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Local woman seeks financial help for life-saving transplant

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Though she hasn't been a Russellville resident very long, Merlin Hernandez is learning first-hand about the spirit of community.

A Go Fund Me account has been created to help Hernandez raise money for what would likely be life-saving treatment for a severe medical condition she's dealing with.

Hernandez, 28, was diagnosed eight years ago with a life-threatening condition called marrow aplasia. With that disease, blood cells normally made in the heart of bone marrow are no longer produced. Without a bone marrow transplant, the disease can be fatal.

Hernandez, whose full name is Merlin Fidelia Hernandez Argueta, is from San Pedro Sula, Honduras. She came to Russellville last year to live with family members.

While she has received several blood transfusions and platelets, along with chemotherapy and immunosuppressants accompanied by steroids, those are only short-term extensions. Ultimately, to survive, she will need the bone

See 'TRANSPLANT,' Page 8



COURTESY PHOTO
Merlin Hernandez, 28, suffers from a life-threatening condition called marrow aplasia. Without a bone marrow transplant, the disease can be fatal.



We're All Ears!
Have an opinion? **256.332.0255**
Story idea?
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Officials striving to increase safety on crowded East Lawrence Street

With two preschools (Little Tigers and Mars Hill Bible) within a short distance on East Lawrence, morning and afternoon pickup times are extremely crowded.



John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Given a choice, East Lawrence Street is one road Patricia Tharp would avoid.

But with a young child who attends Mars Hill Bible Preschool five days a week, traveling the crowded street is a necessary evil for Tharp.

According to Tharp, with two preschools within a short distance on East Lawrence (Little Tigers Preschool), morning and afternoon pickup times are extremely crowded. And with no turn lane for vehicles to enter Mars Hill Preschool, Tharp says she's almost been rear-ended more than once and she's even witnessed vehicles passing her across a solid yellow line into a blind curve.

See 'SAFETY,' Page 8

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- Adolphus Floyd Bradford**, Russellville, age 67
Died Friday, December 21, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Beulah Cemetery in Oak Grove.
- Dewey Gene Carter, Jr.**, Russellville, age 72
Died Tuesday, December 25, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Bethlehem Cemetery.
- Gladys Thelma Curnutt**, Russellville, age 70
Died Thursday, December 20, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Tharptown Cemetery.
- Flossie Mae Finley**, Russellville, age 88
Died Sunday, December 23, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Bethlehem Cemetery in Russellville.
- Kerrie Alana Martin**, Empire, AL, age 38
Died Tuesday, December 25, 2018. Funeral arrangements had not been announced at press time. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.
- Joseph Dural Swinney**, Russellville, age 79
Died Monday, December 24, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Oak Grove Cemetery in Russellville.
- Thomas Edward Taylor**, Russellville, age 91
Died Monday, December 24, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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Community Spirit Bank unveils plans for Bulldog branch at Belgreen School

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Belgreen High School will soon become the latest Franklin County school to operate a student bank.

Community Spirit Bank announced plans for a Belgreen Bulldog branch that will launch early this year.

“We are pleased to formally announce our intentions to implement a new student-led ‘Bulldog Branch’ of Community Spirit Bank,” said Brad Bolton, CSB President/CEO. “We place great emphasis on advancing the financial literacy of the students in our local schools, and we are excited about our new partnership with Belgreen High School.”

The new financial literacy branch will be located within the school’s admission office. There are some improvements to be completed before the branch opens, with all aspects of the student branch being paid from leasehold improvements the bank is making on the campus.

Traditional banking products will be available to Belgreen students, teachers and staff only, as the Bulldog Branch will not be open to the general public. All grades, elementary through senior high, are welcome to utilize the on-campus branch for limited banking transactions.

Potential student bankers underwent a formal interview process in December, and those selected will gain valuable work experience while learning about real life financial education.

