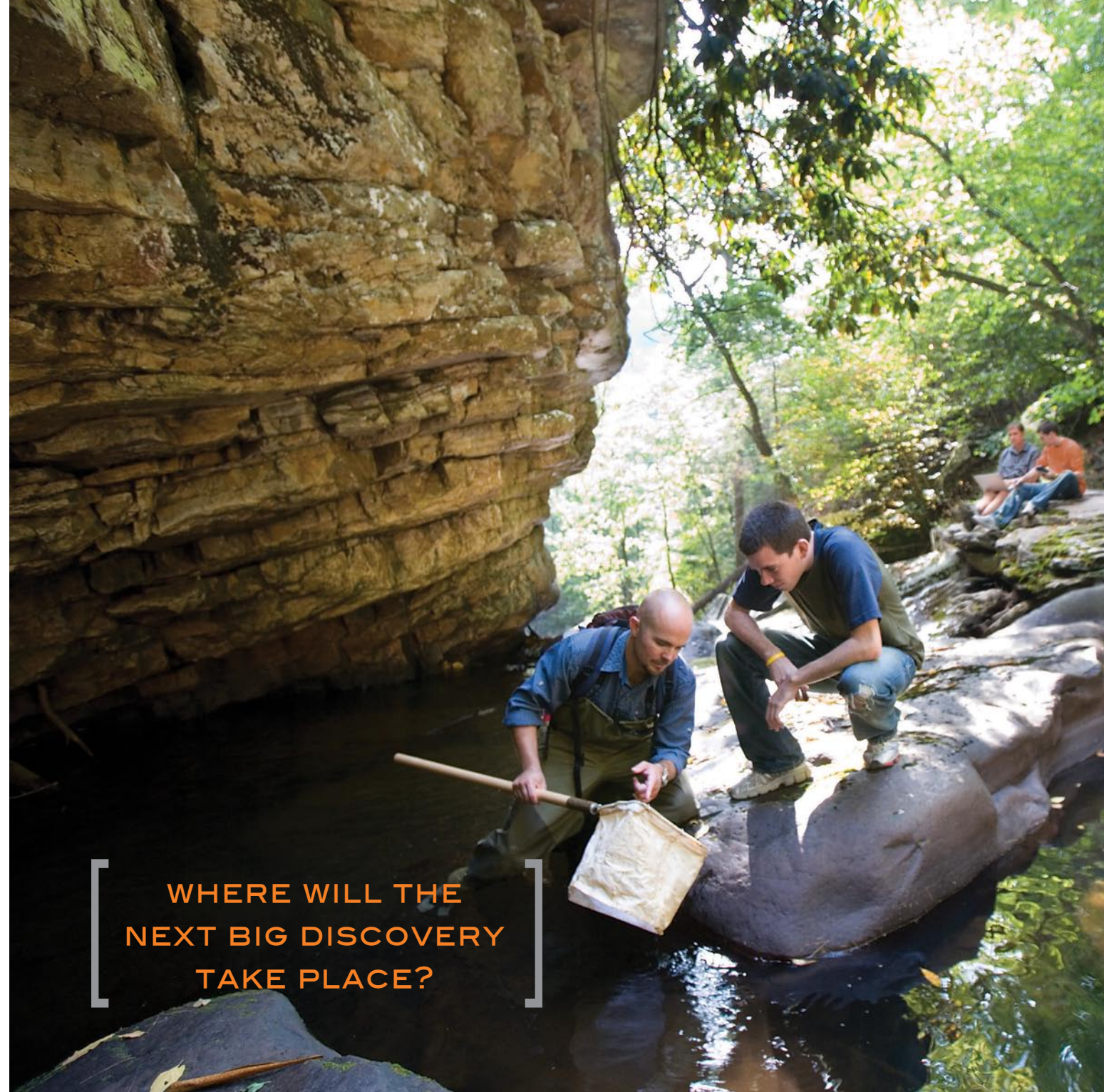
It’s the second-largest retailer of automotive replacement parts in the United States and the only Fortune 500 company based in Roanoke.

**5** Tucked away at Hollins University, the **Eleanor D. Wilson Museum** brings sought-after exhibits to campus. Since opening in 2004, this contemporary art museum has hosted traveling exhibitions and lectures by nationally known artists such as Binh Danh, Taliaferro Logan, and Chakaia Booker. It was also the first venue in the United States to show *The Light Fantastic: Irish Stained Glass Art*. Now showing: California artist Barry Masteller’s moody paintings of landscapes at dusk. [hollins.edu/news-events/museum](http://hollins.edu/news-events/museum)

**6** They just don’t make ’em like this anymore: Roanoke’s **Grandin Theatre**, a classic movie house dating to 1932. Restored to its original art deco splendor in 2002 after a \$1.25 million makeover, the theatre shows mainstream flicks, as well as independent and foreign films, on its four screens. Don’t miss the quarterly Open Projector Night for screenings of locally produced short films. [grandintheatre.com](http://grandintheatre.com)

**7** *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance* named Roanoke one of the **top five places to retire** nationwide, and *Money* rated it higher, among the top three places to retire. The region’s four distinct seasons and mild climate are something even Florida can’t compete with.

FROM LEFT: GREG VAUGHN; JOHN HANUHL; MUSEUM INSTALLATION VIEW; THE LIGHT FANTASTIC: IRISH STAINED GLASS ART, 2009. COURTESY OF THE ELEANOR D. WILSON MUSEUM AT HOLLINS UNIVERSITY AND INTERNATIONAL ARTS & ARTISTS; BINH DANH, 2009.



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