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Russellville, AL 35663



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

A leaky HVAC unit has flooded the interior of Marilyn Young's Ridgecrest apartment in Russellville on several occasions.

## Ridgecrest resident continues fight with management over unlivable conditions

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

"A hellhole."

That's how Marilyn Young describes her two-bedroom apartment at Ridgecrest Apartments in Russellville and the battle she's had with the complex management since she and her son moved in on April 25, 2016.

And more than two years later, Young and her disabled child continue to reside in conditions that she believes are unsafe.

Among the conditions in Young's apartment are an infestation of bedbugs that two different pest control companies have diagnosed but not treated, a rusted hot water heater full of holes, an HVAC unit that leaks so badly it fills

See 'RESIDENT,' Page 8

**Johnny Mack MORROW STATE SENATE**

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## "God experiences" inspire local writer to share her story

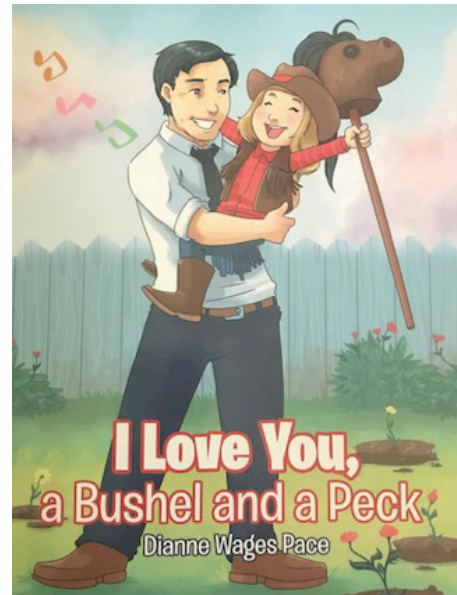
John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

As an accomplished writer and author of two children's books, you might say Dianne Pace calls upon her life experiences for inspiration in her writing.

But she describes the ideas for her writing as coming from God experiences, rather than life experiences.

And that includes Pace's newest book, *I Love You, a Bushel and a Peck*. Pace will hold a book signing this Friday (5-7 p.m.) and Saturday (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival. She will set up in front of

See 'WRITER,' Page 11



Dianne Pace will be signing copies of her new book at the Watermelon Festival.

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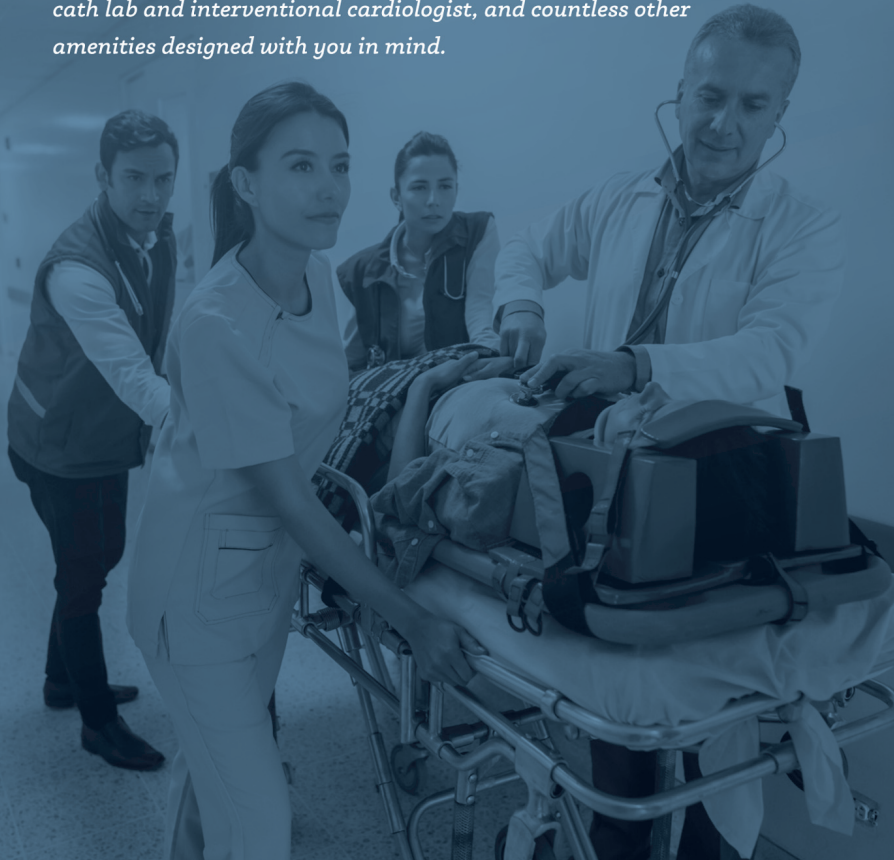
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**Sharon "Sissy" Kaye Cothrum,**  
Russellville, age 49  
Died Wednesday, August 8, 2018.  
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Hyde Cemetery.

**Betty Rogers Robison,**  
Russellville, age 88  
Died Wednesday, August 8, 2018.  
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**Jeanette Zills Hutchins,**  
Russellville, age 90  
Died Tuesday, August 7, 2018.  
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

**Arlenia D. Seay,** Russellville, age 94  
Died Monday, August 6, 2018.  
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

**Jason Keith McCormack,**  
Tuscumbia, age 43  
Died Saturday, August 11, 2018.  
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Poplar Creek Cemetery in Leighton.

**Cathy Britnell Wiginton,**  
Russellville, age 63  
Died Monday, August 6, 2018.  
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Mt. Pleasant Methodist Cemetery in Newburg.

**\*Sale good August 15 through August 21\***

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## Finding a way forward



COURTESY PHOTO

Spruce Pine native and Franklin County student Hannah James (left) stands with YSP advisor Cynthia Scott.

## Youth Success Program propels local student in a life-changing direction

Submitted to the FFP

PHIL CAMPBELL — For some youth, finding a way forward into successful adult employment seems impossible. The Youth Success Program (YSP) at Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) has proven to be exactly the lifeline Hannah James of Spruce Pine needed for her future.

For James, advanced homeschool classes through 11th grade helped her make headway academically, but the isolated experience and difficult subject matter left her burned out and ready for a change. Rather than continue in homeschool, she entered the Youth Success Program after learning of the free GED program offered through NW-SCC.

Knowing that a structured school system would be a very different experience from homeschool, James was nervous about entering the classroom environment. Her uneasiness dissipated quickly upon meeting NW-SCC Adult Education instructors Gloria Butts and Kathy Hutcheson, along with YSP advisor Cynthia Scott, on the NW-SCC Phil Campbell campus.

James attended free GED preparation classes every weekday for several months before obtaining her GED.

"The instructors helped so much by walking me through challenges in the material step-by-step to help me understand," said James. "They also welcomed me with open arms and made me feel more comfortable meeting new people."

Also, James worked with Scott to set goals, find her interests and determine her next steps.

"Mrs. Cynthia made me feel like I could talk to her about anything," said James. "From personal issues to college questions, I could come in and talk to her about it."

After completing her GED, James earned a financial incentive from YSP. She then enrolled at NW-SCC for her first college class at the age of 17. Through her successful participation in YSP, James received free tuition for Math 110, which she completed this past May.

When asked what she would say to someone about the NW-SCC Youth Success Program and the free Adult Education GED preparation classes,

See 'SUCCESS,' Page 7

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# Honey Do List: The 'vibe'

I know, I know...the kids have just started back to school, and a lot of you parents are trying to catch your breath from all the preparations, as you should. But when you've realized how bored you are without the kids around all day, it will be time to make plans for fall projects and, yes, the holidays.

Now is the time to look around and see what projects you would like to tackle. A little cleaning, a little paint and a repair here and there have the potential to change the entire atmosphere in your home.

Have you ever thought about how the color of paint in a room can change your whole mood? A bedroom decorated with soft colors can help you rest better. A play room

**Have you ever thought about how the color of paint in a room can change your whole mood? A bedroom decorated with soft colors can help you rest better. A play room can come alive and be more fun with bright, vivid colorful walls, or maybe a bright accent wall. A formal living room can become a better place to entertain guests with more dignified color and decor. Think about the "vibe" you want to create in each room of your home.**

can come alive and be more fun with bright, vivid colorful walls, or maybe a bright accent wall. A formal living room can become a better place to entertain guests with more dignified color and decor.



