DEEP PASSION

XENIA MOUNTROUIDOU KNOWS THAT SOME PASSIONS JUST RUN DEEP.

PHOTO OF MOUNTROUIDOU BY DAMIEN SIVIERO
FACTOID

■ MEMOS

Dixie Sustainable Garden on Facebook. Abbie Cain at caina@cofc.edu. For more information, visit event and have access to all the produce you want, email popping up on campus. And, to volunteer at a harvesting is nurturing students, faculty and staff alike. Keep an eye out for first-come, first-served free produce stands at Dixie Plantation Student Garden the College’s research plots – not to mention a whole lot of produce – With workshops, volunteer opportunities and research plots – not to mention a whole lot of produce – With workshops, volunteer opportunities and growth.

OPPORTUNITIES.

1. With workshops, volunteer opportunities and growth.

2. CULTURE CRAM.

It’s not too late to get started on your College Cultural Passport! You only need six performance-based events by the end of the semester to become a College Cultural Ambassador – and there are still plenty of arts, academic and athletics events featuring members of the CoC community that count! Get with the program and log your attendance on MyCharleston. Check out culturalpassport.cofc.edu.

3. NO WORDS.

If the beauty and charm of Charleston has ever left you speechless, the new CoCMOJI keyboard is for you. It’s the first-ever emoji alphabet created by the College, and it’s free to download on your smartphone at social.cofc.edu/emoji.

4. KID YOU NOT.

From 4 to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays, kids under 8 eat for free at Marty’s Place. A kid-friendly menu is also offered on Tuesday nights. Come and get it!

5. FREE SPIRIT.

The College of Charleston Bookstore offers employees 20% off all apparel on Cougar Spirit Days, the first Friday of each month.

6. GET PUMPED.

There’s no reason to go around feeling deflated when all you need is a little air. Stop by the bike tire pump directly outside the front doors of McAlister Hall any time and fill up for a second wind!

7. WHICH OF THESE EMPLOYEES OFFICIATED AT ANOTHER EMPLOYEE’S WEDDING?

A. Smity Smith for Ryan Mears  
B. Marnette Bowen for Kenyatta Grimgame  
C. Stephanie Anwarter for Marla Robertson  
D. Tom Buchheit for Meredith Gerber  
E. Ron Smith for Mary Bergstrom

8. 679.

The number of CoC faculty and staff who contributed to the Boundless Campaign.

STAFF TRAINING APPLICATIONS are due April 1 for Maymester/summer 2017, June 1 for fall 2017 and November 1 for spring 2018. To apply, log onto MyCharleston, click on the Employee tab and open the Staff Application for Credit Course under Employee Forms. For more information, contact Deana Richardson, richardsond@cofc.edu.

The at-large and temporary elections for the STAFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE PRESIDENT will continue through April 7. To vote, go to the Staff Advisory Committee Ballot section under the Employee tab on MyCharleston and click on Staff Advisory Committee Ballot System. Under Current Elections, click At-Large Representatives and/or Temporary Representatives, hit Continue and choose a candidate. For more information, visit sac.cofc.edu.

APPLAUSE

■ The OFFICE OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY SERVICES was the only S.C. organization – and one of only 25 higher education institutions – to receive the National Procurement Institute’s 21st annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award for 2016.

■ DIANE BOWERS, associate director of the Academic Advising and Planning Center, won the National Academic Advising Association’s 2016 Outstanding Advising Award. JOHN CREED, faculty advisor and interim associate chair of the political science department, and SILVIA YOUSEFF HANNA and ABE SAUNDERS – both academic advisors in the Academic Advising and Planning Center – were also recognized with Excellence in Advising Awards at the NACADA Region 3 Conference.

PERKS

■ Employees receive 20% off rates for this summer’s CoC BASKETBALL CAMPS for boys ages 3-6 (Jr. Cougar Camp) and ages 7-14 (Day Camp). Camps are held June 12-15, June 26-29 and July 31-August 3 at TD Arena. For more information and to register, visit cofcbasketballcamp.com. Contact Ashley Perrucci at peruccia@cofc.edu for the coupon code.

■ GEORGE STREET FITNESS CENTER EMPLOYEE PASSES for the College of Charleston Bookstore offers employees 20% off all apparel on Cougar Spirit Days, the first Friday of each month.

■ Employees and students receive a 20% discount off of all veterinary services at OLDE TOWNE VETERINARY CLINIC on Pinckney Street. For more information, visit oldetownevet.com or contact the clinic at info@oldetownevet.com or 723.1443.

