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A Veterans tribute on Armed Forces Day



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Honoring the Veterans who have served or are currently serving for their sacrifices is something that the Craig County community takes tremendous pride in.

Pam Dudding
Contributing writer

There are many military Veterans living in Craig County and they have countless stories to share. Some do not mind doing so, while others cringe at the thoughts of horrific times in service and in war that they experienced.

Still, it is real. War is real. Serving your country is real. Life is real and sometimes not pleasant to the eyes or the heart.

In asking several Veterans about their memories of serving, some opened up and shared the following.

"I was recently asked if I would write an article on Armed Forces Day.

Our hometown reporter, Pam Dudding, said she knew that I was a career military man, and an active member of VFW Post 4491, so she thought that I might be a good candidate to give any input on this subject," Kenneth Looney, AECS (Retired) United States Navy, said. "Knowing how much Pam respects, honors and supports our local veterans year after year, I said yes. Yet, after the conversation had ended, I asked myself, 'What have you just done?'"

He continued, "Armed Forces Day is not one of the most celebrated, or most well-known holi-

See **Tribute**, page 5



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Camp lessons are available for kids of all ages.

Return of 4-H camp starts in a few weeks

Pam Dudding
Contributing writer

For many kids, "there's no camp like 4-H camp."

The Craig County 4-H is already actively planning for the 2021 4-H Camp at Skelton 4-H Center at Smith Mountain Lake, the week of July 12-16.

However, due to COVID-19 protocols, the number of children attending camp this year has been reduced by 50 percent.

"Craig County 4-H is limited to taking 30 people to camp this year and camp enrollment filled up the first week camp was announced," Craig County 4-H Agent Sally Farrell said.

She added, "The campers, teen counselors and adults will be limiting contacts to family members and COVID symptom checking for the two weeks prior to camp. If this is not possible, then the results of a negative COVID test within seven days prior to camp must be obtained before attending camp."

All COVID protocols will be followed at 4-H Camp.

Camp will be a bit different this year with campers signing up for one track of classes.

"There are eight different class tracks: All Star Track 1, All Star Track 2, All Star Track 3, Amazing Race Leadership Chal-

lenge (for those at least 12 years of age), Outdoor Adventure Track, STEM Studio Track and All Things Ag," Farrell said before adding, "Each class track consists of three daily classes as well as other activities such as a 'free swim' period. Also, the child's class track will serve as the camper's 'pod' for that week of camp."

This year, Craig County is attending camp with Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke so there will be an opportunity for the local campers and teen volunteers to make new friends.

"Since Craig County 4-H did not attend camp last year and we have reduced the number of campers attending this year, camp costs will be covered by camp donations," Farrell noted. "This will take the burden off the families who have suffered financially during the pandemic."

If you have a child between the ages of 9 and 13 who would like to attend camp but did not sign-up, please contact the Craig County Extension office as they are now starting a waiting list.

Farrell can be reached by email: sfarrell@vt.edu or phone: 540-864-5812 or if you are a person with a disability and desire assistance of accommodations, dial TDD - 800/828-1120 during the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Ponton places with Around the World photo

Pam Dudding
Contributing writer

Passions often brings out the best in people, especially when it is birthed in their hearts.

Aliana Ponton, 24, discovered her love for photography when she received her first Nikon camera at age 11.

"My passion started when I got my first camera. I was always an outdoor girl and when I started

taking photography with that little Nikon, it showed me how much closer I could get with nature, wildlife and people," she shared.

Her favorite subjects are still wildlife, nature and landscape.

"I absolutely love photography," Ponton exclaimed. "The excitement for me is getting close to my subject and understanding their behavior. I spend hours observing and photographing.

Some of the simplest things go unnoticed."

She is currently observing and photographing a family of Bald Eagles and watching their nestling grow into an adult and sharing it with others on social media.

Ponton recalled that her biggest influence was Sharon Myers, saying, "She is an amazing woman and photographer. She showed me a lot about editing, getting the right angle and much more."