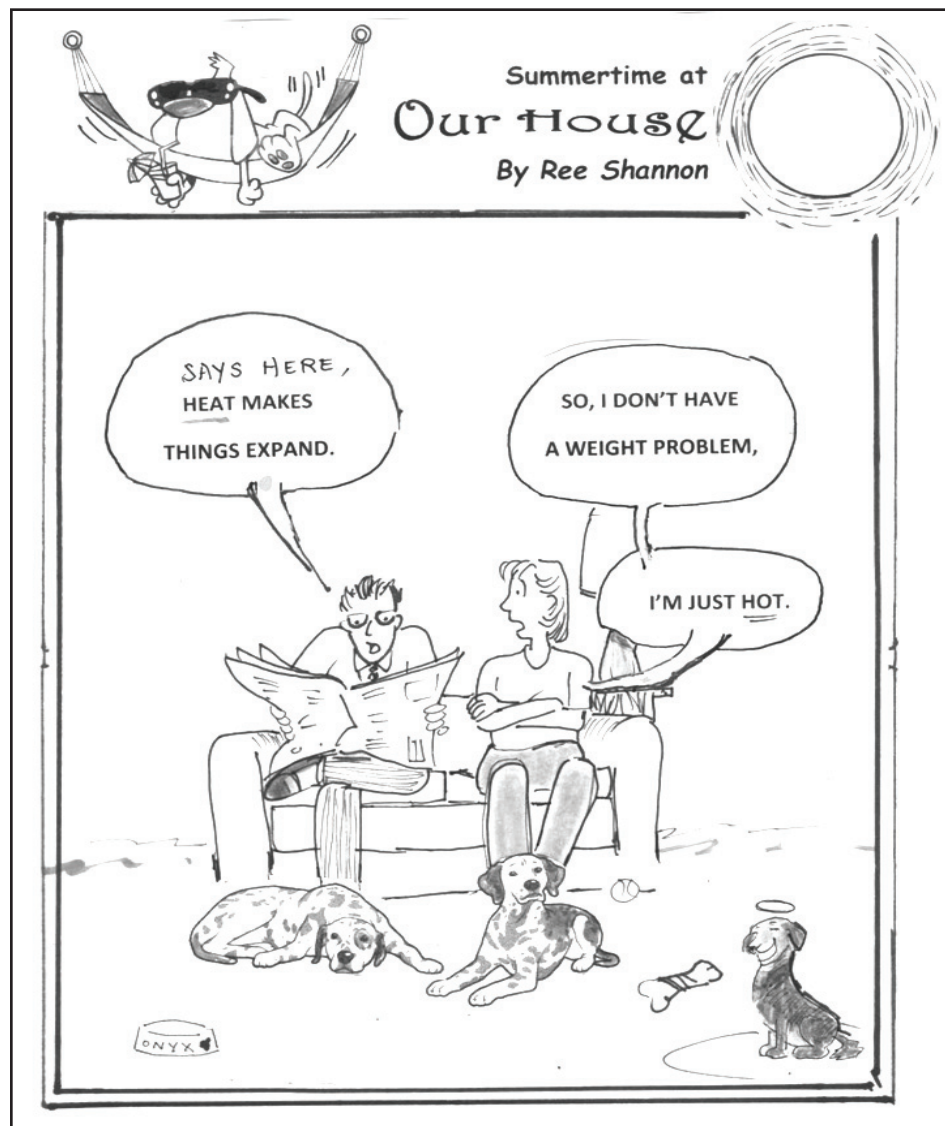
Doug Green

Don't just pick out a pretty color. Think about the "vibe" you want to create in each room of your home. Do you want it to be relaxing, exciting, fun, playful, restful...? The only limit is your imagination.

Consider using more different colors, even in a formal setting. Small areas of contrast can really help your creation. Remember, there's no wrong way, just your way, and these days individuality is the most popular style.

The first step is the inspiration. The second step is the motivation. The third step is the preparation. This includes repairing walls, filling nail holes and leveling dents. A hammer, a putty knife, a little spackling and some sandpaper will be needed, for sure.

Next week, wall prep. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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### Publisher

John Pilati

### Executive Editor

Mike Self

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

### Sales Representatives

John Pilati

### Content Contributors

Mike Self, John Pilati, Ree Shannon,  
Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton,  
Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

### Graphic Design

Jason Hill

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The *Franklin Free Press* is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The *Franklin Free Press* reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

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# Paying off student loans quickly

If you're between the ages of 25 and 35, chances are you have student loans you're still paying off. That's just the sad reality of my generation.

As soon as we graduate from college, most of us have Sallie Mae hunting us down for her monthly payments. If you're in that situation, I want you to do this one thing: Pay off those debts as quickly as possible!

Here are some practical ways to get those student loans off your back as fast as you can:

#### 1. Make (and stick to) a budget

Yes, a budget! If you have no idea where your money is going every month, then it's impossible to make sure you're putting that hard-earned cash toward things that matter—like getting out of debt. With a monthly budget, you should be making sure your basic needs are taken care of—food, housing, utilities, transportation—and then paying off as much debt as possible. The budget will help you see how much you can put toward that debt.

**All the money you send to Sallie Mae every month is money that could be going toward building your future—emergency savings, a down payment on a house, and retirement.**

#### 2. Pay your smallest debts first

If student loans are your only debts, then get moving on them. But if you have other debts like credit cards or a car payment, list all your payments on paper (including the student loans) and pay them off from smallest to largest. By paying off the smaller ones first, you'll get a couple of quick wins that will help you stay motivated.

#### 3. Consolidate your debts

This is the only time I will ever tell you to use debt consolidation. A few guidelines: Make sure you consolidate into an interest rate that's lower than the one you have now. Also, mentally prepare for a larger balance on your one loan. Two \$20,000 loans would consolidate into one \$40,000 loan.

#### 4. Take an extra job or work overtime

I know, I know. If you're working a full-time job, the thought of working even more hours might wear you out. But remember, this is just temporary. The faster you get these loans paid off, the faster you can return to a sense of normalcy in your life. Moving forward, I want you to focus as much as possible on getting rid of those loans. All the money you send to Sallie Mae every month is money that could be going toward building your future—emergency savings, a down payment on a house, and retirement.

Don't let student loans hang around any longer. Be intentional, make a plan and knock them out as quickly as possible!

#### About Rachel Cruze

As a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author and seasoned communicator, Rachel Cruze helps people learn the proper ways to handle money and stay out of debt. She's authored three best-selling books, including *Love Your Life, Not Theirs* and *Smart Money Smart Kids*, which she co-wrote with her father, Dave Ramsey. You can follow Cruze on Twitter and Instagram at @RachelCruze and online at [www.rachelcruze.com](http://www.rachelcruze.com), [youtube.com/rachelcruze](http://youtube.com/rachelcruze) or [facebook.com/rachelramseycruze](http://facebook.com/rachelramseycruze).



Rachel  
Cruze





### A burden to help?

Dear Dave,  
Do you believe that the adult child of a senior citizen who is physically and mentally healthy but has neglected to plan for retirement should be burdened with providing financial assistance to that parent?

Robbie

Dear Robbie,  
Based on the wording in your question, I can only believe that you don't think the adult child should be "burdened" to provide this assistance. My guess is you're talking about one of your own parents. I understand that you might be aggravated with a parent who has been irresponsible with their money. But in my mind there's a bigger question. How big is the burden?

I talked to a guy recently who was making \$1.5 million a year. He was questioning whether he should help his dad—an older man in poor health, who didn't handle his money well—by giving him \$1,000 a month. There's no question you give that guy money. You're making millions, but you don't want to help your sick dad? Come on! But if you bring home \$2,000 a month and your family is barely getting by, you're not morally required to financially take care of a parent who was irresponsible with their money.

It's all relative. Do you have the money? Can you provide this help without placing an undue burden on yourself and your family? If the answer is yes, you may be asking more about your own aggravation than any sort of moral obligation.

But no, you're not morally obligated to destroy your own life, or your

family, to take care of a relative who didn't take care of themselves financially.

Dave

### Separate emergency fund?

Dear Dave,  
I've going to be debt-free with a full emergency fund in pace by the end of the year. I'm going to get a dog after that, but I wanted to make sure I did it the right way and was in good financial shape before making that move. Is a separate emergency fund for pets a good idea?

Scott

Dear Scott,  
My wife and I love animals. We've had a least one dog the whole time we've been married. Still, I think a full emergency fund of three to six months of expenses will cover you and your pet.

You go through some expense as a pet owner, along with happy, wonderful times and heartbreaking things, too. We lost our golden retriever recently, and I can tell you that was really hard on everyone. You love them like they're family, but you still have to use common sense sometimes and remember that they're animals and not human beings. Part of that includes spending reasonable amounts of money on them and—in some unfortunate cases—doing things with the animal's best interest, not our own desires, in mind.

What is a reasonable amount? That depends on how stable you are financially. It's really a ratio question of expense to means. But no, I wouldn't recommend a second emergency fund just for pets.

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 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

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 Russellville 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.


 The 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.


 In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the National Defense Education Act, you are invited to attend a program entitled *Carl Elliott: A Profile in Courage* on Monday, August 20 from 6-7:30 p.m. at the University of North Alabama Performance Center. Elliott was the winner of the first Profile In Courage Award. Please make plans to attend this special event.


 Waldrop Church in Haleyville will hold a special 100th Anniversary event on Sunday, August 26 from 2-4 p.m. This service will highlight Waldrop Church members and their families over the last 100 years! Please encourage extended family members and relatives to attend. There will be a museum of artifacts and historical documents, plus display boards depicting pastors and church events down through the years. Everyone is invited to enjoy a potluck lunch from 12-2 p.m., followed by time to view the display boards and church artifacts.


 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. 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!


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


 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville Saturday, September 8 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.


 The next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be Thursday, September 13 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.


 The American Cancer Society Relay for Life of the Shoals invites you to their 2019 Kick-Off, as they Turn the Page on Cancer! The event will be Thursday, September 13, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Listerhill Credit Union Auditorium (4790 East Second Street, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661). A light meal will be provided. There will be special guest speakers, an awards presentation for outstanding volunteers and door prizes for attendees. Please RSVP to melmax34@yahoo.com. Funds raised help the American Cancer Society attack cancer in dozens of ways, each of them critical to achieving a world without cancer—from developing breakthrough therapies to building supportive communities, to providing empowering resources to deploying activists to raise awareness.

 The American Cancer Society Relay for Life will hold a support group meeting for survivors and caregivers on Sunday, September 16 at 6 p.m. in the Community Room at ECM East (2111 Cloyd Blvd., Florence, AL 35630). Everyone is invited to come and share their journey. Light refreshments served.

 Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. 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.

 New Life Ministries invites you to join them for Sunday School at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and for worship services on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a fellowship lunch after morning services. You and your family are invited to come worship and fellowship with the Lord of Hosts and his children. New Life Ministries is located on Hwy. 24 west toward Red Bay, right behind Tompkins Feed.

 TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weight loss support group meets each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center. Weigh-ins begin at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more information.

 Village Square Apartments in Russellville host George's Country Boys each Monday night from 6-8 p.m. for some Gospel and Country singing. Come join in the fun!



# Council approves rezoning

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved three rezoning applications at its August 6 meeting.

A request by Janice Trapp to rezone 230 LaGrange Road to residential was approved.

Mark Welborn's requests to rezone the west and east corners of Walnut Gate Road and Highway 24 to business were also approved. Welborn plans to build another a Yogi's truck stop at the intersection and have the project completed sometime in 2019.

Public hearings were held on all three requests with no person speaking for or against the requests.

In other business, the council:

- Approved a contract with InCare for the purchase of a new computer for the city's Administration Department.

- Contracted with Civil Group, LLC, for the construction engineering and inspection for the city's TAPAA-

TA16(914) sidewalk project in downtown Russellville.

- Authorized mayor David Grissom to enter into an agreement with the Federal Aviation Authority for the funding of the Russellville Municipal Airport project number 3-01-0063-014-2018.

- Declared a vacancy for Firefighter I in the Russellville Fire Department and asked the Civil Service Board to add an additional name to the current list.

- Approved the reappointment of Deborah Freeman and appointment of Jerry Kimbrough to the Civil Service Board.