Students selected for the inaugural group of tellers included Autumn Bragwell, Abigail Davis, Anna Kate Dempsey, Ansley Tate, Emma Dempsey, Ismal Lopez, Bailey Oliver, Scout Bragwell, Reagan Showers, Ella Wiginton and Alexis Keenum.

“We are excited about the opportunity to bring banking to these students and this campus,” Bolton said. “We believe it will serve generations



COURTESY PHOTO

The new financial literacy branch at Belgreen will be located within the school’s admission office. Traditional banking products will be available to Belgreen students, teachers and staff only, as the Bulldog Branch will not be open to the general public. All grades, elementary through senior high, are welcome to utilize the branch for limited banking transactions.

of students and will be something the student body, faculty, administrators and community can be proud of.

“We extend our thanks to Franklin County Career Technical Center director Scott Wiginton for his proactive initiative to help bring banking to Franklin County Schools, and Mrs. Ann Scott [principal], Mr. Derek Ergle [assistant principal] and Ms. Georgia Jeffreys [guidance counselor] for their support in launching the program.”

Community Spirit Bank has been making an active investment in financial education since

2013, sponsoring 10 area schools with the EverFi Financial Literacy Digital Platform. Over the last five years, more than 3,300 students have been reached, completing 25,930 financial modules, which equates to nearly 19,000 hours of education.

“On behalf of the officers, directors and employees of Community Spirit Bank, we are excited to add this Belgreen location where students can lead and demonstrate the ‘community spirit’ of their Bulldog Branch, as we attempt to provide every day,” Bolton said.

Local eateries receive satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

All 12 of the Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of December 17-21 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 12 Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 88 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The highest score was 100, received by Russellville Senior Center, 205 Montgomery St. SW, Russellville.

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

- Russellville Middle Schooo, 765 Summit, Russellville, 88. (Heat sanitizing dishmachine only reaching 140 degrees, burgers being held at 108-120 degrees. Supposed to be heated to 165 degrees).
- La Cabana, 10047 Hwy. 75, Russellville, 89. (No drying device at handsink in restroom, mold on food).
- Swamp John’s Country Store, 5181 Hwy. 24, Red Bay, 91. (Dented cans).
- Parade Food Mart, 4141 Hwy. 24 East, Red Bay, 93. (No paper towels in restroom).
- Burger King #10859, 15455 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 96.
- Jack’s #136, 521 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 96.
- Red Bay Hospital, 211 Hospital Road, Red Bay, 97.
- East Franklin Junior High, 1815 Hwy. 89, Phil Campbell, 97.
- Russellville High School, 1865 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 97.
- Tienda Latina Mi Refugio, 412 Madison St., Russellville, 99.
- New Freedom Daycare, 508 St. Clair St., Russellville, 99.

Of the 19 inspections done in Colbert County from December 17-21, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory.

The high score of 100 was received by Red Roof Inn, 2807 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

Health ratings are available at www.foodscores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

Honey Do: The gift of time

I've heard it all my life. The older you get, the faster the time goes by. I've got news for you.

It's true.

You're probably reading this on the day after New Year's at the end of a year that, for me, has rushed by like Santa's reindeer must do when he points them toward home.

I really feel the true magic of the season when the kids and grandkids get home. Now that two months of hectic sales and shopping have come to an end and the Christmas plays and musicals have been practiced and performed and the parties have been partied and the dances have been danced, now is the time to settle in and enjoy our blessings.

That brings me to the greatest gift on Santa's list--time. Time spent with family and friends, old and young, laughing, reminiscing, letting the ghosts of Christmas past roam freely as they attach themselves to new generations and become new memories and traditions.

The telling and re-telling of the

struggles and hardships, humorous times and difficult times, are what makes a family a family and what gives the next generation the motivation and confidence to endure.

After all, look what Grandpa and Grandma went through, and they maintained their integrity. They survived (whether with tears or laughter), and we are here to prove it.