With her passion for nature and landscape, Ponton discovered a photo contest on social media called the Around the World Challenge.

"I had to enter it, so I choose my photo of Joe's Trees on Route 42 to submit. There were around 344 entries from all over the world such as Ireland, Switzerland, Africa and many other places," Ponton noted.

She won the "Honorable Mention" award and was recognized on their social media site. Many

See **Ponton**, page 4



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Almost 350 photos from all over the world recently entered in the Around the World Challenge Photo Contest. Local resident Aliana Ponton chose to enter her landscape photo of Joe's Trees on Route 42. Her love for photography was noted by the judges and she won an Honorable Mention Award.

Upcoming elections need poll workers

Pam Dudding
Contributing writer

If there is one thing that is of the utmost importance in everyone's life, it is their "voice." Each American has a right to voice their views and one way to do that is to vote.

There are two upcoming elections, and everyone should take the opportunity to vote. Also, poll workers are needed for both: the June 8 Democratic Primary Election and the General Election on November 2.

Joanna Ryan, Director of Elections and General Registrar in Craig County, is looking for workers.

"First, a huge thank you to all current and previous Officers of Elections a.k.a. poll workers," she shared. "We cannot uphold our honorable election system without you. While other communities struggle, Craig County continues to thrive and uphold its integrity. Many of our poll workers have served for several years and their dedication is appreciated."

Sadly, Ryan admitted that with each election, it gets harder to find new poll workers.

"Our community needs you," she exclaimed. "Life is busy and there are new challenges each day, however, we shouldn't lose sight of the basic needs of our community."

She noted that it takes at least four poll workers to manage a polling precinct and remain at top performance during the entire day and Craig County often only has three at each precinct, leaving some to dual roles.

"For some, it is impossible to meet the lengthy election day commitment due to families, work, and personal challenges. With those obstacles in mind, we are excited to introduce the new Poll Worker Partner Program," Ryan explained. "This program splits the day into two shifts: morning from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. and evening from 12:30 p.m. to closing time. We are hopeful this will be an option for those who in the past have been unable to serve on election day. This is a paid opportunity."

It was said that you do not have to be into politics to serve as a poll worker on election day. "There are countless reasons being a poll worker is for you," Ryan added.

She listed a few examples:

- Spend the day with your friends (and get paid)
- Get to know your neighbors
- Serve your country in your community
- Help to understand how the election process works
- Build your resume for work
- Build your portfolio or complete service hours for college
- Because you love Craig County
- Because you want to be part of the solution

"We need you," Ryan emphasized. "The feeling of serving your country in your community and spending the day with others who care is worth the sacrifice."

To sign up, learn more, or ask questions, contact the General Registrar's office at 540-864-6190 or send an email to vote@craigcountytva.gov. And remember to vote.



Boating is a favorite at 4-H camp and many teens have learned how to maneuver through the waters over the years.



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citizens.coop/myaccount

Gas lines formed in Craig County with a pipeline scare



SUBMITTED PHOTO

With the concerning news about the pipeline, gas lines were backed up down Main Street, even in Craig County. Others from area counties traveled to Craig to get their gas as places like Salem quickly sold out. The Carpers who own the three gas stations in Craig had gasoline the next day, helping to ease the fear in their citizens of a "gas pandemic." Much kudos was given to them for their quick response.

DMV to expand appointment opportunities as COVID-19 restrictions are eased

In line with Governor Ralph Northam's recent announcement to ease current COVID-19 restrictions, the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will open more windows in its customer service centers beginning June 1, creating 184,000 additional appointment opportunities across the Commonwealth.