- Authorized the abatement of a nuisance at 415 Hillcrest Street.

- Approved a request from the United Way of Northwest Alabama to waive the rental fee for the A.W. Todd Center for an event on September 26, 2018.

The next city council meeting is set for August 20 with work session at 6 p.m. and meeting to follow.

# Commission posts for new technical project manager

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission is looking for a new technical project manager after Fred Nethery submitted his resignation effective August 10, 2018.

The technical project manager handles computers and information technology systems projects for Franklin County.

Commissioners approved the resignation and the advertisement of the position at a special called meeting on August 7.

In addition to posting for the position, the commission voted to bid out technology services for the county in order to have another option in the event no qualified candidate applies for the IT position.

"I've talked with other counties," Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore said. "Some have an IT guy come in and do the basic day-to-day work, and then when there's a complicated issue they contract it out. We want to leave that option open so we don't box ourselves in."

"My recommendation is [that] anyone who wants to apply for the position come here and look at our system, so they can be familiar with it."

The position will be advertised and applications accepted through August 31, 2018. That same deadline will apply for bids for handling the county's IT operations on a contract basis.

The salary range will depend on experience, but will begin at \$40,040 plus benefits, according to a spokesperson in the Franklin County Commission office.

## 'SUCCESS,' from page 3

James replied enthusiastically, "I'd say go for it! Come meet the instructors and advisors here and get to know them. They work at your speed, on your time schedule, and they are so nice and welcoming."

The Youth Success Program (YSP) at NW-SCC serves out-of-school youth ranging from 16-24 years of age in Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Marion and Winston counties. YSP identifies and assists those who have been unable to complete their education and need guidance and assistance deciding between continuing their education and seeking additional training toward employment.

YSP offers services such as job skills/employment training, GED support, college enrollment assistance, tutoring and mentoring.

For more information about the Youth Success Program at NW-SCC, contact Sharon McBride by phone at 256-331-5262 or by email at mcbride@nwscc.edu.



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## ‘RESIDENT’ from page 1

a bucket each day, subflooring in the front hall and bathroom of her apartment, and mold in the bathroom as a result of repetitive flooding of the apartment.

Young maintains extensive written records of her communication with Ridgecrest’s on-site manager, as well as representatives from Albertville-based Sunbelt Management Company, which owns Ridgecrest Apartments.

Ridgecrest is a privately owned apartment complex, but residents, based on their income, receive financial assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture toward their monthly rent.

Young’s two-bedroom apartment rents for \$755/month. Of that amount, she pays \$268 and the USDA pays Sunbelt the remainder. Pursuant to its agreement with the USDA Rural Development, Ridgecrest is subject to regulations and applicable governmental housing codes.

A recent inspection of Young’s apartment by City of Russellville building inspector Bill Fuller found below-code violations with the HVAC system and the hot water heater, both of which Fuller said he would report to Ridgecrest’s manager.

When contacted by the *Free Press*, the Ridgecrest manager said they were working to correct the problems in Young’s apartment, but she said official comment would have to come from Sunbelt Management.

Sunbelt Management officials did not respond to phone messages from the *Free Press*.

As a result of the leaking HVAC, Young’s apartment has flooded several times, most recently in June of this year. Young reported the flooding to Ridgecrest’s on-site manager, and a company came to dry the floors.

“The company said I could not be there while they got the water up,” Young said. “When I came back home to view the damage, I saw there were seven huge blowers connected to my utilities. The company said it was to dry the floors, which had

also flooded the lower apartment.

“When the company left, they had destroyed my apartment, leaving it in shambles.”

Young’s linoleum was removed, leaving OSB board subflooring in her front hall and bathroom. Two months later, Sunbelt still has not replaced her flooring. There is mold visible on the bathroom floor that Young says her attorney had tested, and it’s also present in her air conditioning vents.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Young’s linoleum was removed, leaving OSB board subflooring in her front hall and bathroom.

Haleyville attorney Jerry Roberson represents Young. Roberson said his goal for his client is simple.

“I’m trying to get her and her son in an apartment that is habitable, safe and sanitary, and get her compensated for what she has been through,” Roberson said.

Young’s lease with Sunbelt contains similar language to what Roberson described. The lease provides the lessor with the duty to “maintain the buildings and unassigned community areas of the complex in a decent, safe and sanitary condition in accordance with applicable government housing codes and USDA Rural Development regulations.”

Young said she first discovered bedbugs in April of 2018, and she immediately notified the on-site manager at that time. After a change in on-site managers took place, Young went back to address the bedbugs with the new manager.

When an exterminator from Terminix Pest Control showed up to Young’s apartment weeks later, Young says he told her to bag everything up in her two bedrooms so he could come back and

exterminate the apartment. Young bagged her clothing and her son’s clothing, but as of this week no exterminator has come back to treat the apartment, so their clothes and bedroom contents remain in trash bags. Another pest control company sent a representative to her apartment to inspect it, but again no treatment was done.

“I have done all I was asked to do,” Young said. “I have spent time, money and effort trying to handle the problem myself and bought chemicals on my own. The bedbugs are still a major problem throughout my apartment.”

Young and her son are living in the den of her apartment, with no use of their two bedrooms. She says her son had an allergic reaction to bedbugs earlier this summer that required a visit to a hospital.

“This is only a peek into the horrific situation that I encounter on a daily basis,” Young said. “I have been living on subflooring since my apartment flooded on June 26, and we’ve been packed up waiting on our apartment to be treated for bedbugs since May. I must spray my couch and love seat just so we can get a decent night’s sleep.

“We have to shake our clothes out in the hall each day to make sure we’re not transmitting bedbugs to my work or his day care and school. That’s what we’ve been reduced to.”

With so many problems dating back to when she first moved into Ridgecrest, you might wonder why Young and her son don’t simply find somewhere else to live. She explains it’s not that simple.

“I am a single parent and can not afford to move, or I would,” Young said. “I have taken out two loans to try and take care of the bedbugs. What can I do? All I do is sit up and cry and pray.

“My furniture was worth thousands of dollars, and it’s ruined,” and Sunbelt offered me \$300 for it and said we should have purchased renter’s insurance. And Sunbelt tells USDA the apartments are up to code. Not this apartment—we’ve been standing in water in an apartment with no flooring, infested with bedbugs, full of mold living out of one room.”

Young said a Sunbelt representative offered her another apartment, C-1, but she says she hasn’t been able to look at that apartment because there was still work being done to bring it up to code.

“They try to say they offered me another apartment and I refused. I didn’t refuse,” Young said. “I couldn’t even get into the apartment they wanted me to take because it wasn’t up to code.

“What do they expect me to do, just move from one hellhole to another?”

During a recent conversation with a Sunbelt Management representative, Young says that when she complained about the problems in her apartment, the representative told her, ‘You’ve been living with it this long, so you can afford to live with it a little while longer.’

Joe Pesci starred in a 1991 movie called *The Super*. Pesci played a landlord ordered by a court to live for six months in the filthy building he managed. That’s certainly one way to get problems fixed.

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# Programs planned to recognize Elliott

Submitted to the FFP

On Monday evening, August 20, from 6-7:30 p.m. there will be an event honoring the 60th anniversary of the signing of the National Defense Educational Act, sponsored by former Congressman Carl Elliott, originally from Vina, and Senator Lister Hill, also from Alabama.

The act helped improve science, foreign language and technology education nationwide. To date, more than 20 million people have attended college under this act, which established student financial aid and did so without restrictions of gender, race or nationality.

Elliott also authored the Library Services Act which brought bookmobiles and library services to millions of rural Americans.

The event will take place at UNA in the Guillot University Center and will feature speakers such as Johnny Mack Morrow, Buzz McKinney (nephew of Carl Elliott), and Mary Jolley and Julian Butler, both aides to Elliott while in Congress. Grant Morrow, a young aspiring actor from Spring Hill, TN who attends Summit High School, will portray Elliott as a young man about to leave Vina on foot to reach the University of Alabama to begin his college career with a little over two dollars in his pocket.

There will also be an exhibit of Carl Elliott memorabilia from the Red Bay Museum in Red Bay. Elliott, who published several volumes of history books of North Alabama, also wrote the Red Bay history book, *One Hundred Years of Memories, an Oral History of Red Bay*.

On Tuesday morning, August 21, another event will be held at Vina High School at 8:30 a.m. also honoring the place where Carl Elliott attended school.

The public is invited to attend both events. An additional event at the University of Alabama is scheduled for September 7.

# Open for business



PHOTO BY JASON HILL

Mark "Yogi" Welborn (second from right) celebrated the opening of his new business, Five & Dime Antiques and Collectibles, on North Jackson Avenue in downtown Russellville, with a ribbon cutting ceremony on August 10. Among the attendees were E.H. "Ellis" Davis and Willodean Davis (seated in front), the former owners of the property. They were joined by members of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.



**We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com).**

**For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at [franklinfreepress.net](http://franklinfreepress.net)!**

# Tiger Spirit is alive and well!



COURTESY PHOTOS

Members of the Russellville High School Class of 1958 (pictured at right) recently celebrated their 60th reunion. The Class met at the Canteen in Russellville on July 21, with 37 total attendees (22 class members, plus spouses and guests). Memories of school days, teachers and friends were shared. A "Lost in the Fifties" display (pictured above), created by Emogene Baker, was enjoyed by all as members of the Class of '58 celebrated their years together at RHS.



Send your guest columns, photos and other creative submissions to us at [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com).





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**LOST AND FOUND**

Lost: 200-foot extension cord, black with yellow connectors. Lost between East Side Missionary Baptist Church and Russell Valley Road. Please call Buckshot at 256-810-8543. (5)

Multi-Family Yard Sale this Friday, August 17 from 7-3 at 111 SE Hall Street in Russellville. Plus-size clothes, household items, what-nots and more!

Multi-Family Yard Sale this Friday/Saturday, August 17-18 from

7 am-until at 1775 Pine Avenue, Littleville.

Two-family Yard Sale this Friday and Saturday, August 17-18 from 8 am-until in Phil Campbell. Turn left at Piggly Wiggly across the RR tracks. Go to second street on the left (Holder Street). Sale will be at the corner. Look for signs. Lots of items, great prices!