Oh, did I mention the "true magic" of the season? Please don't forget the faith and hope that only comes from keeping "Christ"mas and passing that faith and hope on to the next generation.

The greatest gift on Santa's list may be "time," but the greatest gift on God's list is "LOVE," and it knows no time. No honey-do list should be without it.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and a WONDERFUL, BLESSED, HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Doug Green

OUR HOUSE by Ree Shannon



Send your letters to the editor, guest columns, cartoon panels and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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Correction Policy

The *Franklin Free Press* strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

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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My take Are you ready for on this... another countdown?

The days of counting down for Christmas have ended, but that expression got my thoughts to spinning on how many things we count down for.

Have you ever thought about that? If you haven't, then please humor me and read on.

A young child will count down when it's close to time for a birthday party. His or her friends and cousins will be there, and there will be presents and games and cake. Even the arrival of the actual birthday doesn't put an end to the counting, oh no! It just goes from minutes to seconds.

The sweet thing about a child is he enjoys thinking happy thoughts. As the last friend gets into his car to leave and those little hands keep waving until out of sight, that birthday child will look up into your eyes with the sweetest smile and say, "Thank you for my birthday party. It was so much fun! Next year, we can do it again?" And, in his little mind, the countdown has begun.

What about the space flights? How many times in your life have you stood around the television in your classroom or at home and counted down the biggest adrenaline rush ever? Whether it was the very first launch or the most recent, the countdown to the words "lift-off" is the most anticipated moment in time. It never gets old. Is it the countdown itself? Would it be exciting if there were no countdown? Do the words "lift-off" give it the adrenaline rush? I think all of it together is what builds the excitement. A rocket going off into space could be all that was needed. What would the results be with a silent launch? Think about that, if you would. Without a countdown, I

just don't think it would be the same adrenaline rush.

As I write this, our worldwide countdown that brings the transition from one year to the next is almost here. The television coverage is nonstop across the states. Excitement is high, there are celebrity hosts and co-hosts and music and movies, and the list goes on and on. There are families who make it a yearly tradition to be together to welcome in the New Year.

Church families will welcome in the New Year by singing hymns and being thankful for all the blessings from the year before. When the countdown has ended, the New Year is brought in with a prayer. I can't think of a better way to do it.

Whether you are a part of a group or alone and are still awake, you will be a part of that famous countdown: *Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one - Happy New Year!*

Why is the beginning of every year started like this? Well, I have my take on this. It's simply because....It's the American Way!

Thank you to all my friends, old and new that I have met while having the opportunity to do what I enjoy because of the *Franklin Free Press*. I'd like to give a big thank you to Mike Self for all of your support and help. If I don't run out of things to talk about (yeah, I know, that will *not* happen), I will be back next year.

So happy New Year! May 2019 be your best one yet!



Gail Motes



Invest now?

Dear Dave,
I'm almost debt-free, and I'll be finishing my master's degree soon. I'm not from this country, so I'll be returning home in the next three to five years. Considering my situation, would investing in the stock market be a good idea? I've been reading that the market is about to crash, so I wanted to get your advice.

Rahm

Dear Rahm,
If someone could accurately predict the stock market with certainty, that person would be a multi-billionaire. Right now, there are also articles out there that say the market is about to boom. There are always "glass-half-full" and "glass-half-empty" articles floating around. I wouldn't avoid stock market investing based on one ridiculous article. However, in *your* situation, you may not want to invest in the stock market right now. History says you stand a fair chance of coming out with less than you put in if you don't leave the money invested in the stock market alone for at least five years. The market cycles up, and the market cycles down. This really isn't a big problem if you're going to put your money in there and leave it alone for 20 years or more. But three to five years? The historical data says you've got a reasonable chance of actually losing money. So, I probably wouldn't invest if you're going to be gone in five years or less. Instead, when you're settled and have a career in your home country, I'd advise looking into how you can invest there. You might

even want to do some research and find out if you can begin investing there now.

