



Rebuilding Hope

Camp Easterseals' Journey After the Storm

Tucked away in the peaceful mountains of Craig County near Roanoke, Va., Camp Easterseals has long stood as a sanctuary for individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities. When a powerful storm swept through the camp earlier this year, the aftermath was devastating.

The intense flooding in February was the worst the camp had experienced in over a decade, leaving a trail of destruction that impacted nearly every building on the property. Most notably, the horse pasture and recreation hall suffered significant damage, with floodwater reaching table height in several buildings.

Despite the grim scene, the spirit of Camp Easterseals remains unbroken. Amber Braley, who became the camp director last fall, plays a significant role in these efforts. Her journey with the camp began in 2014 as a counselor. In 2017, Braley would take on a new role as a camp nurse, eventually transitioning to a full-time position from 2021 to 2024. Her passion for the camp's mission began after a heartfelt recommendation from one of her patients, as she served as a home health nurse, who cherished his time at

Camp Easterseals as a child and said, "It was the best week of my life."

The impact of the storm was felt deeply by the staff and campers, with families reaching out in concern over the camp's future and the status of its cherished events. Fortunately, through the tireless efforts of volunteers and supporters, Camp Easterseals can confidently assure everyone that their annual camps will proceed as planned.

Camp Easterseals has long been a sanctuary for individuals aged 8 and older, offering a rare opportunity for those with special needs to enjoy a true camp experience. The camp's unique mission allows families a peace of mind that is hard to find elsewhere. For instance, one family recounted their journey from staying nearby in Roanoke during their child's first year at camp to feeling comfortable enough to take a vacation, knowing their child was in good hands.

Although the essential clean-up has been completed, the camp is still hoping to recoup costs associated with immediate clean-up efforts and to replenish their program supplies

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ruined by the damaging floodwaters. Donations play a crucial role in the camp's recovery efforts, offering the flexibility to rebuild key camp components and enhance their programs. According to Braley, the mantra that fuels

their mission is: "Let's do this and do it well, because our campers deserve the best!" The ongoing Restore Camp Easterseals fundraiser aims to address urgent needs such as fence repairs, debris removal, and replenishing lost sports and art equipment. Those interested in contributing can find more information at <https://bit.ly/4k4AYwr>.

In addition to financial support, the camp welcomes volunteer efforts. A new

(continued on page 14)

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*Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative is an
Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.*

Rebuilding Hope *(continued from page 13)*



From left, Victoria Coles, supervisor of programs, and Amber Braley, camp director



On site playground featuring an American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet panel.



Camp canoes cradle the aftermath of the floods.



Amber Braley shares a sweet moment with two of the camp's 4-legged friends.

volunteer initiative will launch in the fall, providing opportunities to assist with various projects. Community members have already started to pitch in, and those interested can reach out via email at camp@eastersealsucp.com.

Camp Easterseals envisions a bright future, buoyed by the community's unwavering support. The storm, while challenging, has strengthened bonds and highlighted the camp's vital role in the lives of its participants.

Under the leadership of Braley, Valerie Coles, supervisor of programs, and a team of selfless individuals behind them, Camp Easterseals continues to thrive. Coles, who transitioned from early intervention programs to focus on grant writing for the camp, emphasizes the importance of scholarships, which are the focus of most fundraising efforts. With camp costs

ranging from \$1,150 for a six-day session to \$2,530 for 12 days, these scholarships ensure that they can accommodate as many campers as safely possible, especially those who may not otherwise be able to afford to attend.

"Acceptance is the bare minimum for our campers. Here, we celebrate each camper who joins us. This is a safe place. What makes us unique is providing so many first-time experiences — whether it's a camper putting on a helmet for the first time to touch a horse or another developing an entire talent show act with

their favorite object with our staff's help. This is a special place, and we're grateful for any support from our community," Braley says.

Camp Easterseals has been a valued member of Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative for nearly 70 years, reflecting a longstanding partnership that underscores the community's support for this essential organization. The cooperative's involvement highlights the importance of local support in the camp's ongoing recovery and future success.

To stay informed about ongoing recovery efforts, follow Camp Easterseals on social media and subscribe to newsletters for the latest updates.

Together, with the community's help, Camp Easterseals is determined not just to rebuild, but to emerge stronger and more vibrant than ever.



WATER SAFETY WORD SCRAMBLE

Outdoor water activities and electricity never mix because water is a powerful conductor of electricity. When electrical devices or cords come into contact with water — like at a pool, lake or beach — it can cause serious electric shocks. Keep all electrical items far away from water and always follow safety rules when you're outside near water.

Read the sentences below, then unscramble the bolded letters to complete the safety tips.



1. Never touch electrical **csevierd**, switches or plugs when your hands are wet.
2. Always place **lacertceil** items like radios, speakers or lights at least 10 feet away from the water's edge.
3. After using outdoor electronics, **ngulup** them and store them away from water to prevent accidents.
4. Keep extension **dsroc** far away from water sources to prevent tripping hazards.
5. Always pay attention to “no **wmsinimg**” signs, whether at the pool, beach or lake.



Answer Key
1) devices 2) electrical 3) unplug 4) cords 5) swimming



CRAIG-BOTETOURT
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

2025 VMDAEC/CBEC Scholarship Recipients

CONGRATULATIONS!

These local high school graduates were chosen based on their academic achievements, personal statements and CBEC membership.



Jadyn Miller
James River High School



Jaycob Wolfe
Craig County High School



Shailyn Wickline
James Monroe High School



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TUESDAY, JULY 15, 2025
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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat, like clothes dryers and dishwashers, during the evening when the outdoor temperature is lower. Running heat-emitting appliances in the evening will reduce indoor heat gain during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest and ultimately keep your air conditioner from working harder than necessary.

Source: energy.gov