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Two Cemetery Plots for sale. Located at Colbert Memorial Gardens in "The Garden of Everlasting Life." Good price, need to sell. Call 256-332-6302 and leave message. (3)

Local honey for sale. \$15/quart. Call 256-332-1369. (3)

Two Murray riding lawnmowers for sale. One 38-inch cut, one 36-inch cut. 12.5 hp motor on both of them. Call 256-668-1914. (4)

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# More local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

All but one of the 14 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of July 30-August 3 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. The one score falling below the satisfactory level was an 84 issued to Wendy's of Russellville, 13679 Hwy. 43 South. The remaining 13 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 100, received by Raspados Don Hugo, 311 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville. Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:  
•La Cabana, 10047 Hwy. 75, Russellville, 89.  
•Taco Bell, 15500 Hwy. 43 North, Russellville, 91.  
•El Patron Tex-Mex LLC, 13665 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91.  
•Vulcan Food Mart, 28485 Hwy. 24, Russellville, 91.  
•Kelly's Kitchen, 17901 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91.

•Stockyard Cafe, 14330 Hwy. 243, Russellville, 91.  
•Chevron Food Mart, 3515 Broad Street, Phil Campbell, 92.  
•B&J Cafe, 1327 Shelnett Loop, Phil Campbell, 92.  
•Discount Grocery and Variety, 201 E. Lawrence St., Russellville, 94.  
•Wayne's Catfish Haven, 18437 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 94.  
•Mexico Bakery, 111 Franklin St. SW, Russellville, 98.  
•Los Dos Hermanos, 409 Madison St., Russellville, 99.  
Of the 29 inspections done in Colbert County from July 30-August 3, no restaurant scored below the satisfactory range. The high score for the week in Colbert County was 100, scored by the Littleville Senior Center, 1400 Jackson Highway, Tuscumbia. Updated ratings are available at www.food-scores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.



## 'WRITER', from page 1

Common Sense Clothing, a new downtown store on Jackson Avenue.

"I know about my homeland, my family, my children because of my years of work with them, and most importantly, my God," Pace said. "Therefore, my writings thus far have been about my God experiences, my family and my homeland and the people in it.

"I hope to write more throughout my retirement years and will use what I know best as inspiration."

Pace will have copies of *I Love You, a Bushel and a Peck* available for purchase at a discounted cost of \$12. The book, published by Christian Faith Publishing, is also available on Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble for \$13.95.

The story is about a little girl and her daddy (inspired by Pace and her father Erskine Wages).

"We had a little sing song we shared all of our lives," Pace said. "And it went, 'I love you a bushel and a peck, a bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck.' I sang it to my dad just before he passed away."

Shortly after her father's death in 1998, Pace found a note he had written her in an autograph book she had when she was a young girl.

"I found this little message daddy had written to me," Pace said. "He promised to be a father who was proud of me, and he ended it by saying how much I meant to him and that he loved me more than words can tell.

"I thought about how my dad's love for me through my life had been a perfect example of my heavenly Father's love and how a Christian father's love for his child is a perfect example of our heavenly Father's love. So I decided to write a children's book based on that."

Pace believes the book shares a message that is very personal to her.

"I think it contains a really good Christian message children need to hear and their parents need to hear," she said. "It's important these days that parents realize they are such a strong example to their children, and they can choose to be a positive example or a negative example. And if they choose to be a positive example, they are exemplifying an example of our heavenly Father to their children."

Pace penned her first children's book several years ago. *Odel's Diner*, illustrated by local artist Doug Allen, was a book about our Appalachian culture in northwest Alabama and the foods we eat. She was inspired by her childhood days at Kent's Diner, a local downtown diner on Lawrence Street.

"It was a familiar place for locals to sit and talk about politics, and that's what we do in the South," Pace said. "*Odel's Diner* was based on the foods we eat. I felt it was important children know and understand [that] the foods we eat are very cultural, and it's something they should have a good understanding of."

The book ended with a variety of recipes from local cooks for typical Appalachian foods like turnip greens, black eyed peas and fried green tomatoes.

A long-time educator, Pace taught from 1972-82 in Georgia. She taught four different grade levels, taught music and served as curriculum coordinator. After her family moved to Russellville in 1982, she began teaching in 1983 at Russellville City Schools, teaching kindergarten and first grade until 2000.

She moved to the faculty at Northwest-Shoals Community College, where she was a child development instructor, and she served as director of grant development and external funding, writing grants for the college.

When she retired in 2011, Pace was serving as acting director of the Northwest-Shoals foundation.

Pace went to work for the State of Alabama after that, traveling across north

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Alabama in her role as an education specialist for the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. She retired this May.

Earlier this year, Pace attended the Southern Christian Writers Conference, where Pulitzer Prize winning author Rick Bragg spoke and received an award.

"I met Mr. Bragg several years ago when I invited him to speak to the Northwest-Shoals Community College Foundation," Pace said. "Every time I hear him speak or read his books and writings, he inspires me to write about what we know best."

In addition to her two children's books, Pace was a contributing author to Faye Aldridge's *Real Messages From Heaven* book three, where she submitted a short story on a test of faith based on a personal experience.

She's also a contributing writer for elementary science and character education curriculum and was one of the first contributors to the Standards for Alabama First Class Pre-K when the program first began in the state. Those standards, along with ongoing revisions, remain in place today for Alabama's Pre-K Program.

Pace and her husband Barry live in Russellville. They have two sons, Brian and Brent, and seven grandchildren.



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## Wildcats battle for survival in brutal Region 7

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Red Bay head coach Michael Jackson is on the record with his opinion that the newly aligned Region 7 is the toughest region in the north half of the state in Class 2A football.

He'll get no argument whatsoever from Tharptown coach Kevin Lacey.

"Yeah, I agree," said Lacey, now in his third year running the Wildcat program. "When this [new alignment] came out, a day or two later we all sat down at a table together and pretty much said the same thing—there's not a tougher one around."

Tharptown, as expected, moved up to Class 2A and was placed in a rough-and-tumble Region 7 that also includes Jackson's Tigers (who are 33-11 with two region titles over the past four years), an Addison team that has gone 23-4 the past two seasons in Class 1A with five playoff wins, a Sheffield program never lacking for high-caliber athletes, a Tanner team with a promising first-year head coach (former Russellville star Oscar Bonds) bent on restoring the Rattlers to their recent status as perennial contenders, and a Colbert County program that has won a total of 10 games in the Class 3A playoffs over the previous six seasons.

Throw in Hatton, which has won all four of its recent meetings with Tharptown by a combined score of 201-30, and there's no way around it—the Wildcats are going to have their work cut out for them just to be competitive on a weekly basis once region play begins.

"Looking back at the last couple of years....two years ago we won two games, and last year we won one," Lacey said. "It's gonna be tough. Our guys had that deer-in-headlights look when [the new region alignment] came out. But we've been preaching to them, it's still football. We're still gonna go compete. Those [other] teams put their pants on one leg at a time, just like we do."

"It is what it is. There's nothing we can do about it except go out there and compete just like we would against anybody else."

The Wildcats won't have to wait long to get acquainted with some of their new region opponents; after an early bye week on August 31, a road trip to Sheffield and home games with Colbert County and Tanner are up next on the schedule—all of which makes next Friday's regular season opener at home against Shoals Christian all the more important. Tharptown's lone win in 2017 was a 38-28 road victory over the Flame in Week 3.

See 'WILDCATS,' Page 16

# Can't miss this

It's time again for our annual look at all the biggest games coming up on the local prep football slate

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Another high school football season kicks off next week, which means it's time for our annual pre-season tour of the most intriguing, must-see games on the schedule. We'll take it week by week and highlight the matchups involving teams in the *Free Press* coverage area that you won't want to miss in 2018.

So dust off the seat cushions and do your best to beat the

See 'MISS,' Page 18



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Colbie King (11) and Kolby Bragwell (4) will try to help Red Bay avenge last year's season-opening loss to Colbert Heights.

## No place like home: Eight RHS coaches are Golden Tiger grads

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

In terms of sheer size, John Ritter's coaching staff at Russellville is by far the largest he's had in six seasons as a varsity head coach. But there's something else about the current Golden Tiger football staff that's even more noteworthy.

Eight Russellville football coaches (five at the varsity level and three at the middle school level) are former Golden Tigers themselves, having graduated from RHS.

"I think it's a rare thing, to have almost...I guess it's about 33 percent of our staff is from here," said Ritter, who previously served as the head coach at Red Bay (2012-13) and West Morgan (2015-17). "That's amazing. It speaks volumes about the tradition here and the commitment by those guys to come back and make sure they're doing their part for Russellville to get back on top and then stay on top."

The five RHS alumni on the varsity football staff are Bryant Bonds (a 2005 graduate who helps

coach the defensive line), Tony Bonds (Class of 2001, offensive line), Corey Flanagan (Class of 2008, outside receivers), Jermaine Groce (Class of 2003, cornerbacks) and Mason Willis (Class of 2010, fullbacks). On the RMS staff, Heath Boyd (Class of 1991, defensive coordinator), Chase Gilmer (Class of 2009, quarterbacks) and Jake Ward (Class of 2010, receivers) are all Russellville graduates.

**"I think it's a rare thing, to have almost...I guess it's about 33 percent of our staff is from here," Ritter said. "That's amazing. It speaks volumes about the tradition here and the commitment by those guys to come back and make sure they're doing their part for Russellville to get back on top and then stay on top."**

"They bring a sense of pride about this place," said Ritter, whose team is scheduled to kick off its 2018 schedule with a preseason game at home against East Limestone next Friday, August 24. "All our coaches do, but when you go [to school]

See 'HOME,' Page 17



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# Red Devils ready to chase playoff berth

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Jason Harris is not necessarily a numbers guy. Sure, he's as pleased as anyone to see the attendance at Vina's summer workouts increase significantly, but he also knows the main objective is not merely to fill a few extra uniforms on Friday nights.

"Hard work—that's our theme around here," said Harris, now in his second season as the Red Devils' head coach following a five-year stint as an assistant. "Work hard and never quit. That's what these guys are doing. I've tried to teach them that it doesn't matter what size school you are; if you put in the work, you're gonna see the results. They're ready to see that."

"We have kids now that hate losing more than they like winning. That's a good thing."

Vina hasn't finished a season with a winning record since the 1989 Red Devils went 6-5. The program has produced just two playoff teams (2009 and 2015) this century, but Harris is optimistic that another postseason berth is not so out of reach.

