

'Purpose' celebrating seven years of ministry with concert



From left: Tim Williams, Paula McDougale, Byron Gann and Scott King.

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As they approach their seventh anniversary of spreading God's word through music and their personal testimonies, the four members of the gospel group 'Purpose' (pictured at left) find it hard to believe seven years have passed since they first performed together.

"Where have seven years gone?" said Paula McDougale. "From the beginning, God began opening doors for us to step through to minister. Each year God has blessed this ministry team. We have seen people saved, healed, delivered and encouraged."

See 'PURPOSE,' Page 8

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BCDA board opposes Sunset review

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When the Bear Creek Development Authority was established in 1965, the agency was charged with the management and regulation of all development of the shoreline lands of its four lakes.

While the lakes and the Bear Creek Watershed serve the important purpose of providing drinking water to area residents and maintaining flood control, there has always been an economic aspect to BCDA.

In the minds of some BCDA board members, though, the agency has gravitated away from its original mission when it was created 53 years ago.

BCDA's original contract with the Tennessee Valley Authority calls for BCDA to own, manage and regulate all development of the shoreline lands for residential, recreational and industrial uses.

The Code of Alabama Sec. 33-15-6(2)(b) sets out BCDA's purpose and powers, which include: "Develop

and carry out a unified, comprehensive program of resource development designed to encourage and assist the economic growth of the area, which program shall not be inconsistent with official programs for statewide economic development."

After months of criticism from Morrow as to BCDA operations, the board took action to combat the Sunset review process. At the board's July 27 meeting, board member Peggy Fowler made a motion to submit to every Alabama legislator and those newly elected legislators in November a resolution stating the board's strong opposition to Sunset consideration. The board approved the motion, and the resolution will ask legislators to withdraw BCDA from Sunset review and/or take no action regarding the method of how the board is selected.

It's the economic growth aspect of the agency's duties that remains at issue and led, in part, to Rep. Johnny

See 'SUNSET,' Page 9

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Doris J. Barber, Mantachie, MS (formerly of Russellville), age 79
Died Friday, July 27, 2018. Graveside service held at Franklin Memory Gardens. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

Charles Thomas Fretwell, Russellville, age 67
Died Saturday, July 28, 2018. Funeral will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, August 1, 2018 at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Delmar Leon Fuller, Russellville, age 81
Died Monday, July 23, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Spruce Pine Cemetery.

John Calvin Pickett, Florence (formerly of Russellville), age 76
Died Friday, July 27, 2018. Graveside service held at Knights of Pythias Cemetery in Russellville. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

Dalton Ray Vickery, Russellville, age 81
Died Monday, July 30, 2018. Funeral arrangements had not been announced at press time. Pinkard Funeral Home was directing.

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Russellville's downtown district to be considered for National Register at public meeting on 9/27

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The City of Russellville's commercial historic downtown district will soon be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The announcement came last week from the Alabama Historical Commission. Properties listed in the national register are recognized as significant to the nation, state or community, considered in the planning of federal or federally assisted projects and eligible for federal and state tax benefits.

There will be a public meeting to consider Russellville's commercial historic downtown district on September 27 at 10:30 a.m. at the

Alabama Historical Commission, 468 S. Perry St., Montgomery.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) said he will be working to help the downtown district receive approval on the registry.

"As an Alabama legislator, preservation of our history has always been a top priority for me," Morrow said. "To hear the Russellville commercial historic district is being considered for nomination is very exciting news, and I will be doing everything that I can to make this happen for this well deserving site."

Additionally, the Easterwood House in Cherokee, also in Morrow's House district, will be considered the same day for nomination. For more info on the proposed nominations, contact Collier Neeley at 334-230-2696.

Vina inducts Beta members

Submitted to the FFP

At the end of this past school year, Vina High School inducted 35 students for their new chapter of the National Senior Beta Club.

Students were chosen in April based on a few criteria specifically focused on the four pillars of the National Beta Club: Achievement, Character, Leadership and Service.

Each student had to have at least an 80 academic average and receive two recommendations from teachers. Any students who were in in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension this school year were disqualified.

Sarah Jane Hattaway, the club sponsor, said she hopes that having this honor society will encourage other students to raise the bar with their academics and behavior.

The Vina Chapter also installed the new officers for the 2018-19 school year: Emma Humphres as president, Makenzie Lawler as vice president, Anna Belle Humphres as secretary, Sierra Ayers as treasurer and Issac Harper as committee counsel. These officers were nominated and voted on by their fellow Beta members.

The Vina Chapter also completed their first fundraiser for the Scholarship fund for the senior members. The students were able to raise enough money for four out of the seven senior members to receive scholarships. The recipients of the scholarships are chosen by all high school teachers and will be acknowledged at graduation.

The following is a list of all of the newly inducted Beta Club members by grade level.

9th grade

Cassidy Cameron
Amy Colvin
Austin Davis
Aaron Gann
Peyton Hughes
Avery McNeill
Braden Pardue
Kayleigh Scott

10th grade

Nash Humphres
Baylee Hutcheson
Kade James
Hannah Johnson
Sarah Johnson
Kaitlyn King
Tristan Moomaw
Jayla Puckett
Greta Raper

11th Grade

Sierra Ayers
Alea Baker
Issac Harper
Summer Hickman
Sarah Hughes
Anna Belle Humphres
Emma Humphres
Makenzie Humphres
Timothy Newell
Katherine Singleton
Dalton Williams

12th grade

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Trae Dill
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Carlan McNeill
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Honey Do: Bolt or screw?

One of my goals in writing this article is to address the great questions that have bewildered the handyman (or woman) for decades. For example, last week we looked at the names of sizes of nails. This week we attack another great controversial question: What is the difference between a bolt and a screw?

Okay, all you machinists, mechanics, carpenters and anyone else who may use fasteners, take a moment and think about it before you read the rest of this column. Thinking...thinking...thinking...please proceed.

What about machine screws that can be fitted with a nut? Machine screws are manufactured with the purpose of threading into "pre-threaded" holes and holding material together without the use of a nut. Therefore, it is technically a screw.

Is it the head or type of drive? Bolts, generally, have a hex head and are tightened with a wrench. But what about lag screws? They have a hex head.

Do all screws have "pointy" ends? Machine screws have blunt ends and threads like a bolt.

Is it the thread count? Screws and

bolts come in a variety of thread patterns from fine to standard to metric and on and on.

Here is the best answer that I can find, nuts.

Bolts are generally designed to go through two or more pieces of material and fasten with a nut on the other side. Screws are designed to thread into pre-made threads, or cut their own threads, to fasten material together without protruding from the other side.

Wait, wait, wait....what about machine screws that can be fitted with a nut? Yeah, that's what I said. It seems that machine screws are manufactured with the purpose of threading into "pre-threaded" holes and holding material together without the use of a nut. Therefore, it is technically a screw. Maybe if you get it long enough to go through and put a nut on it, it becomes a bolt. Maybe...

Anyway, that's the best I can explain it. I hope you sleep a little better tonight now that this is cleared up. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

113 WASHINGTON AVE. NW
RUSSELLVILLE, AL 35653
256-332-0255

The Franklin Free Press is published weekly by
Pilati Investments, Inc.
Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

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Ask Ken Coleman: First impressions

Question: Do you have any suggestions for how a leader can get to know his or her new team?

