Xenia Mountrouidou knows that some passions just run deep.

Photo of Mountrouidou by Damien Siviero
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. **THE NUMBER OF CoFC FACULTY AND STAFF WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE BOUNDLESS CAMPAIGN.**

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 McGlister Hall any time and fill up for a second wind!

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

A. Smitty Smith for Ryan Mears
B. Marnette Bowen for Kenyatta Grimmage
C. Stephanie Anwaert for Marla Robertson
D. Tom Buchheit for Meredith Gerber
E. Ron Smith for Mary Bergstrom

8. **FREE SPIRIT.**

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

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**FACTOID**

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 research plots – not to mention a whole lot of produce – with workshops, volunteer opportunities and featuring members of the CoFC community that count! Get with the program and log your attendance on MyCharleston. Check out culturalpassport.cofc.edu.

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**FACTOID**

Deana Richardson, richardsond@cofc.edu.

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**FACTOID**

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.

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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.
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.

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.

“All you’ve got 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.”

Mountrouidou gets to see these waterscapes several times a year, most often in the complex, highly exclusive caverns around Ginnie Springs in northern Florida, where she travels with her husband, who has a deep water-lighting company and is known in the technical diving community as the “Underwater Light Dude.”

“But there is still life there. . . and the colors! There’s an abundance of color – all these blues and greens that turn and change as you go. . . . I feel so special that I get to experience these things; it’s a whole world that most people never get to see.”

“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 GETS DARKER AND DARKER, AND COLDER AND COLDER, BUT THERE IS STILL LIFE THERE. . . . AND THE COLORS! THERE’S AN ABUNDANCE OF COLOR – ALL THESE BLUES AND GREENS THAT TURN AND CHANGE AS YOU GO. . . . I FEEL SO SPECIAL THAT I GET TO EXPERIENCE THESE THINGS; IT’S A WHOLE WORLD THAT MOST PEOPLE NEVER GET TO SEE.”

“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. It really is a gorgeous thing when you are down there. I feel so special that I get to experience these things; it’s a whole world that most people never get to see.”

And Mountrouidou gets to see these waterscapes several times a year, most often in the complex, highly exclusive caverns around Ginnie Springs in northern Florida, where she travels with her husband, who has a deep water-lighting company and is known in the technical diving community as the “Underwater Light Dude.”

“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.”

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.

“In some ways, it is a way of logging off, of taking a break, but it’s also very cerebral, very focused,” says Mountrouidou, noting the prevalence of “computer people” in the diving community. “Maybe it’s because we enjoy technical gear. But maybe it’s because we’re sitting in here all day at our computers, so we want to get away and explore nature.”

Whatever the explanation, for Mountrouidou at least, one thing is for sure: This passion runs deep.
Having a roll. Sometimes, you just get on a roll.

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

“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 personal bowling shoes and got fitted for their own personal 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,” laughs Overby, explaining that the team joined the U.S. Bowling Congress (USBC) league that plays on Tuesday nights at the Charleston Rifle Club, where it’s been playing ever since.

The Holy City Rollers (aka Atom Smashers)

L-R: CLINT HALL, RICK HELDRICH, JASON OVERBY, ANDY GELASCO, RICH LAVRICH

“We were in the playoffs (aka roll-offs) once, with our 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 second-most points of any team in the league. That’s why Overby and his team members are so enthusiastic about bowling. ‘We’re always on the lookout for new members,’ says Overby, who would like to see more of his colleagues in the chemistry department get involved in Campus Recreation Services’ bowling leagues.

“We’re always on the lookout for new members,” says Overby, who is always looking for new members. “And, when we do get new members, they’re always interested in the sport. So, if you’re interested in joining the Holy City Rollers, just come on down to the Charleston Rifle Club on Tuesday nights and give it a try. You won’t regret it!”

And don’t worry about being the best bowler on the team. “We’re not looking for the best bowler on the team,” says Overby. “We’re just looking for people who want to have fun and enjoy the sport. So, if you’re interested in joining the Holy City Rollers, just come on down to the Charleston Rifle Club on Tuesday nights and give it a try. You won’t regret it!”
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 – oh, 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.
SECOND NATURE

When it comes to computers and nature, John Skosnik knows 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 medias – the pens and the paint – not so much the new-fangled Photoshop,” says the Michigan native who came to the College last May. “I spend enough time in my day job looking at a screen.”

That’s why, most weekends, he’s creating art in his studio.”I actually prefer the more traditional medias – the pens and the paint – not so much the new-fangled Photoshop,” says the Michigan native who came to the College last May. “I spend enough time in my day job looking at a screen.”

It really helps to check your ego at the door. Still, this is like your baby.”

And Skosnik has developed a habit of naming his “babies” along the way. There’s his vibrant watercolor of the red wolf, Reginald; his acrylic of the scarlet lily beetle, Lily; and his graphite pencil drawing of the crow, Harvey.

He’s become particularly fond of painting birds – especially seagulls, since they allow him to get close enough for snapping photos or sketching thumbnails to use as references back in his studio. Though pleased with his progress, an artist, Skosnik not yet ready to show his work in an exhibit. “I’m shy about that,” he says. “I like to build up my craft first.”

“You’ve almost used your free 30 minutes with an attorney through Advantage Legal Assist and you need further representation. What can the attorney offer you?
A. A pop talk
B. A legal brief
C. The number of another, more expensive law firm
D. 25% off the regular hourly rate
E. Nothing – it’s over when it’s over

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Quiz!

Maybe you’re stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire. Maybe your teenager has you at your wits’ end. Maybe your babysitter quit or your identity has been stolen or you’re ready to adopt or you’re packing for a trip abroad. Maybe you’re just tired of being tired.

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 deeroakseap.com using your username and 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!

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

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

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. Start to Fit at Work
E. Nobody Likes a Bully

Click on Grief and Loss under the Balancing tab. Which of the following categories is not listed?
A. Death of a coworker
B. Loss of a job
C. Loss of a relationship
D. Loss of a pet
E. Death of a salesman

Which 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

You have just requested some information for storing important records. Which tab includes guidelines for storing important records?
A. Aging
B. International
C. Working
D. Medical
E. All of the above

What kinds 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
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.