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This mother Wood Duck was seen leading her brood around Vernonia Lake recently. Other duck species, such as Mallards, have also hatched families at the lake this year.

Vernonia man is helping efforts in Afghanistan

KUNAR, Afghanistan – When the most advanced Mine Resistant Ambush Protected, or MRAP, vehicles roll into Forward Operating Base Wright for repairs, it's not the men and women in uniform who fix them up.

It's a group of civilian men and women headed up by AE-COM-CACI Field and Installation Readiness Support Team, or AC FIRST, who do the bulk of the repairs to these advanced military vehicles.

"We're a support team for the FOB, and we'll do anything and everything," said Celestino Marrero, a Fayetteville, N.C. native and FOB supervisor for AC FIRST. "We can't repair actual battle damage, but we can do just about everything up to that point."

The maintenance shop run by AC FIRST consists of a vehicle maintenance shop, welders, and even a weapon maintenance shop that fixes everything from crew served weapons to M9 pistol side arms.

They are capable of providing service on the vehicles including engine overhauls, drive train work, transmission labor and even some supplemental armor issues.

The shop also has field service representatives from most of the major MRAP manufacturers, who specialize in the

specific variations of the vehicle that are used in the Kunar province.

"Basically we help with anyone who comes in on a convoy," said Marrero. "We can fix them up, get them field mission capable and back out on the road so they can continue their mission."

The biggest customer for the shop is the Provincial Reconstruction Team, whose team mechanic Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Bryan Brys, a native of Terre Haute, Ind., is the sole military presence in the maintenance shop.

"They support me with everything that I need," said Brys, a Machinist's Mate 3rd Class, and the mechanic responsible for all of the PRT's vehicles. "There's a lot of things that if I can't handle it myself they'll help me out."

One particular incident involved a dead starter in one of

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Public warned that bats can be rabid

As people spend more time outdoors with the arrival of summer, Washington County Public Health officials are reminding residents of the potential dangers of bats and rabies.

"Only about 10% of bats tested in Oregon are positive for rabies," says Dr. Jennifer Vines, Deputy Health Officer for Washington County. "Nonetheless, we are advising people never to touch or handle a bat.

It's also important to keep your dogs and cats up to date on their rabies vaccinations."

A Gaston woman was recently bitten by a bat, that tested positive for rabies, as she removed the bat from her dog's mouth. She was given an antibody injection and is currently midway through the rabies vaccine series. Her dog, while up to date on its rabies vaccine, is being quarantined for 45 days

as a precautionary measure.

This is the first report of a rabid bat in Washington County in 2012. Since 2000, there have only been five reports of rabid bats.

If a bat bites you, call your health care provider immediately. If a bat is found on your property, keep children and pets away and contact Washington County Environmental Health at 503-846-8388. If your pet encounters a bat or is bitten by a wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Keep pets safe on July 4

Beware of fireworks. Fireworks are no blast for some pets, with many dogs becoming easily frightened by their deafening roar. The best option is to leave your dog indoors (not leashed in the yard) during the holiday weekend in a safe, secure, escape-proof room of the house with comfy bed, safe chew toys, food and water. Dogs that are crate trained will do better in a crate. Cats will do best in a room they are most comfortable in, with food, water and their litterboxes. Also consider leaving a TV or radio on

to drown out the sound of the fireworks and to provide familiar noises while you're out.

Be a comfort. Speak calmly to your dog and offer soft massage. TLC goes a long way in easing anxiety. Some dogs also get less anxious when they can have treats, but don't overdo it.

Confirm your pet's collar and I.D. information. Dogs can become easily frightened by loud celebrations on the 4th of July. Make sure yours is wearing a properly fitted collar with cor-

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Vernonia 4th of July events

This year's 4th of July activities in Vernonia include a parade at 5:00 p.m. (staging starts at 4:00 p.m. at city hall) with musician Jesse Cain on the Honorary Vernonian float. Cain will give a concert starting at 7:30 p.m. on the school grounds, with gates opening at 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$2 per person or \$5 per family, and all money collected will go to support Vernonia Youth Programs. Activities are sponsored by the

Vernonia Prevention Coalition and the Vernonia Rural Fire Dept.

Fireworks start at dusk (donations collected afterward) and the Boosters will once again be offering their famous Booster burgers. Vernonia Rural Fire Dept. will also have activities for the children in the crowd.

Come to Vernonia's Great American Bash Concert and stay for the fireworks.

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