MEMOS

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Xenia Mountrouidou had barely gotten her feet wet before she took the plunge—taking her newfound love of diving to the extreme as an advanced cave diver. Ten years and thousands of dives later, the computer science professor is still exploring the underwater labyrinth of her passion.
Deep down, though, she knew she needed more than computer network analysis to make her happy. She knew there was something else. She needed to pursue her No. 2 passion: She needed to be in the water.

“I love the water. Since I grew up in Greece, as a child I was always in the water,” says the assistant professor of computer science, who first became interested in computers and cybersecurity as a young girl. “My dad always told me, ‘You have to find your passion and do it as a job.’ So, if you have two passions, you have to do one as a job — and I guess it’s also your job to do the other one, too.”

So, still knee-deep in her computer science studies, Mountrouidou (aka Dr. X) registered for Skin and Scuba Diving I at N.C. State. And then she delved into Skin and Scuba Diving II. Before long, she was going from open-water training to technical training. She did cavern training, then took Intro to Cave Diving. From there, she did an apprenticeship in cave diving and took Advanced Cave Diving.

“I got really into it, really fast,” she smiles, adding that it didn’t hurt that she met her husband through the scuba community along the way. “That was it. I was hooked.”

Since 2007, she has done some 1,000 open-water dives and 400 cave dives, everywhere from Florida’s cave country to the Bahamas’ blue holes and from North Carolina’s shipwreck graveyard to Mexico’s cavernous cenotes.

“Every dive is like visiting a whole different world,” says Mountrouidou, who is especially fond of diving shipwrecks like the wreck of the Normannia off the coast of North Carolina. “It is gorgeous! But it’s spooky, too — like a haunted house. There’s leftover furniture, and you feel like the people were just there. But there’s hidden life down there, too. To see the whole architecture of the ship and then the wildlife that has made its home inside: That is fascinating to me.”

The ability for life to flourish — to adapt to even the darkest, coldest depths — is certainly intriguing.

“It amazes me that nature is so very well thought out,” says Mountrouidou. “It gets darker and darker, and colder and colder, but there is still life there. It just changes as you go deeper and deeper. And the colors! There’s an abundance of color — all these blues and greens that turn and change as you go. Everybody thinks we’re adrenaline junkies. But this is a calculated risk: We take multiple precautions.”

Between the rigorous training, the specialized gas, the multiple lights and the line-laying protocol (so that you can find your way out of the underwater labyrinths), there are a lot of safety measures in place — and there’s a lot to think about, too.

“It’s not that Xenia Mountrouidou wasn’t keeping her head above water. In fact, the third-year Ph.D. candidate at North Carolina State University was cruising steadily toward her lifelong dream of being an ethical hacker. This was her No. 1 passion — all she’d ever wanted to do. At least on the surface.

“I really like the social aspect of it. The technical diving community is our community now,” says Mountrouidou, who also volunteers her time maintaining the North Florida Springs Alliance’s website and cleaning up the aqueducts in the area’s state parks. “Everybody thinks we’re adrenaline junkies. But this is a calculated risk: We take multiple precautions.”

Whatever the explanation, for Mountrouidou at least, one thing is for sure: This passion runs deep.
Having Ball

And, when these faculty members in the chemistry department got started with Campus Recreation Services’ faculty/staff bowling league back in 2012, they just couldn’t be stopped.

Sometimes, you just get on a roll.

“We called ourselves the Atom Smashers, and we just had fun,” says Jason Overby, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, recalling that the department actually had two teams on the Campus Recreation Services (CRS) league one year: the Atom Smashers and the Smashers of Atoms. “None of us were very good bowlers at all, but we didn’t want to stop when the season ended.”

So Overby and his colleagues bought their own bowling shoes and got fitted for their own bowling balls—and the rest is history.

“I went from not knowing that people had their own personal bowling balls to getting one fit for myself—and now I’m on my fifth ball and my third pair of shoes,” says Overby. “Hydrate. That’s the single best thing you can do to improve your game.”

And they’ve picked up a few pointers along the way.

“I learned very quickly that the single best thing you can do is get a ball that’s a good fit,” says Overby. “That’s the single best thing you can do to improve your game.”

And they’ve done a lot of that themselves. The Holy City Rollers now sponsored by Holy City Brewery (co-owned by geology alum Chris Brown ’05), is made up of Overby, Rick Heldrich, Richard Lavrich and Andy Gelasco from the chemistry department; Mike Katuna, professor emeritus of geology; Mike Rhode, spouse of Kate Mullaugh in the chemistry department; and Clint Hall, a friend they met their first year in the CRS league.