"Hard work—that's our theme around here," said Harris, now in his second season as the Red Devils' head coach after a five-year stint as an assistant.

"Work hard and never quit. That's what these guys are doing. I've tried to teach them that it doesn't matter what size school you are; if you put in the work, you're gonna see the results. They're ready to see that. We have kids now that hate losing more than they like winning. That's a good thing."

"There's a lot of enthusiasm around here," he said. "We've got more kids out than we've had in the seven years I've been here, and the kids are working harder than they ever have. We averaged four times as many kids at workouts this summer as we have in the past. Things have really picked up around here."

"A lot of it has to do with work ethic. I work constantly around here; it's just the way I was brought up. The kids see how hard I work, and they're following suit. They see how much I put into this program, and they're following suit. That's the one thing I've tried to teach these kids around here—the value of a good work ethic. They're really buying into it."

Harris believes that one primary reason for the increased participation and involvement in Vina football has been the return of the Red Devils' junior high program, which had gone dormant until Harris revived it three years ago.

"The junior high program just sort of died around here," Harris said. "We started it back up a few years ago, and that's really helped. Those kids we started back up with, they're older now. They're in the tenth and eleventh grade now. I've been with them a while. We brought them up, and they really believe in what we're doing."

Roughly half a dozen young players—all products of the resurgent junior high program—logged significant snaps as freshmen on the varsity last season, and Harris expects them to make an even bigger impact as sophomores this year.

"We had five or six ninth-graders on the varsity last year, and all those guys should be better with a year of experience under their belts," he said. "They should be ready to go."

Here's a position-by-position breakdown of where the Red Devils stand heading into next Friday's regular season opener at home against Marion County.

## Quarterbacks

Junior Braden Moomaw, who played receiver last season, has made the switch to quarterback and will take the snaps in Vina's old-fashioned, Power-I offense. Harris said Moomaw, who is taking over for departed senior Blake Hardin, made major strides this summer as he continued to adapt to his new position.

"This is his first year playing quarterback for us, and it's gonna be a learning process," Harris said. "He got better as the summer went on. In the spring game [against Hatton and Phil Campbell], he did okay. It was his first time to play quarterback, and he was a little green. But when we went to a seven-on-seven at Waterloo in June, it was amazing how much he had improved."

The Red Devils don't put the ball in the air too often, and Harris expects Moomaw to impact the game as much with his legs as he does with his arm.

"Yes, I think he can be a factor in the run game," Harris said, "running some option and things like that."

## Running Backs

Vina is ready to roll in the backfield with a trio of experienced options.

See 'READY,' page 15



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## 'READY,' from page 14

Senior Jacob Lewis is healthy again after going down midway through the 2017 season with a knee injury. He'll team with fleet-footed junior Jackson Landers, who rushed for more than 300 yards in last year's 60-58 shootout loss to Shoals Christian, to form a dynamic duo at tailback.

"Jackson had a really good year for us last year," Harris said. "He carried the load after Jacob got hurt, and he did a really good job of it. He's really fast. He's still kind of learning the position, so I expect him to be even better at it this year."

Harris said Lewis's recovery from knee surgery has gone well. "He seems like he's a little quicker, actually, and he's definitely stronger," Harris said.

Speaking of stronger, 250-pound senior Isaac Harper will once again see time at fullback—particularly in short-yardage and goal-line situations—when he's not lining up at one of the guard spots on the offensive line.

"Isaac is a big, strong guy," Harris said. "He's hard to bring down."

### Wide Receivers

Senior Chance Kennedy is Vina's most experienced receiver, and newcomer Glen Ashley—a 6'1 sophomore—is also expected to make an impact in the passing game.

"He didn't play last year," Harris said of Ashley, "but he's got some good speed, and he's really tall."

Sophomore Elijah Whitfield didn't play last season either, but Harris expects the 6'1, 220-pound tight end to make a big impact as both a blocker and a downfield receiver.

"He's gotten a lot faster since he played in our junior high program," Harris said. "He'll be involved in the passing game as well."

### Offensive Line

This young but experienced group returns every starter from last season and is the strength of the entire team, according to Harris.

"They're pretty athletic, and they've gotten quicker also," the coach said. "We're expecting a lot of good stuff out of our guys up front. They blocked really well in the run game last year, and they've kind of been the workhorses around here this summer. We went back to some old-school weight lifting, and they have gotten so much stronger."

"They've got really good size, and they're pretty athletic. Most of our O-line guys play basketball and baseball, and they're pretty good at it. They're the heart and soul of this football team. Our offensive line guys are our leaders, without question."

Harper (6'2, 250) and sophomore Zack Davidson (6'0, 220) will handle the guard spots, with plenty of help from 6'3, 290-pound senior Kyler Blackburn. The tackle spots belong to 6'3, 315-pound junior Nash Humphres and 6'0, 220-pound sophomore Dawson Miller. Junior center Shannon Upton (5'10, 200) is back to anchor the middle of the line.

### Defensive Line

With a roster of 27, the Red Devils will have to employ more than a few players on both sides of the ball. The limits of endurance figure to be tested, especially in the early-season heat and humidity of August and September.

"We worked really hard on our conditioning this summer," Harris said. "We had a few to quit, and one of the factors was because of the conditioning we were doing. But the ones that have been here for it and stuck with it are gonna be a lot better because of it. We've really put an emphasis on conditioning around here."

Zack Davidson and Elijah Whitfield will start at defensive end in Harris's 4-3 scheme, with Kyler Blackburn and Nash Humphres manning the interior of the line at defensive tackle. Harris also expects newcomer Scott Presley, a junior who did not play last season, to provide a different look at tackle and to disrupt things in the opposing backfield with his quickness off the ball.

### Linebackers

Isaac Harper is back to anchor the front seven at middle linebacker, with Jackson Landers and Dawson Miller flanking him at the outside 'backer spots.

### Defensive Backs

There is experience on the edges, where seniors Jacob Lewis and Chance Kennedy will man the corner spots, and youth in the middle, where sophomore Glen Ashley and eighth-grader Nate Stidham are expected to be the

starting safeties.

Whereas the Red Devils have a few more players on the roster this season, they'll be operating with a few less coaches on the sideline. Harris, who serves as his own defensive coordinator, has just three assistants on staff: Terry Swinney (offensive line and linebackers coach), Talon Thomas (receivers coach) and newcomer Ben Guin (offensive coordinator).

"We're about three coaches short from what we had last year," Harris said, "but I think we've got it figured out."

Vina went just 1-9 a year ago, beating Tharptown 14-7 in the season finale, but Harris believes the Red Devils are capable of contending for a playoff spot right away in Class 1A, Region 8, which also includes holdovers Cherokee, Hackleburg, Phillips, Shoals Christian and Waterloo, along with newcomer Mars Hill.

"Injuries and youth hurt us last year, but I think we're gonna be better for it this year," Harris said. "The way our region is gonna shake out, I think it's gonna be pretty tough. Mars Hill dropping down to 1A, they're gonna be tough. They run the Wing-T, and their coach [Darrell Higgins] was the Wing-T guru at Deshler all those years. Hackleburg is always there at the top of the region every year, so those two are pretty much a given."

"Bear Creek will be better this year, and Waterloo made the playoffs last year. They've got a really good quarterback in the Palmer kid, Coach [Brad] Palmer's son. I don't know that much about Cherokee, but they always have a lot of speed, and Coach [Lymos] McDonald does a good job. I don't know much about Shoals Christian either."

"We're trying to fight for a playoff spot. That's our goal. We've gotta be more physical, and we've also gotta be in better shape, with the way we have to play kids both ways. I think we're gonna be that. We just have to learn to be more disciplined on both sides of the ball. I don't think we'll be making as many youthful mistakes as we did last year."

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# 'WILDCATS,' from page 13

"Sure, our guys are excited. They're ready to go," Lacey said of the season opener. "They've had that one circled since we released the schedule. It's big for us, because we've got the bye week right after and then a really tough stretch."

"I do think you learn a lot and improve a lot from Week 1 to Week 2, but for us it's gonna be big to learn a lot Week 1. We're gonna have two weeks after that to get ready to go to Sheffield. Then we come back home for Colbert County and Tanner. That's a tough stretch, so it's good to have a week off before you play those three weeks."

The Wildcats will host Brilliant on September 28 before having another open week on October 5. They'll resume region play with games at Hatton, versus Addison and at Red Bay before closing out their nine-game schedule on November 2 with a non-region game at county rival Vina.

Here's a position-by-position breakdown of where the Wildcats stand heading into next week's opener.

### Quarterbacks

**Position coach: Kevin Lacey**

Carson Petree has taken the bulk of the snaps at quarterback over the past two seasons, but Lacey has expressed a desire to utilize the quick and athletic senior as a playmaker at other positions this season. Tharptown lacks proven weapons at the skill spots, further necessitating a move by Petree to either receiver or running back in the Wildcats' flex-bone, double-wing offense.

"Carson's a great quarterback when it comes to running the football, and he's great at running the offense," Lacey said. "At the same time, he also

knows he's not a true quarterback when it comes to the passing game. Carson's a strong receiver who runs good routes and gets open. He would definitely help us on the receiving end. He's quick, too, and we'd like to utilize more of his speed.

"The quarterback's job in the offense is to distribute the ball. We're trying to find more ways to get him the ball without him taking the snap."

**"Carson's a strong receiver who runs good routes and gets open," Lacey said. "He would definitely help us on the receiving end. He's quick, too, and we'd like to utilize more of his speed. The quarterback's job in the offense is to distribute the ball. We're trying to find more ways to get him the ball without him taking the snap."**

Whether or not the Wildcats are able to accomplish that depends greatly on the development of junior Yovani Gomez, who has been splitting reps at quarterback with Petree this fall after playing receiver as a sophomore in 2017.

"Those two guys are taking all the reps at quarterback right now," Lacey said. "We're still working it out, looking at both of them."

### Running Backs

**Position coach: Thomas Horton**

Leading rusher Peyton Price graduated, leaving the door open for a new featured ball carrier to emerge this season. Petree is a candidate, along with fellow senior and converted receiver Luis Macias.

"Luis was a receiver for us last year, but now we're moving him over to be our primary running

back," Lacey said last week. "He's looked really good so far."

Tharptown has better depth and more options on the offensive line than at the skill positions, which has allowed Lacey to move former O-lineman Ruben Alfaro to fullback. The rugged junior will split time there with freshman Blake Daily.

"He played fullback for us last year at the end of the year," Lacey said of Alfaro. "He's a big, stocky kid, and he runs hard."

### Wide Receivers

**Position coaches: Joseph Brown, Gary Gunderman [Gunderman will also coach special teams]**

The Wildcats are young and thin at receiver, which is why Petree's playmaking ability would be so welcome on the perimeter. Daily could also see time at split end, according to Lacey. The head coach is high on the potential of sophomore tight end Nathan Lucas, who is emerging as perhaps the team's most reliable pass catcher.

"He's got really good hands," Lacey said of Lucas. "By the end of the year last year, he was one of our primary guys. He's a big kid, and he's learning more of the offense. He got more playing time toward the end of the season. He really came along."

### Offensive Line

**Position coach: Marc Tracy**

The Wildcats may be "hunting for skill guys," as Lacey put it, but he likes the depth his team has in the trenches. Sophomore Travis Staten, who started at tackle last season, now anchors the line at

See 'WILDCATS,' page 17

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## 'WILDCATS', from page 16

center. Junior Gunner Lane is a returning starter at guard, and 6'4 senior Evan Franks has made the move from tackle to guard.

Freshman Tyler Amos leads a tackle rotation that also includes junior Eric Espinosa and freshmen Bryson Wilkins and Gabe Compton.

"Tyler Amos is probably 6'3, 6'4, and he's gotten stronger over the summer," Lacey said. "As he develops, we expect him to really become a big, strong kid."

### Defensive Line

**Position coach: Marc Tracy (defensive coordinator)**

Nathan Lucas, Tyler Amos and junior Cody Palmer will all see time at defensive end in Tharptown's 4-4 front. Seniors Alex Flores and Alex Matias are part of a rotation at defensive tackle that also includes Gunner Lane and Evan Franks.

### Linebackers

**Position coach: Thomas Horton**

Travis Staten, who played some defensive end last season as a freshman, has moved back to outside linebacker, where he'll start opposite Blake Daily. Lacey said Ruben Alfaro and Eric Espinosa will handle the inside linebacker spots.

### Defensive Backs

**Position coach: Joseph Brown**

Tharptown has plenty of experience and playmaking ability on the back end of the defense, with Carson Petree and Luis Macias locking down the corner spots and junior Yovani Gomez patrolling the middle of the field as the starting safety.

Petree and Macias are part of a senior class that Lacey said has handled its leadership role well.

"We've got a really good senior group. I've really gotta brag on them," he said. "This is the most positive senior group we've had. They're really doing a good job working with the underclassmen."

Lacey said Tharptown had 28 players out for fall practice in grades 7-12.

"The numbers are getting better every day," Lacey said last week. "The first few days [of fall practice] went really well. We had good energy. We've got more players out everyday. By Monday, we'll definitely have everything set and ready to go."

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## 'HOME', from page 13

somewhere and it's your home school and you wore this jersey, you're a little more invested. That's not to say anything negative at all about our other coaches; it just speaks to what it means to play here and the respect those guys have for the team and the school system."

Flanagan, a former two-sport athlete who played both football and baseball at RHS, is now in his fourth season coaching at his alma mater after spending two years on staff at Deshler High School.

"For me, personally, it means so much to be able to coach at Russellville, a place I have called home for the majority of my life," Flanagan said. "I love coaching here and being able to give back to a place that has given so much to me. I was a part of the Golden Tiger tradition as a student-athlete when I was in school here, and I do my best every day to pass that down to the kids I teach and coach. The people in this community are so special, and they truly love the Golden Tigers. It's awesome to be a part of it."

The 2018 season will be the eighth on Russellville's varsity football staff for Groce, whose playing career with the Golden Tigers ended in 2002.

"Coaching at my alma mater is special because I'm a product of this great community and school system," Groce said. "It's an honor and a privilege to come back to RHS and inspire the next generation of student-athletes to accomplish the impossible. The history of excellence here at RHS helps to create a unique culture and expectation of winning. That motivates me every day to strive to become the best coach I can possibly be in order to give each athlete the very best opportunity to become a champion."

Ritter knows what it's like to go back and coach at the school where you once wore the uniform. A standout prep quarterback at Lauderdale County High, he returned to Rogersville as a volunteer coach on his father Ronnie Ritter's Tiger staff after his collegiate playing career at the University of North Alabama came to a close.

**"The passion for sports here is electric, and I'm excited to be a part of it," Groce said. "This place is special, and I wouldn't trade it for any other. It's truly great to be a Golden Tiger."**

"Fifteen years later, I still look to see how Lauderdale County did," Ritter said last week. "We played them this past year [at West Morgan], and dressing in the visitor's field house was very weird for me. I grew up in that stadium, on that field, in that field house. I get what it means to those eight guys to come back and coach here, and I'm proud to have them on staff."

Boyd, now entering his 16th season as an RMS football coach, is the longest-tenured of the Russellville alums on staff. Tony Bonds played offensive line at Ole Miss after graduating from RHS. Groce, Bryant Bonds, Gilmer, Ward and Willis all played in at least one Super Six during their time as Golden Tigers.

"We talk about the way it was when they were [playing] here," Ritter said, "the similarities between my vision and the vision of some of the past coaches. And we've got guys who may not be alums, but they've been here a long time. Coach [Tim] Townley has been here a long time. He jumps on board with those guys who played for all those state championships."

"We do a lot of comparison type stuff, but it's not

really comparison in a negative way as far as what we should be doing or should not be doing."

Ward and Willis were seniors on the Russellville team that lost 27-14 to Demopolis in the Class 5A championship game at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa in 2009. The Golden Tigers haven't been as far as the state semifinals since, but Groce says the fervor of the fan base and the entire Black and Gold community is still going strong.

"The passion for sports here is electric, and I'm excited to be a part of it," Groce said. "This place is special, and I wouldn't trade it for any other. It's truly great to be a Golden Tiger."

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## 'MISS,' from page 13

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### **Week 0 – Friday, August 24**

#### **Colbert Heights at Red Bay**

Last August, a 14-6 win over Red Bay on The Mountain propelled Colbert Heights to the most successful season in program history. Eighteen seniors are gone from that 11-2 team, however, and reigning Class 3A Coach of the Year Taylor Leathers will be breaking in a slew of first-time starters next Friday at Fred Bostick Memorial Stadium.

Red Bay, meanwhile, looks like a team on the rise; eight players on offense and nine on defense have at least one game of starting experience under their belts. Seniors Kolby Bragwell (the first three-year starting quarterback Michael Jackson has had in 17 years as a head coach) and Elijah Ingle (another three-year starter who excels at left guard and defensive tackle) are the unquestioned team leaders, and last year's breakout freshmen (like receiver/corner Jalen Vinson, linebacker/H-back Cam McKinney and defensive end/tight end Alex Kennedy, for instance) are poised to make an even bigger splash as sophomores.

Both coaches favor an old-school, run-heavy style on offense, so it would come as a surprise if either team cracks double-figures in pass attempts. If the Tigers want to start a new win streak versus Colbert Heights [they had won six straight meetings prior to last year's loss], they'll have to contain dynamic sophomore Carson Shaw, an athletic and elusive runner who is taking over for older brother Kevin as the Wildcats' starting quarterback.

#### **Bonus Game: Shoals Christian at Tharptown**

Tharptown's only win last season was a 38-28 victory at Shoals Christian in Week 3. Getting off to a 1-0 start this year would be huge for the Wildcats, especially considering that their next three games—following an early Week 1 bye—are at Sheffield and at home against Colbert County and Tanner. *Gulp.*

### **Week 1 – Friday, August 31**

#### **Deshler at Russellville**

A year ago, Bo Culver opened his tenure as Deshler head coach with five straight wins, including a 35-3 pasting of Russellville at Howard Chappell Stadium that ranked as the Tigers' most lopsided win in the series since 1997. John Ritter—Russellville's fifth head coach in the last 13 seasons—would love to get off to a similarly hot start with the Golden Tigers, who have won six straight home games (by an average margin of nearly 17 points) against their rivals from Tusculumbia since a 23-13 loss in 2004.

Speaking of the head coaches, each is a proponent of a distinctly different style of offense; Culver has ascended through the coaching ranks as a spread guy, and Ritter has his roots in the triple-option. In terms of personnel, Deshler has a talented group of returning players led by dual-threat quarterback Channing Marmann and senior running backs Xavier Trotter and Kam Pritchard, while a fully reloaded Russellville offense will hardly resemble the unit that failed to reach the end zone in last year's opener.

Aside from being one of the fiercest and oldest rivalries in northwest Alabama, this game is typically a pretty good barometer for the rest of the season. Since 2011, in the three seasons that began with a loss to Deshler (2011, 2013 and 2017), the Golden Tigers have gone a combined 12-19 with zero playoff wins. In the other four seasons (all of which opened with a win over Deshler), the Golden Tigers have gone 36-12 with four playoff wins.

#### **Bonus Game: Red Bay at Phil Campbell**

The excitement level is running high at Phil Campbell, where first-year head coach Kevin Barnwell has installed a new offense, a new strength and conditioning program and a new set of expectations in the hopes of achieving different results. Nothing would be more different than earning a win over rival Red Bay, which the Bobcats haven't done since 2005. [Red Bay has won the last 12 meetings, all but two of them by at least two touchdowns.]

### **Week 2: Friday, September 7**

#### **Russellville at Corner**

When the Golden Tigers traveled to Corner for a semifinal series in the Class 5A baseball playoffs back in 2016, half of Jefferson County turned out. A big crowd should be on hand for this one, too, as the two schools meet on the football field for the first time ever in the Region 8 opener for both teams.

#### **Bonus Game: Phillips at Vina**

Second-year head coach Jason Harris said Vina's goal this season is to fight for a playoff spot in Class 1A, Region 8. With better injury luck, more experience and a big, physical offensive line leading the way, it just might happen—though it's hard to imagine the Red Devils remaining in the postseason hunt for long if they don't find a way to beat the Bears.

