



Embracing leadership

Veteran safety **Reggie Floyd** helps the defense through tough times



These dinosaurs are not extinct

At Dinosaur Kingdom II in Natural Bridge, Mark Cline's imagination runs wild on 16 acres.

Story in Extra



When online security isn't secure

Business

THE ROANOKE TIMES

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ROANOKE, VIRGINIA \$4

Back of the Dragon, the serpentine road between Marion and the town of Tazewell, is gaining traction among motorcyclists and accelerating the flow of tourism to what used to be coal country.



Court still in session for young addicts

Held in Franklin County, the region's only juvenile drug court has marked its 10th anniversary.

By **Casey Fabris**
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When teens enter Franklin County's juvenile drug court, they must say goodbye to their drug of choice — literally.

Reading a goodbye letter aloud to the court is part of the process, said juvenile drug court coordinator Sherry Pilson. It can be a powerful moment, she said, followed by applause, standing ovations and handshakes.

Pilson shared a letter from a teen currently working through the program, bidding farewell to alcohol.

"As my friend, I thought you were helping me out through hard times; I thought you were there for me when I needed it," the participant wrote.

But alcohol eventually turned from friend to foe, causing trouble and family strife. Leaving it behind prompted an improvement in grades, attendance, behavior and attitude, the letter states.

The final line reads: "I am thankful to say goodbye to you."

Franklin County has been working to set teens who struggle with drug and alcohol use onto a better path for 10 years. The juvenile drug court, one

See **COURT**, 4

U.S., Taliban talk to halt terrorism in Afghanistan

A Trump administration envoy said he was "satisfied" with the Taliban's commitment.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's longest war has come full circle.

The United States began bombing Afghanistan after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to root out al-Qaida fighters harbored by the Taliban. Now, more than 18 years later, preventing Afghanistan from being a launching pad for more attacks on America is at the heart of ongoing U.S. talks with the Taliban.

MORE INSIDE
U.S. mulls more pressure on Iran.
Nation & World 1

The Taliban have continued to launch attacks.

An Afghan official said at least three police officers were killed Saturday when a Taliban suicide bomber targeted a district police headquarters in eastern Ghazni province.

Ahmad Khan Serat, provincial police chief's spokesman, says the explosion on Saturday morning in the Ab Band district also wounded 12

See **TALIBAN**, 4



Photos by STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS | The Roanoke Times

Above: Motorcyclists gather on the last weekend of June at the kudzu-covered overlook in Tazewell County where views of several mountain ranges can be seen along Back of the Dragon. **Top:** Jesse Carroll of Bassett rides his 2016 Ducati following his friends, David Arrington and Cindy Blair from Axton, on their motorcycle along the road.

'Dragon' breathing life into stalled economy

By **Amy Friedenberger**
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TAZEWELL — Marcus Suikki veered his motorcycle off the road, climbed off the bike and lifted up his helmet.

"That's some intense riding! Whew!" Suikki told Phil Woods, who pulled up beside him. "I wish we had roads like this back home, I tell you."

Not too far behind, Wayne Lake slowed down his heavy-weight Harley-Davidson on a curve crawling with a kudzu wall.

"He goes a little slower, but he rides that Harley like he stole it," Suikki, 46, said.

The three friends traveled from Canada just to ride this winding road in far Southwest Virginia. They took out their cameras and photographed the view from the overlook: mountain ranges and rolling hills dotted with barns and hay bales.

They enjoyed the views and the challenging curves of scenic Virginia 16 so much that they'd ridden it three times that day in June. For Woods, it was his third time making the trip, bringing a

See **DRAGON**, 6



Larry Davidson is the visionary behind Back of the Dragon. He stands on Tazewell's Main Street near the current welcome center. The new welcome center on the same property will open in October.

"I saw a community in dire straits from the decline in coal, and I wanted to see something lift it up."

Larry Davidson on promoting Back of the Dragon to draw tourists

Where is it?
Here's your guide to what's inside.

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