It wasn’t long before their USBC team—now called Holy City Rollers—were old pros, too. Their first year in the league, they made the playoffs (aka roll-offs). Then, their second year, they made roll-offs again—with the highest average in the league. And last year, not only did the Holy City Rollers win the Big Lebowski Bash by over 600 pins, but they also won the Big Cheddar Bowl by over 400 pins.

“The Tuesday-night league bowling has introduced us to a lot of folks we’d most likely never meet elsewhere: lawyers, judges, truck drivers, salesmen, web designers, ...” says Heldrich. “It is always a fun night, but it is more fun on the few nights when we all seem to bowl well.”

But when they do, watch out: When these faculty members in the chemistry department got started with Campus Recreation Services’ faculty/staff bowling league back in 2012, they just couldn’t be stopped.

And they’re not about being as good at bowling as the other team so much as it is trying to be better each week than their averages.

“The single best thing you can do is get a ball that’s a good fit,” says Overby. “That is the single best thing you can do to improve your game.”

And, when these faculty members in the chemistry department got started with Campus Recreation Services’ faculty/staff bowling league back in 2012, they just couldn’t be stopped.

Sometimes, you just get on a roll.
Dawn Brandt peers intently through the scope of her custom-made rifle. She lies on her stomach with her elbows propping up the firearm, her right index finger squeezing ever so gently on the trigger as she gauges the target, some 300 yards in the distance. Her breath is imperceptible. Her mind, completely still. She’s at one with her rifle – a vignette of equipoise in action.

The College’s budget data recording manager is a relative newcomer to the sport of F-Class shooting. But, even though she’s only been at it about a year, she’s shown uncanny ability as a marksman – er, make that markswoman.

“There aren’t a lot of women involved in this sport,” says Brandt, whose husband was into long-range shooting before she picked it up at the local Palmetto Gun Club. “The members couldn’t have been more welcoming and supportive. One of them lent me his gun for a couple of months to see if I liked it. And another person let me borrow his scope.”

Brandt’s natural talent as a shooter immediately impressed others at the club. They couldn’t believe how proficient and accurate she was from the beginning.

“Some of the best shooters at our club customarily score 198 or 199 out of 200,” says Brandt. “At one of the competitions I entered, I ended up with 185, which is pretty good for someone so new to all of this.”

Brandt ascribes her competence in the sport to two things (well, three if you count her “lucky” pink earmuffs). First: “I’m definitely a Type A person and a perfectionist, and shooting is truly a precision-oriented pastime. It’s all about perfection,” she says. “You have to factor in all the variables, such as distance, gravity and wind. And there are a million ways you can position yourself on the ground. All of those variables are critical, and dealing with them intrigues me.”

Second: Yoga. Wait: Yoga? “A lot of what you do in shooting relates to breath,” she explains. “You have to be very controlled when aiming and firing. In addition, you have to get into a zone. You have to quiet your inner conversation, which is a big thing in yoga. I am accustomed to doing that and have practiced it for a long time, and that helps me be a better shooter. I really like that aspect of precision shooting. I like relaxing and getting out of my head. If you start thinking about dinner plans or stresses at work, you won’t shoot well.”

Marrying her yoga experience with shooting makes Brandt something of an anomaly in the sport – a position that is accented by her general outlook on guns.

“The ironic thing is, I don’t really like guns, and I’m a proponent of greater restraints on gun ownership,” she says. “That’s not what you would expect from someone who is passionate about precision shooting. But I don’t associate this sport with my political outlook. I separate the competition from that feeling.”

Speaking of feelings, Brandt wouldn’t mind one day knowing what it feels like to win a local competition. For now, though, it’s all about practicing perfection.

“I’d just like to keep doing my best,” she says. “And, ideally, I’d like to gain enough confidence to go to a longer range and shoot 1,000 yards with accuracy. For me, that would be a true accomplishment.”

The outlook is good – because, as we know, when Brandt takes aim, she tends to make her target.
Q: What did you want to be when you were growing up?
A: I wanted to be an accountant or at least major in math, but things changed after I encountered Calculus 3 in college. Although I passed the class, I immediately changed my major.

Q: What is the job you would love to have at the College?
A: I would love to be the head volleyball coach. Although I am definitely unqualified for the position, I played in college and still love the game.

Q: What do you think would surprise most people on campus about your job?
A: I don’t think that most people are aware that the summer months and November and December are my busiest work months. During the summer, faculty and staff post jobs so that they are fully staffed when school begins. In November and December, staff and faculty are eager to post jobs and make job offers before the December holiday break. I am usually frantically working up until the final hour we leave for the break.

Q: What are the most common questions you hear from applicants?
A: “What is the status of my application?” “When will you make interview selections?” And, “Although the posting is no longer on the website, can I still apply?”