Answer: This is a great question. Many leaders walk into these kinds of situations with their ideas, their expectations and nothing else. They don't spend time building relationships with new team members. In the long run, this type of approach is self-defeating.

Start by meeting with each new team member for about half an hour. Ask them to describe their role, their goals and what they feel is expected of them. Find out what they think their own strengths and weaknesses are, too. Praise their strengths and how these factor into the overall success of the team, and let them know you'd like to develop a plan to address any weaknesses they feel they may have. Also, find out what each member thinks about the current team and its systems and processes. This shouldn't be a complaint session, but rather an opportunity to gather constructive feedback.

Many leaders walk into these kinds of situations with their ideas, their expectations and nothing else. They don't spend time building relationships with new team members. In the long run, this type of approach is self-defeating.

Finally, don't limit these meetings to work-related issues. Get to know each of your team members on a personal level. Ask about their families and their hobbies. Let them know you care and that they're real people—not just units of production.

What I'm talking about is a listening tour. As a leader, this will give you a massive relational buy-in right out of the gate!

Question: What is your advice for writing a follow-up letter to a potential employer?

Answer: A follow-up letter or email after a job interview should be short, professional, polite and to the point. In my mind, it should be a read of about 15 seconds that reminds them they like you.

Open the letter by letting them know you're grateful for the time they spent with you. Next, let them know how excited you are about the possibility of being part of their organization and contributing to their mission. Finally, wrap things up with a little more gratefulness. Thank them for their willingness to consider you, while adding that you're flattered to be considered for the position.

If it helps, think of it as making a sandwich with words. Look at your follow-up as an enthusiasm-and-excitement sandwich, with those ingredients stuffed between two slices of gratefulness. I believe this is the formula for the perfect follow-up!

*Ken Coleman is host of The Ken Coleman Show and the top-rated EntreLeadership Podcast, and author of One Question: Life-Changing Answers from Today's Leading Voices. An acclaimed interviewer and broadcaster, Coleman equips, encourages and entertains listeners through thought-provoking interviews, helping them grow their businesses, pursue their passions, and move toward a fulfilled purpose. You can follow him on Twitter at @KenColeman, on Instagram at @KenColemanShow, and online at kencolemanshow.com or facebook.com/KenColemanShow.



Ken Coleman



The numbers don't lie

Dear Dave,
Why do you think all debt is bad? Aren't some kinds of debt, like a mortgage or student loans, good?

Nathan

Dear Nathan,
It sounds like you're letting me know you think some kinds of debt are okay, instead of really asking for my opinion. When you ask a question that's really a statement, it's called a passive aggressive question. That's okay. You and I will now argue as best we can in a newspaper column.

Having read the bible and what it says about money, I can tell you there's not one place where it says debt is a good idea. Debt is not a positive thing. Any kind of debt is a burden, Nathan. It steals from your ability to save, build wealth and be generous.

It's not necessarily a question of what I think. I'm really just the aggregator of information we've gathered while walking with people through their financial issues. I've worked with tens of thousands of folks over nearly 30 years, everyone from billionaires and millionaires to broke people and those in between. In the process, we've collected a lot of data through formal research projects—I'm talking about a huge stockpile of statistics, facts and figures. And all that data shows debt is the biggest roadblock between people and wealth. I'm also a Christian. Having read the bible and what it says about money, I can tell you there's not one place where it says debt is a good idea.

So, all that information leads me to one conclusion. Debt is not a positive thing. The only kind of debt I don't beat people up over is mortgage debt, as long as it's a 15-year, fixed rate loan. Houses are wildly expensive, and I understand that most people can't save up to buy a

home with cash in a reasonable amount of time. Still, that doesn't make mortgage debt a good thing.

Any kind of debt is a burden, Nathan. It steals from your ability to save, build wealth and be generous.

Dave

Don't cash out retirement

Dear Dave,
I owe \$18,000 on my only car, and the payments are killing me. I'm also upside down on the vehicle by about \$4,000. I'm 31, and I've got exactly \$18,000 in my 401(k). Should I cash it in to pay off the car?

Monty

Dear Monty,
If you use your 401(k) they'll charge you a 10 percent penalty, plus your tax rate. That means you'll probably lose anywhere from 25 to 50 percent to the government. I don't know about you, but I think they already get too much of our money.

I love the fact that you want to get rid of your car payment, but I don't want you to cash out your retirement plan to make it happen. If you can pay off the car in 18 months or less, I'd advise living on a strict, written budget, and throwing as much money as possible toward the car debt until it's out of your life forever.

If it would take longer than 18 months to pay it off, I'd get rid of the car. To do this, you'd have to sell it for as much as you can get, then go to a local credit union for a small loan to cover the difference. If it's your only car, you'd need to ask for an extra \$2,000 to \$3,000 to buy a little beater to drive until you can save up and get into something better.

I hate all kinds of debt, Monty. But being \$5,000 to \$6,000 in the hole is a lot better than having \$18,000 in debt hanging over your head!

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 14 million listeners each week on 585 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*



Letters
to the
Editor

We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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What's Happening


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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS


 **R**ussellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling Boston butts during the Watermelon Festival weekend. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, August 18 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.


 **T**he Russellville Farmers Market is now open! Weekly schedule from now through October is Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 6 a.m.-noon. Manager is Greg Stanford. Located behind the A.W. Todd Centre.


 **P**hil Campbell Elementary School will host Back to School Parent Night this Thursday, August 2. Pre-K through second grade will be at 5 p.m., with third through sixth grade at 6 p.m. Parents, please meet in the PCES gym for a brief assembly before going to your child's classroom. The assembly for Pre-K through second grade will begin at 5 p.m. and the assembly for third through sixth grade will begin at 6 p.m.


 **N**orthwest-Shoals Community College will host a free financial aid workshop this Thursday, August 2 from 4-6 p.m. in Room 111 of Building 127 located on the Shoals campus. The workshop will assist anyone applying for college financial aid and especially those trying to enroll for the 2018 Fall semester. All participants are encouraged to bring a copy of their completed 2016 Federal Income Tax paperwork along with W-2 tax forms. The NW-SCC Financial Aid Office representatives will help participants apply for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), present information on various forms of financial assistance, and provide guidance toward enrolling for the fall semester. For more information related to college financial aid possibilities, contact the NW-SCC Financial Aid Office on the Shoals Campus at 256.331.5417 or email financialaid@nwscc.edu.


 **T**he Shoals Area Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Sheffield Room at Park Place (501 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield) this Thursday, August 2 at 6:30 p.m. Janice Nix will teach on healing. We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. All are welcome.


 **T**he Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833 will meet Thursday, August 2 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center on Ash Avenue. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For info, call 256-324-2317. Everyone is welcome!


 **Y**ou are invited to a benefit singing with "Still Here" and special guest this Friday, August 3 at 6:30 p.m. at My Father's House Church in Russellville. Everyone is welcome. Come and be blessed! For more information, call 256-460-1376.


 **R**ockwood Baptist Church will have VBS this Saturday, August 4 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The church is located on Highway 36 in Russellville. We will have classes for kindergarten through seventh grade. There will be water inflatables for play time, so bring a towel and join in the fun!

 **A**ttention all young ladies of Colbert, Franklin and Lauderdale counties entering 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the Fall of 2018!!! The Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program will be held this Saturday, August 4 at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama. Young ladies entering the 12th grade will have the opportunity to compete for cash scholarships as well as many other scholarships to colleges and universities. Also, each county winner will have the opportunity to represent her county at the state program in Montgomery in January of 2019. Young ladies entering the 10th and 11th grades have the opportunity to be "DYW Little Sisters." For more information, contact Susan Hargett at 256-710-9239 or Katernia Cole-Coffey at 256-332-8880, or check information on our Facebook page at Distinguished Young Women of Northwest Alabama, or email dshargett@aol.com. Other information and sign-up is available at www.DistinguishedYW.org.

 **C**ome worship with us! An old-fashioned tent and prayer revival will be held August 5-12 at the old Mars Hill Church grounds in Phil Campbell. Services will start at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday, August 5 and at 6 p.m. on each of the following nights. There will be singing and a prayer call every night. Everyone is welcome to join us! For more information, please call Rev. Kenneth Hawkins at 256-460-0420 or Rev. Vic Hawkins at 803-804-9406.

 **T**he next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be Thursday, August 9 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.

 **R**ussellville High School will host a "Meet the Tigers" Community Night on Friday, August 10. This event will be a great opportunity to meet members of the current Golden Tiger football team, volleyball team and cheer squad. The night will be highlighted by an Alumni Flag Football Game. RHS football coach John Ritter is inviting all former players and students of Russellville High School to participate in the game. Cost is \$10, and each participant will receive a T-shirt. The number of games and teams will be determined by participation. Contact Coach Ritter at John.ritter@rcs.k12.al.us for more information. July 31 is the deadline to be guaranteed a shirt, but participants can sign up through August 4.

 **R**estoration Church will hold its first annual Golf Tournament at Twin Pines Country Club on Friday, August 10 at 12 p.m. Format is a two-man scramble. Registration fee is \$130 per team. First and second place plus Worst of the Pack will receive prizes. For more information, call Coach Boutwell at the Pro Shop at 256-331-0270 or John Quillen at 256-277-8197.

What's Happening

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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

The Pebble Bluegrass Festival is set for Friday and Saturday, August 10-11 at the Pebble Community Center (100 County Road 3423 in Haleyville). All proceeds go to the community center. Good clean family entertainment. Music includes the Saltillo Circuit Riders. Weekend pass costs \$10. Friday only (7 p.m.) costs \$5. Saturday only (2 p.m.) costs \$7. Children ages 6-12 get in for \$2, and children under 6 get in free with an adult. All bands and pickers welcome. Concessions on grounds. Bring lawn chairs. Free camping in rough. Camper hookups 30 amp \$12/day, 50 amp \$12/day. For more info, call 205-269-2221.

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests Danika and the JEB at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville on Saturday, August 11 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. Call 256-335-4356. The KGB will be the featured act at a show sponsored by the Franklin County Arts Council at the Roxy on the second Saturday of each month.

You're invited to hear Carroll Roberson at Mountain Home Baptist Church (3600 Colburn Mountain Road, Tuscumbia) on Sunday, August 12 at 11 a.m. (preaching) and 6 p.m. (in concert). Roberson can be seen nationwide on the Church Channel, Dish Network and DirecTV. His television presence is growing and is reaching millions with the gospel. Carroll has recorded more than 60 albums. He has written over 300 songs and authored several books. Visit his website at www.carrollroberson.com.

The Cowboy Church of Franklin County (25100 Hwy. 24, Russellville) will hold a Youth Rally for students age 12 to 18 on Saturday, September 1 at 6 p.m. Chuck Wagon will serve the meal. There will be contests, door prizes and music, plus line dancing and arena games. Dress for weather. Arena events will take place rain or shine. Speaker will be Brian Welch. Best church sign wins a prize!

Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Friday and Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Karaoke at 7 p.m. on Thursday nights. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on left. For more information, please call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

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'PURPOSE' from page 1

Purpose will celebrate its seventh anniversary with a special concert this Saturday, August 4 at 6 p.m. at Gateway Church of God (formerly Russellville Church of God), 15988 Highway 43 North in Russellville. The concert will also feature special guests The Chandlers.

Admission is free, there will be giveaways, and there will be a free meal served after the service at the church.

Purpose consists of McDougale, Tim Williams, Byron Gann and Scott King. The group began singing at Gateway, their home church, in 2011. Before their first concert in July of that year, the members of Purpose weren't exactly brimming with confidence about their music.

"Why would anyone want to come out and listen to us sing?" queried Gann. "We all still laugh and say the same thing, because we know you can go to a lot of places to hear great talent."

When Purpose performs, it's more than just music. If it wasn't that way, there wouldn't be any performance at all.

When Purpose performs, it's more than just music. If it wasn't that way, there wouldn't be any performance at all.

"We never claim to be a 'singing group.' We are a ministry team," Williams said. "If we don't have the anointing moving in our services, then we will stay home. It's the anointing that makes people want to come be a part of a Purpose service."

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2017 saw Purpose release its first radio single,

Trust Him. The song was well-received for a first-time release and charted on three gospel music charts. The group's current release is *I Know Me*.

The Chandlers hail from Greenville, TN. They are a family group consisting of Tim and Lana Chandler and their daughters Tiffany and Lyndsey. The Chandlers have several songs in the national charts, including their current single *Ole Time Meetin'*.

With more than 100 services annually, Purpose continues to be a steady presence spreading the gospel across the southeast.

The verse at the heart of the group's name is Romans 8:28, which reads: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

For more information about Purpose or this Saturday's service, call 256-627-8784.

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Opioid issue running rampant

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

While Alabama often brings up the rear in many national rankings, two of the state's Congressional districts rank among the nation's highest in an undesirable study conducted by Harvard University.

Alabama's 4th Congressional District, which includes Franklin County, leads the nation with the highest opioid prescription rate. The state's 1st Congressional District ranks fifth nationally.

Last year, the *Free Press* printed a series of articles bringing to light how Franklin County ranked ninth among Alabama's 67 counties in opioid prescriptions, with 1.6 prescriptions written per person.

Similar numbers were found in the Harvard study, showing 166 prescriptions were written per 100 people in the 4th Congressional District.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay), who moderated a panel discussion on opioid addiction last year at the University of North Alabama, was shocked to see these results.

"This is an embarrassment and should be dealt with immediately," Morrow said. "I am asking that the governor's [Kay Ivey's] Opioid Council meet immediately and determine why two Congressional districts in Alabama lead the nation in this horrible epidemic."

U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, who has represented the 4th Congressional District for more than 20 years, somehow found a way to link his district's heavy opioid use to the popularity of President Donald Trump.

"I think this crisis, particularly in rural America, corresponds directly to President Trump's popularity in my district," Aderholt told *Alabama Today*. "People here have felt left behind and have seen their jobs and opportunities disappear. Due to the epidemic of depression, some people have turned to prescription drugs to dull the pain."

"However, I believe that President Trump's renewed focus on these areas and increasing jobs has resonated here strongly."

Congress budgeted more than \$4 billion in its fiscal year 2018 budget to battle the opioid crisis, the largest amount ever allocated to combat prevention, treatment and enforcement issues, according to Aderholt.

Alabama's 4th Congressional District, which includes Franklin County, leads the nation with the highest opioid prescription rate.

According to www.drugfreeworld.org, opioids are drugs that act on the nervous system to relieve pain. Opioid drugs bind to opioid receptors on cells in the brain and throughout the body. Some of the more common opioid brand names include Dilaudid, Demerol, Oxycontin and Percocet.

A 2015 study showed Alabama ranked highest in the nation in opioid prescriptions, with more prescriptions than people in the state. Alabama doctors wrote 5.8 million prescriptions for opioids in 2015, and the state's population was 4.859 million.

Nationally, 100 Americans die daily from opioid overdose, according to the Center for Disease Control. In Alabama, opioid overdoses have caused more deaths than overdoses from cocaine and heroin combined.

A recent look at the grand jury indictments for Franklin County shows how rampant drug charges are in Franklin County. Although not limited to opioids, of the 50 individuals charged in a recent grand jury term, 26 were facing drug charges, and many others were motivated by addiction in committing other offenses.

While neighboring counties including Marion, Winston, Lawrence, Lauderdale and Colbert counties have seen small decreases in the number of opioids prescribed to their residents in recent years, Franklin County saw a 6.1-percent increase in filled opioid prescriptions in 2016, earning the county a rank of fourth-highest in Alabama.

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Resident questions BCDA board on Twin Forks lease

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A Bear Creek resident confronted the Bear Creek Development Authority at its July 27 meeting about the board's proposed lease renewal with the Town of Bear Creek regarding Twin Forks Campground.

Mark Townsend addressed the board and asked when a public hearing would be set for the renewal of the lease agreement between Bear Creek and BCDA on the Twin Forks property.

"I just have one question—when is the public hearing coming?" Townsend said.

Townsend was referring to the lease extension that would allow the town to maintain and operate Twin Forks beyond the 30-year lease that expired in 2016. According to BCDA attorney Jeff Bowling, the BCDA board voted on September 9, 2008, to renew the lease for "the maximum allowable time according to the TVA/BCDA contract."

Bowling said TVA officials are still reviewing the proposed lease renewal.

"I'm still working on getting the final agreement together with TVA," Bowling said. "We are working under a board vote to extend the agreement."

Townsend questioned how the BCDA board could extend a lease in 2008 that didn't expire until 2016.

"The board hasn't got that authority, and you know it. How do you extend something when there's eight years left on it?" Townsend asked the

board. "Why worry about an extension if you had eight more years left?"

The issue of revenue from Twin Forks Campground was raised earlier this year by Bear Creek councilman Daniel Green, who maintains the town is receiving significantly less revenue than it should and that deposits are not being made in a timely manner.

"I just have one question—when is the public hearing coming?" Townsend said.

Bear Creek mayor Connie Morrison, who also serves as the BCDA board chairman, said she turned over all Twin Forks records to the town's attorney, Scott Hunt, since Green raised allegations about the revenue.

Green met with an official from the State of Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts on April 9 of this year to present information about bank deposits he believes were "significantly less than the revenue that should have been generated from Twin Forks' 80 campsites," Green said.

Townsend also questioned why the extension was signed by Morrison in both her capacity as Bear Creek mayor and as BCDA board chairman. Townsend maintains the BCDA board secretary, Barry Moore, must attest to any signature by the chairman in her official capacity, and that the city clerk for the Town of Bear Creek should have witnessed the mayor's signature.

"This is a serious matter, because we've been

trying to get answers down there for two years," Townsend said. "I hate it's come to this. Everything this board has done in relation to Twin Forks is illegal."

BCDA manager Shannon McKinney explained to Townsend that the board approved the extension back in 2008 for "the maximum allowable time allowable under the TVA/BCDA contract," and that TVA officials did not immediately know how long the maximum allowable time was, so there was no action taken at that time.

"TVA holds the ultimate authority," Bowling said.

Once TVA officials approve the language of the lease renewal, the matter will be placed on the agenda at the next board meeting. Bowling told Townsend the proposed lease renewal was a public document and he was welcome to see a copy of it.

In other action, the board:

- Conditionally approved a budget for fiscal year 2019 subject to Bowling researching a legal issue related to the amount budgeted for cabin cleaning and whether that expense is subject to the Alabama bid law. The board went into executive session to discuss this legal issue.

- Welcomed a new member, Dean Hubbard, the new appointee for Red Bay mayor Charlene Fancher.

- Heard a request from board member Mark McNatt to receive monthly expense/income statements rather than the quarterly ones board members now receive.

'SUNSET,' from page 1

Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) submitting the agency to the Alabama Legislature's Sunset Committee.

That committee will conduct an extensive review of BCDA during its 2019 session. The Sunset Committee has several options at its disposal, including a recommendation to amend the manner in which the BCDA Board of Directors is selected.

The Code of Alabama provides the 14-member board shall consist of one appointee from each of the Franklin, Marion, Winston and Colbert County commissions; one at-large appointee selected by the governor; and the mayor or other chief executive officer of the municipalities of Red Bay, Vina, Hodges, Hackleburg, Bear Creek Haleyville, Phil Campbell, Russellville and Cherokee.

Morrow, who has described BCDA as "a dysfunctional entity for some time," moved forward with the Sunset process because he describes a pattern of lack of proper development of the lands and assets in the Bear Creek Watershed area. Additionally, Morrow is frustrated with the lack of economic and recreational growth of BCDA property.

After months of criticism from Morrow as to BCDA operations, the board took action to combat the Sunset review process.

At the board's July 27 meeting, board member Peggy Fowler made a motion to submit to every Alabama legislator and those newly elected legislators in November a resolution stating the board's strong opposition to Sunset consideration. The board approved the motion, and the resolution will ask legislators to withdraw BCDA from Sunset review and/or take no action regarding the method of how the board is selected.

The vote was approved by all board members in attendance, with the exception of Mark McNatt, who abstained, and Dean Hubbard, who was attending his first meeting since being appointed and had no knowledge of the Sunset review

process.

Board attorney Jeff Bowling was asked to prepare the resolution and submit it to board members for their signatures.

McNatt, who was appointed in 2017 to the BCDA Board of Directors as Vina mayor D.W. Franklin's representative, said he began researching what the purpose and mission of BCDA was after he was elected to the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in the hopes of finding economic development opportunities.

"The initial vision had to do with economic development for the area," McNatt said. "This was a very poor area back in the day. Of course, drinking water and flood control were an important part of the mission, but the citizens and community leaders all recognized the need for economic development in this area."

"In today's busy world, not everyone can afford to take long vacations to the beach or mountains, so we need to look for ways to create opportunities for the citizens who live here."

McNatt believes BCDA's original vision was lost.

"There were many families who were displaced from their homes and land because of the development of the lakes with the stated goal of residential and economic development," McNatt said. "Their sacrifice was supposed to be for the betterment of the area."

In order to more effectively serve the public, BCDA needs to do a better job of tapping into how the public wants to see their lakes developed, McNatt explained.

"The first step is to educate the public on what the original intent and goals were for BCDA and what possibilities and opportunities exist with BCDA and ask them to give feedback to the board representatives," McNatt said. "I don't think most of the public understands what the original purpose of BCDA was as a state agency."

While there are still not monthly meetings, attendance at the BCDA's 2017-18 board meetings has improved. The board has seen a number of instances in recent years where a quorum could not be established at meetings.

McNatt believes there is too much focus on current budget expenses and maintaining the status quo rather than setting long-term development goals.