### **Week 3: Friday, September 14**

#### **Lauderdale County at Colbert Heights**

After three straight road trips to open the season, the Wildcats return to The Mountain for their first home game since a 34-13 loss to Piedmont in the Class 3A quarterfinals last November. Region 8 has a wide-open feel to it this year, and the winner of this game will get an early leg up in the region race. The first two region games (at Westminster Christian on September 7 and then this one) should tell us a lot about how well the reloading process is going at Colbert Heights.

The Wildcats, who rode a big second half to a 28-13 win in Rogersville last October, haven't beaten Lauderdale County in back-to-back years since 2006-07.

#### **Bonus Game: Red Bay at Addison**

Addison, fresh off a 10-win season and a quarterfinal berth in the Class 1A playoffs last year, has won 16 straight home games heading into 2018. That streak may not survive a visit from Class 3A powerhouse Piedmont on August 31, but if it does then Red Bay will be looking to become the first visiting team to leave A.G. Hicks Stadium with a win since Falkville in September of 2015.

Regardless, every win will be precious in what figures to be an extremely tough Class 2A, Region 7 race.

### **Week 4: Friday, September 21**

#### **Vina at Phil Campbell**

These two county rivals have only met twice since 1974, with Phil Campbell posting back-to-back wins in 2008-09. Sophomore quarterback Luke Barnwell, directing the Bobcats' up-tempo spread attack, will take his shots at a Vina defense that gave up 40-plus points six times last season.

#### **Bonus Game: Russellville at West Point**

Russellville's most recent trip to West Point, in 2014, resulted in a thrilling (albeit weather-delayed) 26-22 win. The Golden Tigers are 6-0 all-time against the Warriors, who have made the playoffs each of the past four seasons under head coach Don Farley.

### **Week 5: Friday, September 28**

#### **Cherokee at Colbert Heights**

These two Colbert County rivals met every season for 32 straight years from 1984 to 2015. After

a two-year hiatus, the series is set to resume at Amos Mitchell Stadium on the final Friday in September. After dropping 16 consecutive meetings from 1985-2000, Colbert Heights has currently won 12 in a row against Cherokee—but the Indians still lead the all-time series 26-19.

The two teams combined for 20 wins in 2017, each advancing to the state quarterfinals in their respective classification.

#### **Bonus Game: Phil Campbell at Phillips**

Speaking of rivalries in which the tide has turned of late, Phillips has won eight of its last ten meetings with Phil Campbell after previously having not beaten the Bobcats since 1970 (a span of nine straight losses and one tie). Both teams will be looking to build momentum for the second half of region play.

### **Week 6: Friday, October 5**

#### **Lawrence County at Russellville**

Last season, the Red Devils beat Russellville for the first time since 1945, riding a couple of big plays from tailback Zaye Boyd to a 25-6 win at Golden Tiger Stadium. Boyd had rushed for 1,401 yards and scored 25 touchdowns as a Russellville sophomore in 2016 before transferring to LCHS in 2017; he's now a Golden Tiger again after returning to Russellville late this summer.

Boyd will undoubtedly be the center of attention once again in a rivalry game that has turned particularly nasty in recent years, but the return to health of dynamic receiver Devin Buckhalter—who missed his entire junior season with a broken foot—will be just as critical for a Golden Tiger team looking to wash away the sour taste of last year's 3-7 record. Getting back to the business of beating the boys from Moulton would go a long way toward accomplishing that.

#### **Bonus Game: Sheffield at Red Bay**

Neither team finished with a winning record last year, but Sheffield sneaked into the playoffs—and also ended Red Bay's streak of 18 consecutive postseason appearances—with a thrilling 35-28 win at The Fred in mid-October. The Bulldogs will once again make the trip to the west end of Franklin County, where the Tigers will be rested from their bye week and no doubt hungry to settle a score.

### **Week 7: Friday, October 12**

#### **Colbert County at Red Bay**

We'll call this one the Dale Jeffreys Bowl, in honor of the former head coach—and Colbert County alum—who won a school-record 114 games at Red Bay from 1997-2011 before heading back home to Leighton, where he proceeded to lead the Indians to a 46-19 record in five years before retiring at the end of the 2016 season.

Red Bay and Colbert County squared off 13 times between 1938 and 1961, but they haven't met since. Both will almost certainly be jockeying for position in the Class 2A, Region 7 race when mid-October rolls around.

#### **Bonus Game: Hamilton at Russellville**

Speaking of old rivalries being rekindled...the Golden Tigers haven't played Hamilton since 1995, the end of a 25-year stretch during which the two teams met 23 times. They haven't been region (or area) rivals since 1987, when Russellville capped off a perfect 10-0 regular season with a 20-7 home victory over the Aggies.

Hamilton's last win in the series was a 33-15 victory in 1991; the Aggies haven't won at Russellville since a 17-10 victory in September of 1985.

### **Week 8: Friday, October 19**

#### **Russellville at Jasper**



## 'MISS' from page 18

The last time Russellville paid a visit to Ki-Ro/Gambrell Field, back in 2012, Jasper High School was still called Walker High School, and the Golden Tigers left with a satisfying 16-0 win. They beat the Vikings again the following year at home, but the two old rivals haven't met since. A lot could be on the line when they get reacquainted in the next-to-last week of region play.

### Bonus Game: Shoals Christian at Vina

Last year in Florence, these two teams combined for a staggering 118 points. Vina tailback Jackson Landers, then a sophomore, rushed for more than 300 yards, but the Red Devils fell just short in a 60-58 loss. What will this year's rematch have in store? It might be worth a drive to Vina to find out.

### Week 9: Friday, October 26

#### Colbert Heights at Phil Campbell

After sharing a region in 2A from 2010-13, these two teams are set to start playing high-stakes games yet again as both are now members of Class 3A. Colbert Heights has won the last seven meetings, scoring 46-plus points in five of them and then blanking the Bobcats 30-0 last year at Parrish Field.

This year's meeting should present a fascinating contrast in styles on offense. Phil Campbell runs the Tony Franklin spread; the Wildcats run the football. A lot.

### Bonus Game: Dora at Russellville

Russellville's final home game—and final region game—of the regular season comes against a Dora team that went 9-3 a year ago at the Class 4A level. The Golden Tigers and the Bulldogs have met just once, a 40-8 win by Russellville in the second round of the 1987 state playoffs.

### Week 10: Thursday, November 1

#### Phil Campbell at Hackleburg

For the past 15 years, Phil Campbell's regular season has ended the same way—with a loss to Hackleburg. Perhaps by the time this one rolls around, head coach Kevin Barnwell's young Bobcats will have matured enough to give the program its first win over the Panthers since a 28-20 victory in 2002.

### Bonus Game: Wilson at Red Bay

This will be the fourth home game in the final five for the Tigers, who will no doubt be looking to ride a victory over the Class 4A Warriors into the post-season. Red Bay and Wilson have met just three times (all since 2006), with the Warriors winning two of them.



FILE PHOTO

**BACK IN BLACK (AND GOLD)** - Zaye Boyd has returned to Russellville, where he rushed for 1,401 yards and scored 25 touchdowns as a super sophomore in 2016 (above). He'll get reacquainted with his former Lawrence County teammates on October 5 when the Red Devils visit Golden Tiger Stadium for a critical Region 7 showdown.

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The Russellville Gas Board adopted  
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Watermelon Contests

## Friday

5:45 p.m. Opening Ceremony

6:00 p.m. The Midnighters

7:00 p.m. Rewind

8:30 p.m. 7 Bridges

## Saturday

5:00pm Kerry Gilbert Band

6:00 p.m. LA Outlaws

7:00 p.m. Joseph Baldwin

Band

8:30 p.m. Sweet Tea Trio



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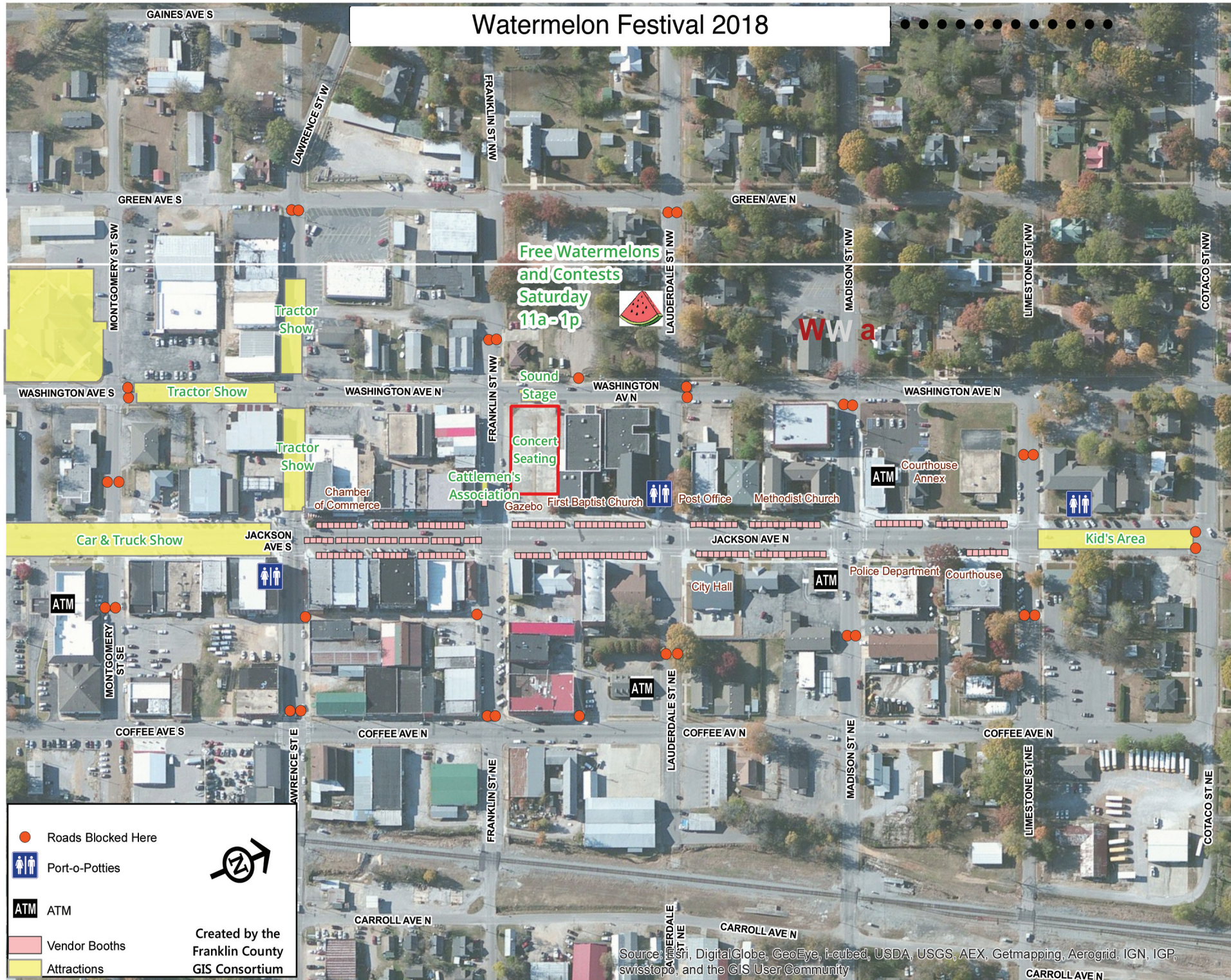
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# 38th Annual Watermelon Festival

