

## **Pulaski, a County of Excellence: Common things done uncommonly well**



### **Vision, Pride and Excellence** –

These three words are the centerpiece of the Pulaski County seal. They also define the past, present and future of this community. Pulaski County has much to be proud of today, most notably is its geographic location west of the eastern continental divide and nestled on top of the plateau through which the New River flows on its way north to the New River Gorge in West Virginia.

Pulaski County is home to a number of regional facilities and several outstanding attractions. The essence of this community can be captured by highlighting a few hidden gems where common things are being done uncommonly well.

A defining feature of Pulaski County, Claytor Lake was created by Appalachian Power Company in 1939, after the construction of Claytor Dam. Today, the dam generates 75,000 kW of “green” renewable electricity while holding back 4,475 acres (232,000 acre feet) of water. Its 100 miles of shoreline include gentle pastures, dramatic cliffs and many hidden coves ideal for summertime boat picnics and “jump-overboard” swimming.



The shores of Claytor Lake host two of Virginia's most visited state parks. Claytor Lake State Park provides camping, hiking, boat rentals, rental cabins and conference room space, while the New River Trail State Park provides outstanding opportunities for horseback riding, hiking and bicycling.

The New River, along which the New River Trail parallels on its 52-mile journey to Galax and the historic mill town of Fries, is nationally recognized as one of two American Heritage Rivers in Virginia (the Potomac River is the other). Bald eagles, osprey, snowy egrets, minks, otters, and many other species are frequently sighted.

Fishing is good, but challenging in the winding waters of the river where you can find smallmouth bass, muskie, walleyes, rock bass, flathead and channel catfish. The excellent habitat the river provides for smallmouth and spotted bass, including a state record 3-pound, 10-ounce catch is of particular interest to anglers.



Located to the south of Claytor Lake is the 16,000 acre Boy Scout reservation (the largest east of the Mississippi). Second nationwide in size only to the Philmont reservation in New Mexico, Camp Ottari, Camp Powhatan and the Claytor Lake Aquatics Center provide outdoor learning and leadership experiences for approximately 10,000 scouts every summer (see <http://www.bsa-brmc.org/camp.htm> for further details).



Located along the New River, eight miles downstream of Claytor Lake, is the Virginia Tech Pete Dye River Course and the Heron's Landing at the River housing development featured in the July/August edition of the New River Valley Magazine. This golf course, designed by world renowned architect Pete Dye, was selected by Golf Magazine as one of the best new public access courses in the United States. From elevated tees, rock

cliffs, and gently sloping terrain, this course wraps along 2½ miles of the majestic New River. One of only two Pete Dye signature courses in the world, the Heron's Landing course is fully open to the public, offering 7,665 yards of bent grass fairways surrounded by the New River and a variety of sand traps and lakes. Appropriately named, 14 of the 18 holes at the River Course have views of the New River with eight of those holes located directly along the River. The Course is home to the 2007 ACC champion Virginia Tech golf team on which Drew Weaver, a British Open player, was a member. Practicing on the River Course and playing in the British open helped this outstanding athlete qualify for the 2008 Master's tournament. Ryan Sypneski, a Pulaski County native also got his start as a member of the Virginia Tech team.

The Virginia Tech River Course is joined by three other courses in Pulaski County. The Pulaski Country Club offers a family atmosphere in great views of the lush 18-hole course from the recently constructed clubhouse. This private club established in the 1920s offers full tennis courts, a pool, clubhouse, and a 6,000 yard, bent grass, par 72 course, renowned for the quality of its greens.

The Draper Valley Golf Course, a par 72 course also open to the public, includes a club house, open fairways and 7,072 yards of driving opportunity. Finally, the 9-hole par 3 Lock Lowman course in Fairlawn offers great opportunities for those new to the sport.



Only five miles from the Heron's Landing Golf Course, is the Motor Mile Speedway and Dragstrip. Unique in Virginia, the Motor Mile complex includes both a NASCAR sanctioned oval track **and** an eighth mile IHRA sanctioned drag strip. Indeed, on five select evenings, spectators can view both types of racing at the same time, a feature not offered by any other track in Virginia. In 2006 NASCAR awarded this ¼ mile oval track

its Weekly Series Regional and National Championship Track, and the Highest Competitor Car Counts Track awards. Also in 2006 the IHRA, designated the adjacent drag strip its Sportsman Track of the Year.