Customers can begin to schedule these new appointments next week. Additional windows will open in stages on June 1, June 15 and in July as DMV continues to hire and train new employees to expand appointment availability, adding to the more than 530,000 appointments Virginians already have scheduled over the

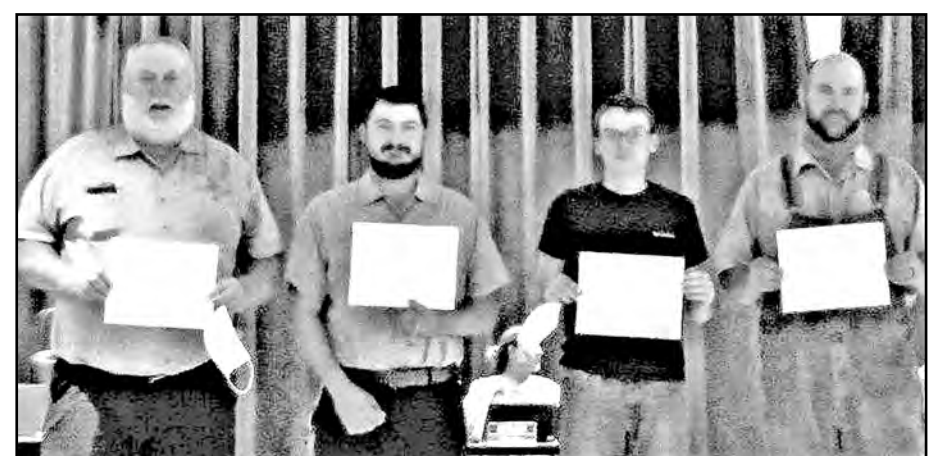
next three months.

"Virginians have told us they appreciate the convenience and high-quality service the appointment system affords," Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb said. "The Governor's announcement enables us to open more windows so customers can secure appointments sooner, but we are still taking great care to offer service that is safe for everyone."

Customer service centers and mobile operations teams continue to operate by appointment only for specific services which generally necessitate an in-person visit. Appointment op-

See DMV, page 3

CCPS honors local resident and his maintenance crew



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Denny Williams and his crew were honored at the May School Board meeting for the excellent work they did in completing the construction of the playgrounds for CCPS. Pictured from left to right, Williams (maintenance supervisor), Clabe Hicks, Chris Hanes and Jason Williams. "Much kudos goes out to their hard work and over and above efforts for a job well done," many shared.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY

The Craig County Public Library is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Wednesday from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The library is located at 303 Main St. in New Castle. For more information, call (540) 864-8978 or visit www.craiglibrary.org.

EVERY FRIDAY

Craig County Genealogy Library open every Friday 1 to 4 p.m. 152 Main Street. 540-864-7023

EVERY SATURDAY

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meeting. 11 a.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, located at 2011 Brandon Avenue in Roanoke. Contact 540-293-4065 for more information.

EVERY TUESDAY

- Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meeting. 7 p.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, located at 2011 Brandon Avenue in Roanoke. Contact 540-293-4065 for more information.
- New Castle Church of Christ will hold its Bible Study from 7 p.m. to 7:45

EVERY SUNDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. 8 p.m. at New Castle Fire Hall.
- The New Castle Christian Church, located at 282 Salem Ave, is pastored by Sheldon

Cosma is having services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., with communion at each, and is on Facebook live at 9 a.m.

- St. Johns Catholic Church, on Route 615, is having virtual masses at 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. by Father Steve McNalley. They are also live on Facebook. For more information, contact (540) 864-8686 or send an email to stjohnewcastle@tds.net.

SECOND MONDAY

- Paint Bank Ladies Auxiliary meeting, 7 p.m. at the Paint Bank Fire Department. Call 897-5346 for more information.

- Craig County Public Library Board of Trustees meeting at 6 p.m. at the library.

THIRD MONDAY

Town of New Castle Council Meeting at 7 p.m. inside the New Castle Town Hall, located at 339 Market Street.

SECOND TUESDAY

- Craig County School Board meets at 5:30 p.m. in the High School Media Center.
- Mountain Lodge 140 AF&AM, 7:30 p.m. at Lodge Hall, 255 Main St.

THIRD WEDNESDAY

The Botetourt/Craig/Roanoke Farm Service Agency County Committee meets each month at 10 a.m. at the Bonsack USDA Service Center. Please call one day before the meeting date regarding possible

cancellation information 540-977-2698, Ext. 2. The Bonsack USDA Service Center is located at 36 Executive Circle, Suite 1, Roanoke, VA 24012. All County Committee meetings are open to the public.

FIRST THURSDAY

Craig County Board of Supervisors meets at 6 p.m. at the Craig County Courthouse.

SECOND THURSDAY

Maywood Garden Club meeting at 7:30 p.m. held at Simmonsville Fire Department.

EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

Everyone six months and up should receive

a flu shot each year. A parent or guardian must accompany those under the age 18. Insurances will be billed. People are encouraged to bring their insurance card and not attend if they have COVID-19 like symptoms. The curbside clinic schedule is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. by appointment only. For more information, contact 540-864-5136.

MONDAY, MAY 31

A Memorial Day Service will begin at 10:00 am. County Courthouse, Main Street in New Castle. Lenny McDonald will be the speaker, and music will be provided by Alyssa Shulke. Sponsored by New Castle Town Council. Everyone welcome.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Punctuation mark Married woman Nocturnal rodent Suffix A way to disappoint Saddle horse West African country Philippine island "Girls" creator Dunham A type of twin Groans Infections What a beaver makes Thou Make a mistake Receive Dresses Burn the surface of Where coaches observe Ceremonial offices Paddle The body's main artery | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Altered the original state Alleges Short-billed rails Northern Thai province Albanian monetary unit Who the Wolverines play for Oath Astronomical period A single unit Presides over Spoiled tot Hillsides Fertility god Assuage Signs a contract Ancient Greek war dance Allows Lunar crater Crash a motorcycle (Brit. slang) | <p>CLUES DOWN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Loose-fitting undergarment Western Romanian city Unit of length Type of electricity Article Mothers Monetary unit Single Lens Reflex Tan-colored horses Region Cautious in spending money Belittle Sarcastic Fathers Clothes Opera's Callas Lentil dish Energy-saving module Make sense of a language Hurries through | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Songs to one's lover Name given to plant groups Improves Patriotic women Inflamed swelling on the eyelid Instrument in Indian music Request Make into leather without using tannin Defies Neither Flower cluster Phonological unit Leaves in water Cavalry-sword Famed American cartoonist Messenger ribbonlike acid Scarlett's home Make Stony waste matter What to do at auction Incorrect letters |
|---|--|---|--|

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Local mother's life experience leads to children's book: 'My Mommy's Name is Mommy'



PHOTOS BY SHAWN NOWLIN

Jane Asamoah, her husband and their three sons at a recent book signing event.



'My Mommy's Name is Mommy' is available at barnesandnobles.com for \$12.49.

Shawn Nowlin

shawn.nowlin@ourvalley.org

The mother, friend, wife and creative that Jane Asamoah is today has a lot to do with her upbringing in the West Africa Country of Ghana. Raised by both parents, Asamoah says that self-conduct was always emphasized more than academic performance in her house.

"My mother, whom I consider to be the most influential person in my life, instilled in me a set of values characterized by honesty, humility, hard work and a sense of altruism. She was a staunch Christian and so she made sure all her children knew God in a personal way," Asamoah said.

She added, "Reading the Bible as a family was something we did together before starting our day. My brothers and I used to hate those moments because they disrupted our sleep. I can still hear us in our whining voices as we complained on our way to school."

Most of Asamoah's adult life has been spent in the United States. After receiving a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Ghana, she received a master's degree in social work from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

When asked if there are common misconceptions about her native country, Asamoah responded, "Growing up in Kumasi, which is in the southern

part of Ghana, any adult could discipline a child who misbehaved without thinking twice about it. I'd love for people to understand that in Ghana, there are rural and urban areas just like here. Not everywhere is impoverished."