"Shockingly, there is no money set aside for development of any current facilities or any future developments in the watershed," McNatt said.

McNatt went on to point out that additional responsibilities listed in the Code of Alabama that BCDA was expected to perform.

Sec. 33-15-6(2)(b) reads in part: "In formulating and executing development plans, seek and utilize the assistance of appropriate federal, state and local agencies and of private citizens and citizen organizations."

McNatt explained that this section directs BCDA to actively reach out to other federal, state and local agencies to secure partnerships and funding as needed to achieve their developmental goals.

With more than 20 percent of Franklin County residents living below the poverty line, the Bear Creek lakes can be an asset to improve opportunities for Franklin County residents and to provide recreational opportunities that are local and inexpensive, McNatt said.

"We also want to get more tax money flowing into our area by developing more economic and tourism-based assets," McNatt said.

With the Sunset Committee review on the horizon, Morrow believes BCDA may finally start to become the organization it once was.

"Fiscal responsibility, transparency, services to our citizens and economic development is what this action is all about," Morrow said. "Let's all now begin the task of rebuilding BCDA."



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Franklin Free Press
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Twelve local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the 12 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of July 16-20 had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic

material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

All of the 12 Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The highest score was 99, received by Subway #24292, 15300 Highway 43, Russellville.

Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

•McDonald's, 15254 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 87. (Fryer cleaner stored above in use fryers, mold in drive-thru fountain ice chute).

•Dismals Canyon Fountain & Deli, 901 Hwy. 8, Phil Campbell, 89. (Handwashing facilities not reaching required 100 degrees in restrooms).

•Piggly Wiggly #87, 3625 Broad St., Phil Campbell, 90. (No verifiable proof of Foodservice employee reporting agreement).

•Willi's, 5680 Hwy. 243, Phil Campbell, 90. (No chemical test papers).

•Sonic Drive-In of Russellville, 15376 Hwy. 43 N,

Russellville, 90. (Mold in fountain heads).

•Daily Bread BBQ, 305 South Jackson Ave., Russellville, 93. (Failure to maintain hot dog chili at 135 or above).

•Piggly Wiggly #87 Deli, 3625 Broad St., Phil Campbell, 93. (No verifiable proof of food service employee reporting agreement).

•Kentucky Fried Chicken, 15045 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.

•Waffle House #2186, 14005 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.

•Speedy Pig, 13670 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 97.

•New Freedom Daycare, 508 St. Clair St., Russellville, 98.

Of the 28 inspections done in Colbert County from July 16-20 no restaurant scored below the satisfactory range.

The high score for the week in Colbert County was 100, received by Publix Dairy and Publix Deli, 3220 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

Updated ratings are available at www.food-scores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

Smoke-free policy for public housing agency facilities now in effect

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A new smoke-free policy began July 31 at all public housing agency facilities in the United States, but officials with the Russellville Housing Authority already had their policy in place prior to the deadline.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) set the policy in place two years ago but allowed a phase-in period for public housing agencies to create their own policies in accord with HUD guidelines.

The smoke-free policy applies to public housing agencies, meaning any state, county, municipality or other governmental entity or public body, or agency or instrumentality of these entities, that is authorized to engage or assist in the development or operation of low-income housing.

In Russellville, the four properties impacted by the new smoke-free policy are Eastside and Westside Apartments, Engle Drive Plaza and Washington Courts.

The Russellville Housing Authority has already set the policy in place to confirm with HUD guidelines. All tobacco products are now banned inside all dwelling units, indoor common areas and administrative office buildings. Additionally, the smoke-free policy must extend to 25 feet from all housing and administrative buildings.

According to HUD's guidebook on the smoke-free policy, such a policy is not discriminatory because smokers are not a protected class and do not have special legal status. And smokers are not prohibited from renting a unit. They may rent subject to the policy guidelines.

HUD finalized the policy on December 5, 2016 but allowed 18 months for public housing agencies to phase in their new guidelines.

According to HUD statistics, one quarter of U.S. Residents, approximately 79 million people, live in multifamily properties. Of those residents, 36 percent are "regularly exposed to secondhand smoke," according to a study by HUD.

In Russellville, the four properties impacted by the new smoke-free policy that took effect on July 31 are Eastside and Westside Apartments, Engle Drive Plaza and Washington Courts.

Although facilities like Village Square and Southwood Gardens Apartments are subsidized by HUD, they are privately owned and not subject to the new smoke-free policy, according to officials with those properties.

Texas Apartments Services, which owns Southwood Gardens, would have the option of implementing its own smoke-free policy but has not done so at this time, according to a Southwood Gardens spokesperson.

HUD also cites the damage caused to rental units by smoking as a reason for the new policy. The estimated annual savings of the smoke-free rule for public housing is expected to exceed \$154 million.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, smoking-related fires result in \$326 million in property damage each year.

HUD describes the role of public housing agency tenants in the smoke-free policy as threefold: Understand and comply with the smoke-free policy; sign a lease or addendum with the smoke-free policy; ensure that everyone living in the home and all guests comply with the smoke-free policy.



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RHS grad earns shot at West AL

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Houston Kitterman is no stranger to dealing with adversity. When it comes to thriving under difficult circumstances, he has first-hand experience.

Kitterman was a freshman at Russellville in September of 2014 when his older brother Austin, a Golden Tiger football player, was seriously injured in an ATV wreck. When officials from East Limestone High School made a donation to the Kitterman family the following week, it was Houston—wearing his brother's jersey—who accompanied his father Allan to midfield for the pre-game presentation.

Austin made a full and miraculous recovery, but the Kitterman family was dealt another blow last fall when Vicki (wife to Allan and mother to Tyler, Austin and Houston) was diagnosed with breast cancer. The news hit Vicki's

See 'WEST,' Page 18



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Houston Kitterman hit .328 with five home runs in two seasons at the varsity level, helping the Golden Tigers win 68 games and make two trips to Montgomery.

Dream Team

With Austin Kitterman bound for MTSU, six players from Russellville's first state title team are now playing college baseball at the Division I level

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

When Russellville baseball coach Chris Heaps filled out his lineup card for Game 1 of the 2015 Class 5A state finals against Helena, he did so in typical fashion. But the lineup the Golden Tigers put on the field that mid-May evening at Riverwalk Stadium in Montgomery proved to be anything but ordinary.

A little more than three years later, six Russellville starters from that game—first baseman Austin Bohannon, DH Jacob Green, pitcher Cody Greenhill, leftfielder Austin Kitterman, shortstop Reed Smith and centerfielder Judd Ward—are all playing Division I college baseball. It was, in retrospect, a truly remarkable collection of talent.

"It's kind of crazy," Kitterman said last week while traveling back to Russellville from a friend's bachelor party in Atlanta. "Cody is with us right now, and we've been talking about that. It's unreal—from that team alone, six guys are playing D-One ball. And Chad [Wray] went to South Alabama, so that's seven guys from one team who had the talent to play at that level. Plus we had guys who went Division II from that same team, like [Landon] Ezzell. And Russ [Carpenter], who dressed with us that year, is playing at the JUCO level. It's crazy that you had that much talent on that one team."

"It's great seeing all that hard work we did pay off. There were definitely days we didn't want to get up at 5:45 and work out, but we did because we wanted to get the best out of ourselves. We wanted to get the most out of us and be the best we could be. To see it pay off like this, honestly, it's not even believable."