Those who enjoy the quieter side of a summer evening might be found fishing, camping or looking for wildlife on Gatewood Lake. Or, area residents could just as well be enjoying the wonders of our solar system at the Wysor Observatory on the campus of Dublin Elementary School, which offer the personal and public access to a 16-inch telescope with a data base of nearly 65,000 celestial objects. Those with an interest in history can enjoy the Wilderness Road Regional Museum located along the original Wilderness Road in Historic Newbern, the Raymond Ratcliffe Museum in the restored Pulaski Train Station, the Back Creek Civil War battlefield and historic areas in Newbern, the Town of Pulaski, Town of Dublin, Snowville and Hiwassee. The Farris Mines area, located along Big Reed Island Creek, provides a view of what life was like when the area was a producer of pig



iron. Remnants of the old furnaces and some company housing provide the unique opportunity to step back in history.

The beauty of the New River Valley, and of Pulaski County in particular, is captivated in the work of local and regional artists whose work is displayed and sold at the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley in downtown Pulaski. In addition to the great gift shop, the Fine Arts Center also sponsors a series of summer concerts, and art and dance classes.



For one week every year, the night sky is filled with merriment when the New River Valley Fair gets underway. The fair hosts a variety of rides, agricultural competitions, and entertainment. This year's activities included nationally known entertainers, a regional talent competition, a demolition derby, lawnmower racing, livestock judging, garden produce judging and a horse pulling contest. These events draw

20,000 visitors to the Fairgrounds annually. Here the Dublin Lyons Club hosts two annual flea markets known throughout the region.

The celebration of life in Pulaski County takes place throughout the year beginning with the Claytor Lake Festival in June, county-wide July 4<sup>th</sup> events, the Count Pulaski Fest in September and Newbern Fall Festival in October. Family recreation is a year-round at Randolph Park where residents and visitors enjoy swimming, picnicking, walking, basketball, sand volleyball, tennis, softball and soccer. Since the construction of the Evelyn Alexander Water Park in 2000, Randolph Park has become a center for summer-time activities regularly attracting over 50,000 visitors per summer from the greater Roanoke, West Virginia and North Carolina region.



After a summer of outdoor fun, the youth of Pulaski County are welcomed back to school where five fully accredited schools provide opportunities in winning sports programs, a state championship theater program, nationally competitive vocational programs, and an academic education which strives to meet a variety of abilities. The Pulaski County School System is also host to the Southwest Virginia Governor's School for Math and Science offering advanced learning

experiences for students throughout the region. Educational achievement by County students results in the award of well over \$1.5 million in scholarships every spring.

With Virginia Tech and Radford University close by, those scholarships can be well utilized without having to leave the New River Valley. Indeed, students from other localities are doing likewise and Virginia's New River Valley has become one of the major centers for higher education in Virginia, with college students accounting for over 25% of the region's population.

Those wishing to continue to live in Pulaski County can continue their education at New River Community College (NRCC). Indeed, NRCC students can begin their education through the Early Learning Center, starting as early as age three. While attending high school, students can get college level credit through NRCC for classes taught at the Southwest Virginia Governor's School, as well as at Pulaski County High School through the Dual Enrollment program.



When students leave area high schools, they can continue their education through a variety of two-year programs provided by the College. NRCC also serves as one of Old Dominion University's Teletechnet sites which offer bachelor, master and doctoral level educational opportunities in many fields of study (business, communication, criminal justice, education, engineering technology, and health sciences). New River Community College supports and complements the outstanding educational offerings provided by neighboring Radford University and Virginia Tech.

The end result is that Pulaski County residents have the opportunity to begin learning at age three, attend a great public school system, continue their education at four institutions (NRCC, RU, VT and ODU) to obtain their choice of an associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees, then continue with computer and vocational classes, such as learning the thrill of riding a motorcycle safely or flying a plane through the private pilot ground school without ever having to leave Pulaski County.

In addition to these recreational and educational amenities, excellence can also be applied to support for business locations in Pulaski County. With three of Virginia's Enterprise Zones, federal designation as a HUB Zone, and an activated Foreign Trade Zone, business incentives are readily available.

Should entrepreneurs or residents desire to travel, the New River Valley Airport is ready to give them wings to fly and a great place from which to take off and land. With the longest runway west of Roanoke and the best approaches west of Lynchburg, the New River Valley Airport offers full instrument landing, a 6,000 foot obstruction free runway, and automated weather observation services.

Those wishing to go into business for themselves can get a head start at the New River Valley Competitiveness Center and those who successfully grow their businesses have plenty of room to grow at the 700-acre New River Valley Commerce Park. With the Commerce Park located adjacent to the New River Valley Airport, charter flights from abroad can directly clear customs through the local U.S. Customs at the NRV Airport and businesses can have their containers clear customs through the friendly service provided by the local office.

**Vision** on the part of the residents of Pulaski County has made this a county where **Pride** and **Excellence** are at the core the County seal as well as of its communities.

