



Quad-City Labyrinth Project



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Summer solstice today, higher temps coming

Deirdre Cox Baker | Friday, June 20, 2003 Quad City Times

You are not imagining the fact that the sun shines brighter and longer today.

June 21 marks the first calendar day of summer, also known as the summer solstice. The Earth has moved to a 23.5-degree tilt on its axis, which means the sun is at its highest elevation of the year. That also translates to the longest of the year's 365 days, stretching for 15 hours and 12 minutes between sunrise at 5:28 a.m. and sunset at 8:40 p.m.

According to the National Weather Service, there should not be many clouds to obscure the sunshine. Today also will feel very summer-like and be followed by even warmer and far more humid weather for the next week.

Today's high should be in the mid-80s, with southerly winds of about 10 mph, said Linda Engebretson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Davenport.

Clouds will start to roll into the region on Sunday, and there's a chance of thunderstorms Sunday night all the way through Friday. Engebretson said there will be a southwest air flow, which tends to help the creation of showers and thunderstorms.

"Next week, I do expect it to be warm and I do expect it to be humid," said Terry Swails, the chief meteorologist at KWQC-TV. High temperatures next week are expected to be in the lower 90s. And it will be muggy.

"As far as thunderstorms, though, there may be some, but they should be widely scattered, which is a shame because we need the rain." Some areas could get some significant rainfall, he added, but most will likely get little moisture.

Springtime, which ends when the solstice begins at 2:10 p.m. today, brought the Quad-City region relatively normal temperatures and rainfall.

Rainfall for the months March through May, three months considered the spring season by the National Weather Service, totaled 10.64 inches, 0.35 of an inch below normal.

As for temperatures during the weather service's spring season, the average maximum was exactly normal at 61.1 degrees, while the average minimum, 38.3 degrees, was 1.1 degree below normal.

Long before weather radar and computer models were invented, the solstice was perhaps the most joyous event of the year. The snow had melted, the sun was out and there was plenty of food on hand. June, coming between the planting and harvesting of crops, became the most popular time for weddings, a tradition that continues today, author B.A. Robinson says on the www.religioustolerance.org Web site.

A feeling of spirituality runs through the solstice and dates to the beginning of human existence, he writes.

For Pat McLaughlin of the Quad-City Labyrinth Project in Rock Island, the solstice is a time to be grateful and to celebrate. She pointed out that the days will now become shorter in the march toward winter.



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McLaughlin plans to walk a labyrinth in acknowledgment of the seasonal change. "It's a way for me to honor my connections for happiness, health and prosperity," she said.

"Walking outdoors is really extra special today."