Asamoah has always been fascinated by the ability to paint pictures with words, something she credits her parents for. When Asamoah and her husband started having children of their own, she knew she wanted to pass along the same values that she was taught growing up.

'My Mommy's Name is Mommy' is Asamoah's first foray into publishing children's books. The premise of the

book, as she explained, shows the conversation that follows when four-year-old Kojo goes missing at the grocery store and couldn't help workers find his mom because he didn't know her real name. Using this experience, Kojo and his family discussed God's names and what relationship we have with Him.

Penned with parents of young children in mind, Asamoah credits numerous people for playing a role in the before, during and after process of the book based on a real-life experience she had in Worcester, Ma. It was her spiritual mom who encouraged Asamoah to find an editor, an illustrator and look into publishing after

receiving a draft of the book.

The main takeaway that Asamoah wants the Craig County community to get from the book is that God is everywhere. "He is not hard to find at all. If you decide to look for Him, I promise you He will make you find Him. He will use situations in your life unique to your circumstance to teach you a thing or two. And yes, even in unpleasant situations like losing your child at the grocery store can become a teachable moment," she said.

'My Mommy's Name is Mommy' is available at barnesandnobles.com and Amazon for \$12.49. For more information, visit janeasamoah.com.

Esteban Duran-Ballen appointed as new Richfield Living Chief Operating Officer



Esteban Duran-Ballen

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Richfield Living, a local leader in senior living and rehabilitation, has announced the selection of Esteban Duran-Ballen as the new Chief Operating Officer.

Duran-Ballen, a graduate of James Madison University with a Bachelor's Degree in Healthcare Administration and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Virginia Tech, joined the team in January 2021.

"In order to achieve Richfield's strategic plan, we were looking to strengthen our operations and financial acumen in the executive team," said Cherie Grisso, Chief Executive Officer. "Esteban's experience in a variety of

healthcare settings and his alignment with Richfield's mission, vision and values provides the perfect combination as our new Chief Operating Officer. I am excited to have his talent as a leader in our community for many years to come."

Esteban has 12 years' experience in operational leadership. His passion for post and subacute care and integrated healthcare systems has enabled him to develop programs to ensure excellent clinical outcomes and quality assurance.

"I am truly honored to join the Richfield Living team," said Duran-Ballen. "It's exciting to be a part of the innovative footprint of person-centered care and impact in

furthering excellence in aging services in the Roanoke Valley. Richfield's values of respect, integrity, service, excellence, and stewardship echo my fundamental principles of quality assurance and servant leadership. I look forward to contributing

to the vision and mission of Richfield to help individuals experience life to the fullest through every phase of their journey."

- Submitted by Lisa Clause, Sr. Director of Marketing & Philanthropy

DMV from page 2

portunities are currently available for a 90-day period.

DMV is conducting more transactions across all service channels now than pre-pandemic. The vast majority of the 15 million transactions conducted since DMV

started reopening customer service centers in May 2020 have been completed by service delivery methods other than at an office, such as online or by mail. Prior to the pandemic, DMV conducted an average of 309,000 trans-

actions per week statewide across all service channels. Last week, the agency completed more than 365,000; of those, only about 73,000 were

done in a customer service center.

-Submitted Jessica Cowardin, DMV Relations and Media Liaison

Article correction

Regarding the Legacy Auction store front article that ran on on May 12, please accept our sincere apologies in mixing up the names. Alvin Hodge's wife is Mary. He employs his daughter Elizabeth Mabes and his daughter-in-law Amanda who sells her 'Possums Oddities' in his store. Their selections are wonderful and diverse.

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Unlimited Calling	\$11.39	\$11.39
Measured Calling	\$2.95	\$2.95

Measured Calling includes \$0.15 per minute in addition to the \$2.95 monthly rate listed above.

Monthly discounts are available to residential customers meeting certain low income criteria.

For more information, contact TDS Telecom toll-free at 1-888-CALL-TDS.

*The above rates do not include charges for long distance, operator services, Directory Assistance, 911 emergency service, optional local calling plans, mandatory local mileage or zone charge, touch call service, or other state and federal taxes/surcharges.
204701VANC/5-21/12460

OPINION

Library Back Porch Party

Library Corner
Empowering individuals to build a stronger community

On Monday, May 10, the library had an outdoor party to celebrate the work of the staff and volunteers. The party honored our three part-time staff members and nine volunteers who continue to invest hours of their time serving the needs of the library. They all deserve a shout-out. Let me introduce the staff.

Letha Persinger was a regular patron of the library. In 2013, she applied and was hired as an assistant to the then director Carla Ritzler. Like all staff, she was part-time, working 15-20 hours a week. When Carla resigned, Letha became our manager and finally Director in 2019. She is still part-time with an average of 29 hours a week. In 2019, the library received the Penguin Random House Award for Innovation Through Adversity, The Barn-Quilt-For Books project landed this for us. Letha and her

son Gauge, then ten years old, traveled to Washington, D.C to receive the award at the Annual Meeting of the American Library Association. And I think there was a bit of sightseeing enjoyed by mother and son. Letha knows this community, her backyard. Despite the rough edges, she turns on the charm for her patrons making them feel welcomed and she is committed to their changing needs. She quickly responded to the changes made by COVID and had WiFi hotspots made available to our patrons.

Even though one of her favorite expressions is "I don't care," from what we see, we know, we are just not buying it. Alex White is the backup team to Letha our Director. She is a soft-spoken, yet a passionate book lover. She reminds us all of the many librarians we have met over the years. If you want to engage Alex in conversation, the subject matter that lights her up is books. Alex was hired part-time in 2017. She has helped hand out free books at the Christmas Parade and setting up for book sale events.

Thanks to her, the library can extend its hours to meet the Library of Va. funding requirements. It is Alex who keeps our doors open on evenings and the hard-to-fill time slot, Saturdays. We all look forward to her continual growth as a staff member in our library. Jessica Hunt is the newest addition to our staff. She joined Letha and Alex in 2018. She worked at the desk for three days a week and eagerly took charge of the children's programs. She understands the value of libraries, especially on

our youngest patrons. With two young children at home, Jessica found a better balance by working from home. She is the wizard that can figure out our website, a challenging format dictated by the Library of Virginia. Emails to Jessica requesting action on the website are instantly and graciously answered by her and quickly attend to. She remains as a fill-in at the desk as frequently as she can. Adaption in the face of limited resources is the survival of this tiny library. We appreciate her flexibility.

Travel Guidelines

Dr. Cynthia Morrow
Roanoke City and Allegheny Health Districts Health Director

After the last year of taking so many precautions, many people may be thinking about travel as we head into summer,

particularly people who have been vaccinated. The good news is that it is safe for people who are fully vaccinated to travel as long as they use some common-sense precautions!

People who are fully vaccinated can travel within the United States without being tested before or after travel un-

less their destination requires it. Because travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends delaying travel until you are fully vaccinated. As a reminder, "fully vaccinated" means two weeks after your final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

During travel, everyone should continue to wear a mask over their nose and mouth in any public place, regardless of vaccination status. Masks are required for everyone on planes, buses, trains, and other forms

of public transportation and in hubs such as airports. The best practice is to continue to avoid crowds, maintain six feet of distance from others, and regularly wash your hands.

Here are some additional suggestions for how to plan for a safer trip:

- If you are not vaccinated, consider trying to get vaccinated before you go. If that is not an option, get tested with a diagnostic (PCR or antigen) test one-three days before your trip. After travel, self-quarantine for seven days and get tested again with a viral test three-five days after you return.
- The safest option is to travel with other fully

vaccinated individuals. If some in your group are not vaccinated, everyone outside your household should wear a mask when in enclosed places, such as in a vehicle.

- Save yourself unpleasant surprises and delays by checking for restrictions at your destination and anywhere you might stop along the way.
- Choose to visit destinations without crowds and avoid poorly ventilated, indoor spaces.
- A safer choice would be a short road trip with few stops. If you choose to fly, try to minimize the number of connecting flights or layovers in airports if feasible.
- A safer place to stay is

in a vacation rental or in the home of a fully vaccinated friend or family member. Crowded hotels and cruises where people share common areas such as lobbies or breakfast seating may not be as safe.

If you are visiting the beach or a pool, stay six feet away from others, whether in or out of the water.

We are hopeful that the weekly number of cases of COVID-19 will continue to decrease, both locally and across the country. And we are hopeful that every day, more people will make the smart decision to get vaccinated. If we all do our part, we can look forward to a summer of fun with our family and friends.

THE NEW CASTLE RECORD

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The New Castle Record encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Record reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length content and style. News of public interest is solicited from all sections of the county.

Ponton

from page 1

have tagged into her site to observe her level of expertise in photography. "I was not awarded a prize, but I received recognition, which was just as great," Ponton said. Ponton also shoots professionally. She has done photoshoots for birthdays, senior graduation pictures, maternity, and other special occasions. Her reasonable charges

vary depending on the requests of her clients. "I'm a mother of two beautiful babies. I went to Craig County Public Schools and I have been raised in this wonderful community my whole life," she added. She is also a "derby girl" who has participated in the Craig County Derbies as well as taken part in the annual "Hooked on

Fishing" events. "My family is absolutely amazing. They have always supported me," Ponton said. "My mom, Melanie Ponton, has always been right by my side and so has my grandparents, Cathy Williams and Jimmy Williams. They are the reason I am who I am. They taught me to be strong, smart, independent and passionate for the things I love."

Email letters to the editor to shawn.nowlin@ourvalley.org

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Craig County High School graduate settling in as Director of Parks & Recreation for Botetourt Co.

Mandy Adkins has been steering the Botetourt County Parks & Recreation Department through a most difficult time, but things are getting better. Mandy sees a bright future as the department eases restrictions that have been necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Adkins was Mandy Lipps when she graduated from Craig County High School in 2007. She always liked sports, and was a volleyball standout for the Rockets under coach Geoff Boyer. She also played basketball for a couple years and got her feet wet in recreation sports by coaching basketball and volleyball in the Craig County youth sports programs.

"I was so fortunate to have the opportunities I did in Craig County," said Adkins, who is the daughter of Craig County's Woody and Robin Lipps. "It's nice to be back close to home again."

After graduating from high school Mandy attended James Madison University. Her positive experience in recreation sports was an influence in

pursuing a major in Sport and Recreation Management with a minor in General Business. Mandy went on to earn her Master of Science degree with a concentration in Sport and Recreation Leadership.

She also met her husband, Taylor Adkins, at JMU. A native of Virginia Beach, they lived about halfway between their two homes when Mandy served as the Shenandoah Valley United Soccer Club recreation director in Harrisonburg, where she planned and implemented fall and spring recreation seasons with over 700 participants each season. She also scheduled facility usage and practices along with overseeing and coordinating a variety of events, including as many as 2,000 participants.

In 2014 Mandy took a job in San Antonio, Texas, far from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Mandy accepted a position as Youth Programs Manager, then Director of Youth and Community Programs, for San Antonio Sports, a job she held when the pandemic hit in 2020. Her position



Mandy Adkins is the Director of Parks and Recreation for Botetourt County.

included overseeing all Youth and Community Programs, serving over 200,000 participants in the San Antonio area.

It was a good job, but it wasn't Craig County.

"Living so far from home was hard," she said. "We were keeping our eyes on jobs we might apply for here, and when I saw this job posted I applied."

Mandy flew home, 20 weeks pregnant with their

second child, right in the middle of the pandemic. She was thrilled when she was chosen to lead to Botetourt County program, and went right to work January 4 with a new baby on the way.