"Knowing that six of your starters are playing Division I ball is just unbelievable."

Kitterman, who began his college career at Union University before transferring to Shelton State, recently joined his five former teammates at the Division I level, accepting an offer to play for Middle Tennessee. The Blue Raiders compete in Conference USA, so there's a chance Kitterman could find himself locking horns on the mound with fellow pitchers—and Shelton State alums—Green (who struck out 30 batters in 24 innings of relief as a junior at Western Kentucky last season) and Bohannon (who signed with UAB earlier this sum-



FILE PHOTOS

Kitterman came through in the clutch for the Golden Tigers against Faith Academy back in 2016 (above). After a strong season at Shelton State in 2018 (below, inset), he'll continue his baseball career at Middle Tennessee.

mer after going 5-3 for the Bucs in 2018).

"That's something that's gonna be pretty cool," said Kitterman, who went 4-1 with two saves, a 4.81 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 48.2 innings out of the bullpen for Shelton this past season. "I played with those guys since I was little. Competing against them will definitely be different than being on the same team, but we're all competitors. Wearing different jerseys and competing against each other, it's gonna be fun. It'll be fun to go against those guys."

Kitterman has never been one to shy away from a challenge. That inner drive is ultimately what helped him join Green, Bohannon, Smith (who signed with Troy after earning All-Conference honors at Dyersburg State Community College this past spring), Greenhill (who earned freshman All-America honors as Auburn's top reliever in 2018) and Ward (another Auburn freshman who made *SportsCenter* in June with a highlight-reel diving catch against Florida in the Super Regional) at the Division I level.

"I'm the biggest competitor there is," Kitterman said. "Making it to the D-One level has always been a dream of mine, and that's something I worked for every day, pushing myself to be the best pitcher I could be. I'm very thankful and blessed by God to be able to do that."

That Kitterman was going to continue his career

See 'DREAM,' Page 19

Star-Struck



COURTESY PHOTO

The North Alabama Elite Stars took second place recently in the 15U Division II AAU National Championships in Orlando, FL. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Carson Shaw of Colbert Heights, Jamarcus Robinson of Florence, Collin Bonner of Russellville, Will Bonner of Russellville, Keondra Hampton of Tupelo (MS); Back row (L to R) - Coach Siran Winston, David Harbour of Tupelo (MS), Chandler Dyas of Russellville, Kelton Petty of Austin High School, Camryn Williams of West Limestone, LaMarcus Miller of Tupelo, coach Terence Smith, coach Bobby Winston.

Local AAU team finishes second in nation

Submitted to the FFP

A local AAU team featuring three players from Russellville High School and one from Colbert Heights recently finished second in the 15U Division II AAU National Championships in Orlando, FL.

The North Alabama Elite Stars, coached by former Golden Tiger standouts Bobby Winston, Siran Winston and Terence Smith, won five out of seven games, defeating teams from New York, Florida, Delaware and New Jersey before falling 73-63 to Niagara (NY) in the tournament final.

Local players on the Elite Stars roster include Collin Bonner, Will Bonner and Chandler Dyas

from Russellville, Carson Shaw from Colbert Heights and Jamarcus Robinson from Florence.

Dyas, who averaged 8.0 points per game and made 31 threes as a freshman on the Golden Tiger varsity last season, competed in the three-point shootout at the tournament in Orlando and finished second. Will Bonner, a rising freshman at RHS, placed fourth.

After opening the tournament with a 63-61 win over Niagara, the Elite Stars faced the same team again in the championship game. The Stars got 15 points from Keondra Hampton of Tupelo High School and 11 apiece from Dyas and Camryn Williams of West Limestone, but Niagara still managed to win the rematch by 10 and take home the

tournament title.

The Elite Stars coaching staff, players and parents would like to thank all the local businesses and individuals who supported them along the way with donations. They were greatly appreciated.

In previous action:

Elite Stars 73 YSU Elite (NJ) 53

Kelton Petty of Austin High School led the way with 23 points as the Stars clinched a berth in the championship game. Chandler Dyas of Russellville and Camryn Williams of West Limestone each added 12 points.

Elite Stars 51 Explosion Blue (Delaware) 36

See 'NATION,' page 15

Belgreen volleyball puts finishing touch on strong summer

Submitted to the FFP

The Belgreen varsity and jayvee volleyball teams both finished off a strong summer by sweeping a pair of matches from Sheffield and Tharptown last Thursday.

The jayvee Lady Bulldogs started off the day by sweeping two straight sets from Tharptown. Bailey Oliver opened the match by serving 17 consecutive points for Belgreen before head coach Teresa Whitten subbed her out for a rest. The Lady Bulldogs followed up with a sweep of Sheffield, winning the two sets 25-5 and 25-9.

Earlier last week, Belgreen's jayvee team also won matches against Covenant Christian and Cherokee on Monday.

In varsity action last Thursday, the Lady Bulldogs closed out their summer schedule by routing Sheffield 25-6, 25-5 and then edging Tharptown in a much closer match by scores of 25-23 and 25-19. Also last week, Belgreen's varsity played three matches on Tuesday at Russellville against Class 5A Hamilton and Class 4A Wilson and Haleyville. The Lady Bulldogs beat Hamilton and Haleyville and came up one point short against Wilson. [All matches were played with a 30-minute running clock.]

Last Monday, the varsity Lady Bulldogs swept matches from Covenant Christian and Cherokee. Belgreen defeated area opponent Covenant by a final score of 25-10, 25-6.

Both the Belgreen varsity and jayvee teams will begin mandatory preseason practices on Monday, August 6. The varsity will open the 2018 season with a big tournament at Brewer High School on August 25. The jayvee will begin their season on August 28 at Sheffield.

'NATION,' from page 14

Will Bonner of Russellville led the Stars with 13 points. Keondra Hampton of Tupelo added 12 points, and Chandler Dyas of Russellville had 11.

Elite Stars 69 Team Walker (NJ) 57

Camryn Williams of West Limestone scored 14 points to lead the Stars. Keondra Hampton of Tupelo added 12 points, and Chandler Dyas of Russellville had 10.

West Melbourne 55 Elite Stars 51

Will Bonner of Russellville led the Stars with 18 points. Chandler Dyas of Russellville added 10, and LaMarcus Miller of Tupelo scored six.

Elite Stars 78 Florida Canes 31

Kelton Petty of Austin High School led the Stars with 18 points. LaMarcus Miller of Tupelo High School added 13, and Camryn Williams of West Limestone had eight.

Elite Stars 63 Niagara (NY) 61

Kelton Petty of Austin High School scored 21 points to lead the Stars in their tournament opener. LaMarcus Miller of Tupelo added 12 points, and Will Bonner and Chandler Dyas of Russellville each had 10.

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PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Head coach John Ritter (middle, in white shirt) and Russellville hosted teams from more than 20 schools for a 7-on-7 camp last Thursday. The Golden Tigers are scheduled to kick off fall camp on Monday, August 6, with the 2018 season opener set for August 31 versus Deshler.

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COURTESY PHOTO

The Russellville Park and Rec 8U softball All-Stars finished third in the ARPA state tournament last month. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Ansley Willis, Bri McCulloch, Erin Grimes, Maria Vela, Sarah Kate Wilson; Middle row (L to R) - Taitum Bishop, Chloe James, Kaylee Suggs, Brookelynn Davis, Khrystian Huerta; Back row (L to R) - Heath Grimes, Montrae McCulloch, head coach Brandon James, Stephanie Wellington.