Q: Have you ever watched a TV show or a movie and noticed HR violations in the plot?
A: Although I try to turn off the HR side of my brain when watching TV or movies, I’ve seen a lot of violations. To name a few from one of the hospital shows I watch: sexual misconduct issues in hospital hallways between staff/doctors and patients and confidentiality issues where physicians mingle in unprofessional ways and end up sharing information among colleagues. No one ever seems to receive any type of discipline for the violations.

Sherri Shannon can open doors that no one else can: For anyone hoping to work for the College of Charleston, she alone holds the keys.

During her 16 years as the College’s human resources employment manager, Shannon has given the final OK – and the good news – to thousands of staff members. Which means she knows a thing or two about most of us. But what do we know about her? Portico decided it was about time we all get to know the College’s gatekeeper to employment. Here’s what we learned.

Sherri Shannon can open doors that no one else can: For anyone hoping to work for the College of Charleston, she alone holds the keys.
COURSES AT THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND SKOSNIK HAS ALWAYS LOVED ART, BUT IT WAS THE ART SCIENTIFIC EXACTITUDE AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION. His passion is natural science illustration, which blends that's why, most weekends, he's creating art in his studio. “I spend enough time in my day job looking at a screen.” says the Michigan native who came to the college last May. “When it comes to computers, I know where to draw the line.”

You might expect john skosnik, a computer programmer by training, to gravitate toward technology in his free time. But, while the digital realm dominates his work as a systems analyst in the office for institutional effectiveness and strategic planning, skosnik prefers to spend his weekends drawing and painting animals. “I actually prefer the more traditional mediums – the pens and the paint – not so much the new-fangled Photoshop,” says skosnik. And skosnik has developed a habit of naming his animals. He's become particularly fond of painting birds – especially seagulls, since they allow him to get close up my craft first.”

Second Nature

You have almost used your free 30 minutes with an attorney through advantage legal assistant and you need further representation. What can the attorney offer you?

1. What is the name of the Deer Oaks EAP service that pays for one cab ride a year per employee?
   a. Take the High Road
   b. Free Ride
   c. Ride on Us
   d. Cougar Cab
   e. Grab-a-Cab

2. If you do a quick search for “workplace fitness,” which of the following online seminars is not listed?
   a. Financial Fitness
   b. You Make Me So Mad!
   c. How to Choose a Fitness Ball
   d. Staying Fit at Work
   e. Nobody Likes a Bully

3. What of the following can you find in the Work/Life Resource Locator center?
   a. Car detailing locator
   b. Pet sitter locator
   c. Personal shopper locator
   d. Nail salon locator
   e. All of the above

4. Which of the following are eligible for six free counseling sessions a year?
   a. CoC employees and their dependents
   b. CoC employees and their same-sex spouses
   c. CoC employees, their dependents and members of their households
   d. CoC retirees for six months after retirement
   e. All of the above

5. Which of the following can CoC employees get on the Deer Oaks EAP website?
   a. Active shooter training
   b. Career development
   c. Etiquette training
   d. Financial consultations
   e. All of the above

6. Which types of training can CoC employees get on the Deer Oaks EAP website?
   a. Active shooter training
   b. Career development
   c. Etiquette training
   d. Financial consultations
   e. All of the above

7. Which of the seminars that came up when you search for “online seminars” interests you the most?

The point is: We all need a little assistance sometimes. And, thanks to the Deer Oaks Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the college has us covered.

CoC’s new EAP is more comprehensive, more accessible and more user-friendly than ever. With online tools, seminars, resources and videos, it’s definitely worth checking out.

Log onto deeroaksap.com using CoC as your username and your password, and see how the new EAP can assist you.

Once you do, take this quiz to show us what you learned! The first 10 people to submit at least five answers to theportico@cofc.edu will win a Portico mug – and the first person to answer all 10 questions will also get a T-shirt from the College of Charleston Bookstore! At your assistance, CoC!
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALLISYN MORGAN – former assistant to the dean of the Graduate School of the University of Charleston, S.C. – whose name was drawn at random from those who correctly guessed that the image was a Wiffle ball bat hanging from a tree behind the Hugh P. Cameron House at 12 Bull Street. The bats are hung as part of a historic preservation and community planning annual tradition, which includes a student-faculty Wiffle ball game and subsequent cookout in the backyard of the Cameron House.

GUESS WHAT?

IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT THE OBJECT in the above photo is and where it can be found, send your guess to theportico@cofc.edu by Friday, April 21. The names of those who submit the correct answer will be entered into a drawing for a free lunch for two at Liberty Street Fresh Food Company. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff.