

100+ Things Best about the Panhandle

Life is good here. Let us count the ways ...

(in no particular order)

I. VICKY BULLETT

Two decades after winning Olympic gold, Vicky Bullett loves court life – and Martinsburg – as much as ever.

At South Middle School, some students know Vicky Bullett not as an Olympic gold medalist, University of Maryland record-holder or retired WNBA star, but simply as a teacher who happens to like shooting hoops.

"They just figured out I had a street named after me," the 43-year-old explains with a smile.

It's been almost a quarter-century since Martinsburg leaders gave a new name to the street where Bullett had grown up with her five brothers, rechristening Eulalia Street "Vicky Bullett Street."

That honor came after Bullett's Olympic success.

In 1988, Bullett was headed into her senior year at Maryland, making her one of the younger members of the U.S. squad for the games in Seoul, South Korea. Nonetheless, the 6-foot-3 powerhouse rebounder was credited with helping to boost the United States over Yugoslavia for the gold.

On June 10, the 1985 Martinsburg High grad will be inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tenn., in recognition of her Olympic success as well as the years she spent in the WNBA's Charlotte Sting and Washington Mystics and playing for professional teams in Europe and South America.

Bullett, who retired from the WNBA four years ago, recently sat down with *Panhandle* writer Misty Higgins to talk about



Vicky Bullett, who brought home gold at the 1988 Olympics and later played in the WNBA, now finds satisfaction teaching at South Middle School in Martinsburg and playing basketball whenever she can.

her work, how she spends her free time and what she envisions for the future.

What is a typical day like for you?

"I teach reading and English to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders and then after school three days a week, I tutor; coach and just spend time with kids at the Boys & Girls Club.

When I was growing up, it was just the Boys Club, girls weren't allowed, but I would go in and play basketball whenever I could.

It looks a lot like it did all those years ago. It's beat up but I love it. An hour spent there is a good time.

Today, a lot of kids don't have enough role models. [Positive attention] was given to me and I think that's what you do – you come back to give back to your community.

Later in the evening, I play pickup basketball games with friends on Tuesday and Thursday or I'm at Gold's Gym working out to stay in good health and shape. I am still a gym rat."

You learned a lot playing basketball with your brothers?

"The lesson I learned from all six of my brothers is to be competitive no matter what. Playing basketball with them made me work hard because they were all so much

21. PICKIN' IN THE PANHANDLE

Pay \$40 for an advance ticket to September's fifth-annual Pickin' in the Panhandle bluegrass and barbecue festival held in bucolic southern Berkeley County, and it's likely you've snagged the biggest bargain of the summer.

Marty Stuart, Confederate Railroad and Trent Tomlinson are among the top-notch bluegrass acts set to play during the three-day shindig at Lazy A Campground in Back Creek Valley.

The early bird price is available only until July 1, but even if you wait to buy tickets on site, the Sept. 9 to 11 event remains a great deal. Adults pay \$50 for three-day pass or \$25 for single-day admission. Children 12 and younger get in free.

Andrea Ball, the executive director of the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention & Visitors Bureau, came up with the idea of marrying bluegrass and barbecue. She envisioned a family-friendly festival that delivers a great time at a reasonable price.

Launched in 2007 as a one-day event, Pickin' over the years has attracted bigger and bigger crowds as well as Ricky Skaggs, Charlie Daniels and other bigwigs of bluegrass.

Barbecue is another major draw for festival-goers, with thousands in prizes for amateurs and professionals as well as the chance for visitors to buy ribs, barbecue sandwiches, kettle korn, ice cream and other fare.

Many festival-goers will pay \$25 per night to camp out at the Lazy A, a lovely creek-side spot nine miles west from Interstate 81's Exit 5 in Inwood. For tickets and other details, go online to panhandlepickin.com or call 800.498.2386.

22. C & O CANAL

Constructed for mules pulling canal boats full of grain, coal, lumber and other market-bound goods along the Potomac River; the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath dates to 1831. Today, the shady, flat, 12-foot-wide path is ideal for a scenic walk or leisurely bike trip. The entire towpath measures 184.5 miles from Georgetown to Cumberland, Md. To know more, go to nps.gov/choh.

23. GREEN SPACE

"A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken," columnist James Dent famously

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Pickin' in the Panhandle will bring Marty Stuart, Confederate Railroad and other big names to Berkeley County in September.

wrote in *The Charleston Gazette*. Panhandle residents may choose to create a perfect summer day by leaving lawn care to others, including Kevin Misiewicz, the owner of Pro Green Pest & Lawn Services. The company, based in Inwood, is focused on quality services that don't harm Mother Nature. For details, see progreenpestandlawn.com.

24. JOY LINE

Situated a mile from downtown Harpers Ferry on Bakerton Road just off U.S. 340, an open-air miniature railroad offers train lovers large-scale fun.

Chris Wallich, whose late father founded the Joy Line in 1970, now wears the conductor's cap as the 40-horsepower locomotive makes its way over a bridge, past a station and through a small tunnel.

The Joy Line is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weather-permitting on weekends from April through October.

It's just \$2 to ride the train three times around the half-mile track and \$2 to get into the Harpers Ferry Toy Train Museum, home to railroad memorabilia, windup and push-model antique toy trains and more.

For details, email hfttm@comcast.net.