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‘WEST,’ from page 13

youngest son especially hard.

“When I found out back in September, it broke my heart,” said Houston, who had just begun his senior year when the diagnosis was delivered. “It killed me, it really did. I’ve been through a lot of struggles, with what happened to Austin and everything, and when I found out about my mom it tore me up. I was in shock, for real, for a month or two.”

Already looking forward to helping a reloading RHS baseball team defy the odds and pursue a fourth consecutive state championship, Kitterman immediately began thinking of ways to honor his ailing mom.

“Baseball was coming up, and I knew we had a lot of goals set ahead of us,” he said. “People were doubting us and stuff, and I told Mom, ‘I’m gonna play this season just for you.’”

Kitterman inscribed each of his three Golden Tiger baseball caps with the phrase *#PlayforMommy*. He hit three home runs as a senior, and after crossing home plate on each one he blew a kiss to Vicki (who, as of this past Saturday, was continuing to take treatments every three weeks).

“I dedicated this season, for real, to her,” said Kitterman, who wound up batting .340 with a team-high .459 OBP and earning All-State honors at third base for a Russellville team that won 30 games and made it back to Montgomery before falling to Faith Academy in the Class 5A finals. “Every night I played for her, and I went as hard as I could. It was special. It could have been so much worse. She could have passed away. I’m grateful and thankful she got to see me play my senior year and see me graduate. That means a lot. Family means a lot. It’s family over everything.”

“She was proud of me, and that’s all I cared about.”

When you’ve seen your brother in a medically induced coma and your mom has had cancer, the term ‘adversity’ begins to take on a whole new meaning. Still, Kitterman admits that not getting moved up to the varsity level as a sophomore in 2016 was a tough pill to swallow. [It was, however, understandable; the 2016 Golden Tigers featured five future Division I players—including Austin Kitterman—and won a school-record 48 games. Needless to say, roster spots were hard to come by.]

“Yeah, it hurt really bad, but it just motivated me to work harder,” Houston said. “I had to prove myself and earn my spot.”

And so he did. Kitterman worked his way into a regular role as a junior in 2017, batting .310 for the season and smacking a walk-off home run in an area title-clinching win over East Limestone. When reliever Rudy Fernandez induced a groundball with two outs in the seventh inning of Game 3 of the state finals against Faith Academy, it was Kitterman who came charging in from second base to make the play that sealed a 7-4 win and a Russellville three-peat.

“Rudy came in to pitch, and Scooter [Skylar Holland] had to come back to play first,” said Kitterman, who typically held down the hot corner for the Golden Tigers. “Cody [Greenhill] went to third, and I went to second. When they hit that ball to me, my heart dropped for a second, even though it was an easy groundball. The runner [from first] tried to mess me up a little, and he almost did. But I was able to make the play.”

“That was my first state championship, for me. It felt so good. I’ve never had a feeling like that in the world, where you finally get what you’ve always wanted and what you’ve worked for all year.”

Kitterman experienced a similar feeling of euphoria earlier this summer. Steadfastly pursuing his goal of playing at the next level, he traveled with Allan to Livingston to work out for the coaching staff at West Alabama. The tryout had been in the works for weeks, but first Kitterman’s travel ball schedule with Over the Mountain Baseball in Birmingham and then the Fourth of July holiday forced a series of postponements.

“They had been trying to get me to come for a while, and we kept having to push it back and push it back,” Kitterman said. “I was starting to get nervous. I was thinking, ‘They’re not gonna like me if I keep pushing it back.’ But we finally got it set up, and I performed well. They liked what they saw, I guess.”

Kitterman fielded 50 to a hundred groundballs, first at third base and then at second. He then stepped to the plate and took five rounds of batting practice, seeing roughly 75 pitches from West Alabama assistant coach David Steed. It’s worth noting that, at that point in the process, Kitterman had not received a scholarship offer from any school; Shelton State and Lurleen B. Wallace had offered the chance to walk on, and he was planning to pursue one of those options if nothing else materialized.

In short, Kitterman stepped into the box at the tryout in Livingston with nothing less than his collegiate future on the line. Suffice it to say, he rose to the occasion.

“It was probably the best round of BP I’ve had in my life,” said Kitterman, who in two seasons of varsity baseball at Russellville collected 80 hits and batted a crisp .328 with five home runs, 42 RBIs, 55 runs and more walks (39) than strikeouts (28). “Everybody told me that most college coaches love back-side hitters, guys who hit line drives up the middle and the other way, so I tried to do that. I was hitting the ball up the middle and to the right side.

“I tried to pull the ball a little bit, just to show some power, but mostly I just tried to stay up the middle and the other way.”

As he stroked line drive after line drive around the field, Kitterman knew something special was taking place.

“Oh yeah,” he said last week. “I was thinking, ‘This feels good.’ That’s how I knew it was a God thing. I was like, ‘This has to be a sign.’”

After the BP session concluded, Kitterman toured the UWA campus, checking out the cafeteria and the dormitories. The Tigers offered him a scholarship on the spot, and he accepted a few days later.

“I called and told them that West Alabama is where I wanna be,” Kitterman said. “It was a great feeling—kind of like the feeling I had when I got the last out in the state finals. It feels great to achieve your goals. That’s what you always wanna do. It’s been my dream to play college baseball at the next level. They were the only college that offered me a scholarship, and they’re only two-and-a-half hours away from home and my family. That really made it an easy choice for me.”

“It meant the world to me. I’m so excited and grateful for this opportunity. Hard work pays off, and I’m an example of that.”

In Kitterman’s two seasons on the varsity at RHS, the Golden Tigers won 68 games, nine playoff series and one state championship. He’s grown accustomed to winning, and the same can be said of West Alabama, where the Tigers have gone 577-336 and made six NCAA regional appearances in 17 seasons under head coach Gary Rundles.

“I really like the environment,” Kitterman said. “They’re a winning program, and I want to win. I love that about them.”

Everybody loves winning; Kitterman loves *grinding*. He understands that hard work on the front end only makes the result on the back end all the more enjoyable.

“That’s what I love about it,” he said of his high school baseball journey. “I worked so hard, and I got to win a state championship. That means so much to me. It was unreal that I actually got to feel that same feeling that my brother and Bo [Austin Bohannon] and Reed [Smith] and those guys got to feel. I loved that.”

Kitterman also took great satisfaction in helping the Golden Tigers get back to Montgomery this past season, even though they ultimately fell short of bringing home a fourth Blue Map.

“We wanted to prove people wrong,” he said. “We knew people were gonna doubt us because of all the talent we lost. The first day we all got back, Coach Heaps told us, ‘What it’s gonna take for us to get back to Montgomery is for all of us (not just a few of us, but *all* of us) to put two feet in—not just one foot, but *two* feet—and really buy into what our coaches wanted us to do. We all came together toward the end of the year and started playing the right way, started having good chemistry.”

“We went on a great run in the playoffs, but it wasn’t easy. We went through some battles. We went through some fights. The thing I loved most about this team was the way we busted our butts. This team never quit. In the third round of the playoffs against Springville, down 14-0 [in the third inning of Game 1], we were still gonna fight until the last out. We almost came back and won that game, and then we did come back to win the series.”