Dave

Designate a percentage

Dear Dave,
I'm debt-free except for my home, and I have a small business with revenues of around \$100,000 annually. About half of that is profit, and I typically pay myself 40 percent of the bi-weekly revenue. I'm in the media business, and I need to upgrade some equipment. At what point do I put back a little more money, or pay myself a little less, to make this happen?

Luke

Dear Luke,
I know what you mean, man. We're in the media business, too, and around my office it seems like we buy more and newer technology every day. Really, it's like a black hole. You could throw money into it the rest of your life, because practically the very moment you open the box it's obsolete.

We finally decided to designate a percentage of our revenues to equipment replacement. Something is always being replaced, but this way we've got a limit *and* we've got something set aside to make our technology needs happen. It's like the envelope system. If the envelope's empty, we have to stop buying and put off whatever it is until the cash is available again.

I hope this helps!

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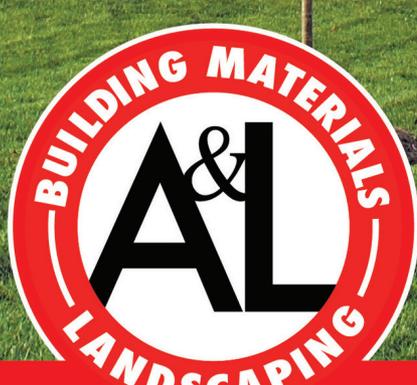
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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

 The Shoals Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Sheffield Room at Park Place, 501 N. Montgomery Avenue, Sheffield, this Thursday, January 3 at 6:30 p.m. Linda Romine will teach on "Jesus: Name Above Every Name." We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. All are welcome.

 With the spring semester right around the corner, Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) will host a registration event this Saturday, January 5 on the Shoals Campus. From 10 a.m.-2 p.m., NW-SCC will help new and current students apply and register for the spring semester. The Saturday registration event will offer one-stop assistance in the registration process with admission to NW-SCC, course advising, financial aid, placement testing (for those who arrive by 12:30 p.m.), and with payments through the cashier's office. The entire registration event will take place on the Shoals campus in the Victor P. Poole Administration Building (building 100), with the exception of placement testing (held in building 127). For those who have not yet applied for admission to NW-SCC, they can apply online at nwscc.edu. Students who have not already applied for financial aid are encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) immediately. The FAFSA can be submitted online at fafsa.gov, and the NW-SCC school code is 005697. Spring semester classes begin January 7. The College reopens to the public following the holiday break on January 3. For more information about the registration event, please contact Assistant Dean of Admission and Recruitment Tom Carter at tom.carter@nwscc.edu or visit nwscc.edu.

 Russellville FUMC will host a men's and a women's Step Study on Sundays from 3-5 pm. A step study guides you through a process of discovery and recovery over your hurts, hang-ups and habits. Everyone is welcome!

 For anyone with the courage to be honest about life's hurts, habits and hang-ups, First United Methodist Church of Russellville will host *Celebrate Recovery!* on Tuesday nights with supper at 6 p.m., large group at 6:30 and small groups at 7:30. Free childcare provided. Church is located at 311 North Jackson Avenue. Come and join us!

 The next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be on Thursday, January 10 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be at 6:30 p.m.

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville on Saturday, January 12 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.

 If you are interested in the study of the Civil War and have an ancestor who was in the Confederate Army, join the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month (except January and July) at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center. Next meeting will be February 7. The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized at Richmond, VA in 1896, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the period from 1861-1865 is preserved. Membership in the SCV is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate Armed Forces. Membership can be obtained through either direct or collateral family lines, and kinship to a veteran must be documented genealogically. Join us for the celebration of our heritage! The minimum age for membership is 12. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317.

 The NACOLG SenioRx Medication Assistance Program supplies free and low-cost medications for anyone in Alabama with a disability or a chronic illness, regardless of age, that requires daily medication. Medicare recipients may also be eligible. For more information, contact NACOLG SenioRx today. There is no charge for this service. Call 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463) or 256-389-0530. This program is in partnership with the state of Alabama and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

 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, 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!