"This is a dream come true to come back to Virginia and Botetourt County," she said. "When I played youth softball in Craig we spent tons of nights on the Cloverdale Fields."



PHOTO BY JESSICA DOTSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Mandy Adkins with husband Taylor and sons Harrison and James.

Mandy stepped into an unusual situation with the pandemic, along with an entirely new staff. Spring baseball and softball was different than usual, as the "Botetourt Youth Sports" group was formed to partner with the county.

"The county provided the fields and they provided everything else," said Adkins. "We had a partnership role and we're

currently deciding what to do about fall sports. No decisions have been made in that regard."

Mandy gave birth to their second son, Harrison, just 13 weeks ago. They also have a two year old son James and they're excited that they'll be growing up in Virginia.

"San Antonio was just too far from home," she said. "It's great to be back."

Rockets host East Mont in softball Thursday



PHOTOS BY BRIAN HOFFMAN

Craig softball coach Elaina WolfeCarper surveys the action from the dugout.



Hannah Ratliff catches for the Rockets.



Katy Day takes her turn at bat in a recent game.

The Craig County Rockets will have a busy week on the softball diamond. The Rockets were scheduled to play at Narrows the beginning of the week, and on Thursday they're back home to host Eastern Montgomery in New Castle.

The Rockets will be trying to

get the taste of a bad loss out of their mouths with two "winnable" games this week. The only game last week was in Covington and the girls were shut out, 21-0, by a Pioneer District rival.

"This was the worst we've played yet," said coach Elaina WolfeCarper. "Again, it was en-

tirely too many errors and not enough hitting."

Sara Jones pitched three innings and had four strikeouts and only gave up four hits. Hannah Ratliff pitched one inning and had a strikeout and gave up two hits. Lily Hutchison and Chasity Wolfe had Craig's only two

hits of the game, both singles.

With nearly a week to rebound, the Rockets worked hard in practice last week.

"It was nice to have four straight days of practice," said WolfeCarper. "We were able to take our time and really work on skill-building without hav-

ing to worry about preparing for a game the next day. This is still very much a young, developing team, but we definitely have girls with talent, and if they continue to work hard, I think that we can turn things around."

Craig is at Parry McCluer on Tuesday of next week.

Soccer team remains undefeated in the district with shutout win over Covington



PHOTOS BY DONNA DEPLAZES

Dalton Henderson had six goals against Covington.



Logan Kittler(right) battles for the ball at Covington.



Alex McDowell(#14) boots the ball out of harm's way.

Dalton Henderson scored six goals and the Craig County defense kept the host Cougars at bay as Craig County took an 8-0 soccer win on the Covington pitch last week.

Dalton scored at will in the victory as Craig dominated play. Bryce Drake and Lucas Taylor also had goals and Lucas had two assists.

On the other end of the field

Craig keeper Mason Huffman kept the goal clean with a shutout. Logan Kittler controlled the action on the defensive side, pushing the ball up the field to begin offensive attacks. Claire Deplazes was also outstanding on the defensive side of the field.

"I thought we played really well," said coach Robin Nobles. "I think Dalton could have

scored just about as many as he wanted, but I told him to turn it back."

The Rockets are now 3-1 overall, with their only loss coming against a strong non-district Auburn team. That was by a score of 4-2 early in the season.

"It was tied at 2-2 at the half and their coach was upset," said Nobles. "They have 20 players on their team and he felt like

they should have beaten us by more than that. We're scheduled to play them again at the end of the regular season, just before the regional, but I don't know if I like the idea of playing them so close to the regional."

Craig was scheduled to play at Narrows on Tuesday, but results were too late for publication. The Rockets beat Narrows the first time around, in New

Castle, but Nobles was very concerned about the physical style of play Narrows used to try and intimidate the Rockets. She asked members of the Craig administration to attend Tuesday's game to make sure things didn't get out of hand.

On Thursday of this week the Rockets will play at Bath, followed by a game at Parry McCluer next Tuesday, May 25.