## Watermelon Festival 2018



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Welcome to the **2018 Watermelon Festival!**

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- Sonia Gamble - Administrative Associate
- Lakita Page - EFNED Educator
- Ida Robinson - Fill-In Secretary
- Janet Lovelady - 4H Foundation Regional Ext. Agent
- Shirley Jimenez—TES



# That's the ticket!



FILE PHOTO

Tickets for The Roxy's Legend of Toyland will officially go on sale this Friday, August 17 at 5:30 p.m. at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville. This initial ticket sale will coincide with the Franklin County Watermelon Festival, which will take place Friday evening and all day on Saturday, August 18. Ticket sales on Saturday will begin at 10 a.m.

## 'Toyland' tickets on sale this weekend!

Submitted to the FFP

Tickets for The Roxy's Legend of Toyland will officially go on sale this Friday, August 17 at 5:30 p.m. at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville. This initial ticket sale will coincide with the Franklin County Watermelon Festival, which will take place Friday evening and all day on Saturday, August 18. Ticket sales on Saturday will begin at 10 a.m.

Assistant director Hillary Hall said tickets for the wildly popular holiday production, which is the creation of Russellville resident and longtime Northwest-Shoals Community College music instructor Lanny McAlister, will be on sale throughout the festival, and those who purchase tickets that weekend will be entered into a special drawing to receive reserved seating.

**"All of the tickets for The Roxy's Legend of Toyland are general admission, but a select few people will have the chance to have their seats upgraded to reserved seating for the performance they purchased tickets for," assistant director Hillary Hall said. "Only those who purchase tickets during the Watermelon Festival will be entered into this drawing, so we encourage everyone to come out this weekend and get your tickets."**

"All of the tickets for The Roxy's Legend of Toyland are general admission, but a select few people will have the chance to have their seats upgraded to reserved seating for the performance they purchased tickets for," Hall said. "Only those who purchase tickets during the Watermelon Festival will be entered into this drawing, so we encourage everyone to come out this weekend and get your tickets."

After the Watermelon Festival is over, Hall said tickets will be available to purchase online the following Monday at Eventbrite.com. Tickets will also be available to purchase each Sunday in November from 1-3 p.m. at the Roxy Theatre box office and before each performance if any tickets are still available.

"We had such a tremendous response to the production last year," Hall said. "I have no doubt tickets for this year's production will go fast, so purchasing early is the best way to ensure you'll get to experience this fun and magical event that has earned a reputation for being of one of the most beloved holiday traditions in our area."

The Franklin County Arts and Humanities Council will present The Roxy's Legend of Toyland on November 28-December 2 at the Historic Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville, with 14 shows planned for this year.

**Summertime...  
Russellville...  
Watermelon...  
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**David Reed  
Grissom  
MAYOR**

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# 2018 Watermelon Beauty Pageant



(ABOVE) 0-11 MONTHS: Queen - Erin Leigh Dewberry  
1st Alternate - Etta Margaret Killen • 2nd Alternate - Bexley Michelle McAfee

(AT RIGHT) 1 YEAR OLDS: Queen - Presley Marie White  
1st Alternate - Caroline Savannah Shelnett • 2nd Alternate - Hadlee Hill



Dianne Wages Pace, local author, will be signing her recently released book, I Love You, A Bushel and a Peck.

Common Sense Clothing Co., Downtown Russellville, during the Watermelon Festival. Fri 5 - 7 and Sat 9 - 3.



Published by Christian Faith Publishing.



(ABOVE) 2 YEAR OLDS: Queen - Madilyn Claire McAfee  
1st Alternate - Zoey Faye Catherine Williams • 2nd Alternate - Masie Bean





# Welcome to the 2018 Franklin County Watermelon Festival!



<b>Fri., Aug 17</b>	<b>Sat., Aug 18</b>
5:45 Opening Ceremony	5:00 Kerry Gilbert
6:00 The Midnighters	6:00 LA Outlaws
7:00 Rewind	7:00 Joseph Baldwin
8:30 7 Bridges	8:30 Sweet Tea Trio



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# Watermelon Festival

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### Friday

5:45 p.m. Opening Ceremony  
6:00 p.m. The Midnighters  
7:00 p.m. Rewind  
8:30 p.m. 7 Bridges

### Saturday

5:00pm Kerry Gilbert Band  
6:00 p.m. LA Outlaws  
7:00 p.m. Joseph Baldwin  
8:30 p.m. Sweet Tea Trio



# Always a Slice of Fun!

Enjoy this year's Watermelon Festival.



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# 2018 Watermelon Beauty Pageant



(ABOVE) 3-4 YEAR OLDS: Queen - Rhealin Richardson  
1st Alternate - Braelynn McCalpin  
2nd Alternate - Ava Marie Bianco



(ABOVE) 5-6 YEAR OLDS: Queen - Maci Reagan Boyd  
1st Alternate - Brentlee Denise Thornton  
2nd Alternate - Mary-Hadley Smith



(ABOVE) 7-9 YEAR OLDS: Queen - Erin Grimes  
1st Alternate - Libby Thorne  
2nd Alternate - Emma Kate Gerstman



# Welcome to the Franklin County Watermelon Festival



*Eddie*  
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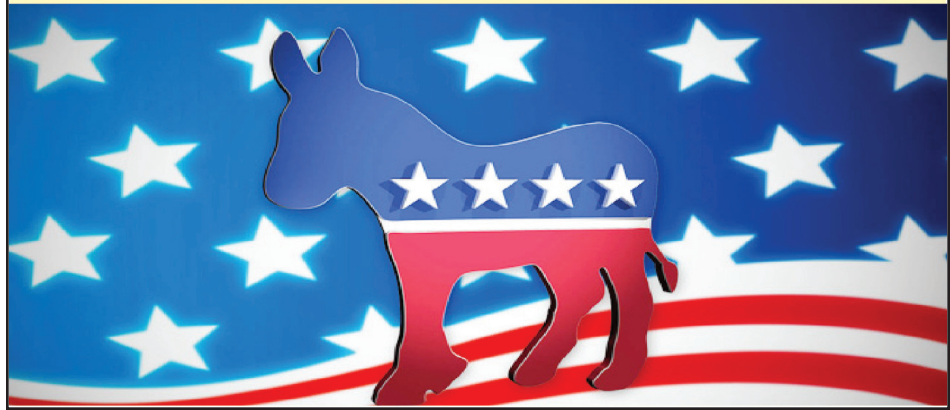
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## The Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee welcomes you to the 38th Annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival!

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# **2018 Watermelon Beauty Pageant**



**(AT LEFT) 18-21 YEAR OLDS**

**Queen - Lauren Belcher**

**1st Alternate - Abby Danielle Swinney**

**2nd Alternate - Jessica Faith McSpadden**

**(BELOW, LEFT) 10-13 YEAR OLDS**

**Queen - Macey Brooke Welborn**

**1st Alternate - Stella Claire Hill**

**2nd Alternate - Kendel McCaig**

**(BELOW, RIGHT) 14-17 YEAR OLDS**

**Queen - Grace-lyn Paris Habada**

**1st Alternate - Keslie Brook Allen**

**2nd Alternate - Lauren Sturdivant**



**The Franklin Free Press would like to  
congratulate all the contestants and  
winners from this year's Pageant!**



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Franklin County  
Watermelon Festival*



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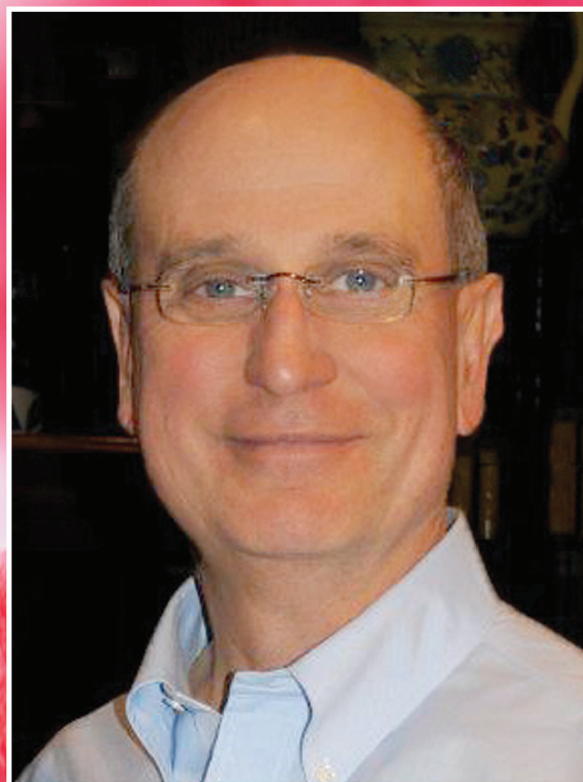
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# WELCOME TO THE 38th ANNUAL *Franklin County* WATERMELON FESTIVAL

*See you there!*





# Russellville

From left: David Palmer, William Nale,  
Mayor David Grissom, Gary Cummings,  
Arthur Elliott, Jamie Harris



*The City of Russellville welcomes you to The 2018 Franklin County Watermelon Festival! We are proud to be a part of The Watermelon Capital of Alabama!*



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