“This team overcame a lot of adversity this year. We wanted to come out with another [state championship] and make history, bring back another Blue Map, but just to make it back to Montgomery was a big accomplishment for us. Most high school players can’t say they played in the state finals. [Landon] Ezzell played in four, and I can say I played in two. You can’t take that for granted.”

Ever the competitor, Kitterman is already looking forward to Gulf South Conference battles with UAH, where Ezzell—his Russellville classmate and long-time friend—signed to play earlier this summer.

“Getting to hook up with him once a year for four years will be a great experience,” Kitterman said. “He’s been one of my good buds since I was three.”

After narrowly missing out on playing with Austin at RHS, Houston nearly got the chance to play alongside his brother at the college level. Austin received a scholarship offer from West Alabama way back in the fall of 2017, but he ultimately chose to play at the Division I level at Middle Tennessee.

Even though they won’t be teammates, Austin certainly sounds proud of Little Bro.

“It’s definitely humbling for me and for him as well, just seeing how he worked so hard throughout his time at Russellville—especially his junior and senior year, taking over that leadership role,” Austin said. “It was great to see him and those guys do what they did. They took off running, and they didn’t let anything get in between them and their goal of getting back to Montgomery.”

“Just getting to talk to him while I was playing in college and see how he was doing on and off the field was great. I’m excited for him. I know he had some JUCO offers, but when West Alabama called him I was tickled to death. He’s reached his goal of playing at the next level. I’m very proud.”

'DREAM' from page 13

after leaving Shelton State was never in doubt; the only question was where. He had talked with Auburn, Alabama and Mississippi State, and offers had come in from virtually every school in the Gulf South Conference and also Louisiana-Monroe. The last school to call him and express interest was Middle Tennessee, where new head coach Jim Toman was hired on June 20. The Raiders brought on veteran pitching coach Kyle Bunn (who had spent the previous four seasons on Indiana's coaching staff) in mid-July, and Bunn subsequently reached out to Kitterman.

"It's great seeing all that hard work we did pay off," Kitterman said.

"There were definitely days we didn't want to get up at 5:45 and work out, but we did because we wanted to get the best out of ourselves. We wanted to get the most out of us and be the best we could be. To see it pay off like this, honestly, it's not even believable. Knowing that six of your starters are playing Division I ball is just unbelievable."

"It was kind of all last-minute," Kitterman said. "I had been talking to a few schools, and [Middle Tennessee] had just hired a new coach and a whole new staff. Their pitching coach, who came from Indiana, reached out to me and said they wanted me to come visit. They got to see some video of me pitching in the state tournament [for Shelton], and they liked what they saw, so they shot me an offer.

"They offered me a lot of [scholarship] money. I went on a visit, and I really enjoyed it. It felt like the right place for me, and the right timing. I can go there and have a chance to pitch and pitch a lot. I'm coming into a new environment with a new staff. They have a lot of guys coming back from last year's team, and a lot of new guys coming in. They're in a good, tough conference, a conference they ran for a long time. It's been a while since they've played at the level they played at for a long time, but the coaching staff feels like they can get back to that legacy that they held for so long.

"It all happened really fast. It came down to the number they offered me. It just felt like home. It's not too far away from home [MTSU is located in Murfreesboro, roughly three hours from Russellville], and they offer the major I was looking for, which is Special Ed. Not every school has that. It just felt right."

When Bunn and the Raiders watched video of Kitterman's outing from May 12 against Chattahoochee Valley [he worked a season-high 5.2 innings, allowing two earned runs and striking out a season-high five batters in an 8-6 loss], they saw a vastly different pitcher than the one who was a side-arming reliever for Union as a freshman in 2017. Shelton State coach Bobby Sprowl—a former major leaguer and renowned pitching guru—raised Kitterman's arm slot to more of a traditional three-quarters delivery and helped him squeeze a few more miles per hour out of his fastball.

"I always threw harder than everybody when I was younger," Kitterman said last week. "When I was on the varsity in the eighth grade, I was throwing 85. My senior year of high school, I was still throwing 85. I was like, 'I don't really understand this.' It was kind of crazy.

"Coach Sprowl talked a lot about pressure points on the baseball and my finger placement when I'm throwing my fastball. You wouldn't think that changing where your fingers are on the ball would make such a big difference, but it did. Instead of throwing that split-fastball like I did my freshman year [at Union], I brought my fingers together. All of a sudden my fastball was four to five miles an hour faster."

The new arm slot, the new grip and an entire offseason of sweat equity helped Kitterman unlock his potential on the mound. Shelton State opened the 2018 season with three straight weekend series in Florida, and no one was more surprised than Kitterman to see him touch 88-89 on the gun.

"I thought, 'Okay, I really don't know how I did that,'" Kitterman said. "Last summer, when I made my decision to go down to JUCO, I had a goal of playing Division I baseball. I started working really hard, busting my tail, working out and really getting after it. I saw my velocity increase a lot. My biggest goal was trying to locate my fastball to both sides of the plate and to throw my slider in any count, no matter if it's 3-1 or 0-2.

"Coach Sprowl didn't just want me to throw a get-me-over slider on 3-1. He wanted to see guys swing and miss at my slider on 3-1 because they think it's a fastball. He wanted it to be deceptive enough and hard enough that I wasn't just trying to throw it for a strike—I was trying to get a swing and a miss.

"That's probably where I've grown the most—being able to command my fastball to both sides of the plate, and being able to get swings and misses with my slider in any count."

That slider is different than the one Kitterman used to vanquish Faith Academy hitters in his final outing at Russellville, a gutsy complete game effort in a 5-3 win over the Rams in Game 3 of the 2016 state finals. Back then, Kitterman's slider registered in the mid-70s and was more of a sweeping breaking ball with lots of horizontal movement; now he throws the pitch

anywhere from 81 to 83 miles per hour with sharp downward bite.

"That pitch probably had more right to left movement on it," Kitterman said of the slider he threw as a Golden Tiger senior. "Now it's more of a sharp breaking ball that really drops—but it also moves east to west, too. It's more deceptive. When you throw that pitch harder, it's not gonna move as much, but it changes the eye level of the hitter and they swing over it."

Armed with his new arsenal, Kitterman struck out 9.8 batters per nine innings in his lone season at Shelton, the second-best strikeout rate on the staff among pitchers who threw at least 25 innings. Kitterman dedicated each and every one of those K's to his mother, Vicki, who was diagnosed with breast cancer on September 28, 2017—three years to the day from when Austin sustained life-threatening injuries in an ATV accident. [Doctors feared his athletic career was finished, but he made a full recovery and was back on the baseball field for the Golden Tigers in less than six months.]

"She's been my real driving force through this past season," Kitterman said of his mom, who is currently on a once-every-three-weeks treatment schedule. "She did what she could to get to my games, and just getting to see her was great. I got a tattoo on my arm, and it's a daily reminder that there's something bigger than baseball out there driving me to be the best man I can be, on and off the field. She's my blessing. God is doing a work in her just like He did in me in 2014.

"There's nothing like a mother's love, and I've really felt that over the past couple of months. She's excited that I'm getting to live out my dream—not just on the field but also in majoring in Special Ed, which not every school offers. She's very excited about that. She's happy for me."



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