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'SAFETY' from page 1

She describes it as a traffic recipe for disaster, and Tharp has reached out to Russellville mayor David Grissom for assistance.

Grissom received a call from Tharp in December, and he referred her to Russellville Police chief Chris Hargett because it was a traffic issue. Hargett spoke with Tharp about her concerns, and he's pledged to increase his department's enforcement and presence on East Lawrence Street between Highways 43 and 24.

"She is concerned about vehicles turning left into the day care in the mornings. It's one of our most traveled roads we have in town with two day cares, IHP, traffic going to the chicken plant and several apartment complexes," Hargett said. "I'm looking at some options to step up enforcement and see if there's some way to alleviate the fear of accidents while parents are turning into Mars Hill."

Although the speed limit is 35 miles per hour, Tharp says vehicles routinely travel East

Lawrence at higher speeds, and with blind curves before and after Mars Hill, she's concerned about being a 'sitting duck' as she waits to turn into the school.

"If people would pay attention and go the speed limit, they would have plenty of time to stop. People don't pay attention, and they're speeding, and the danger is them rear-ending you when you're turning into the school," Tharp said. **"I'm scared every morning. I turn on my blinker and brake in plenty of time, but people just don't pay attention."**

"With two day cares so close together, I really wish they would make it into a school zone in the morning and afternoon. Until people start getting tickets, they won't care about the speed limit, though."

"If people would pay attention and go the speed limit, they would have plenty of time to stop. People don't pay attention, and they're speeding, and the danger is them rear-ending you when you're turning into the school," Tharp said. "I'm scared every morning. I turn on my blinker and brake in plenty of time, but people just don't pay attention."

"With two day cares so close together, I really wish they would make it into a school zone in the morning and afternoon. Until people start getting tickets, they won't care about the speed limit, though."

Hargett said this wasn't the first concern he's heard about the situation on East Lawrence Street.

"We want to be proactive. We're going to take our speed trailer onto East Lawrence and monitor traffic during those [dropoff and pickup] times for speeders and unsafe driving," Hargett said.

'TRANSPLANT' from page 1

marrow transplant.

The goal of the Go Fund Me account is to raise all or part of the \$210,000 cost Hernandez will need for the transplant. She has no insurance and no financial means to pay for the transplant. That's where her community, and a local church, stepped in to reach out to others to help Hernandez.

"I do not have much hope for life, and I only wish to have the opportunity to live a little longer, because I love life and I know that God is the one who has me here on this beautiful planet," Hernandez said.

Russellville resident Jennifer Betancourt is one of those who was touched by Hernandez's story. Betancourt met Hernandez through a church member at Iglesia Nueva Vida.

"I had a family member pass away from

leukemia, so this hits close to home," Betancourt said. "Her life depends on this treatment. She's depending on other people.

"My only hope is to receive a transplant of a good-hearted person who is enrolled in the bone marrow donor bank," Hernandez said. **"I ask all of you who love life, like me, to please help. I believe in God, I love life, and I know there is still goodness in people's hearts."**

"It's a good bit of money that's needed, so we started a Go Fund Me account and tried to spread the news around town. We hope it spreads a little further from there and keeps spreading and finding people to reach out to help her."

Hernandez has five brothers, each of whom was

analyzed as a potential donor of bone marrow, and none were compatible.

"My only hope is to receive a transplant of a good-hearted person who is enrolled in the bone marrow donor bank," Hernandez said. "I ask all of you who love life, like me, to please help. I believe in God, I love life, and I know there is still goodness in people's hearts."

To learn more about Hernandez and her condition, or to make a financial contribution toward her medical expenses, go online to the website www.gofundme.com and search for Merlin Hernandez Russellville.

All donations are protected through Go Fund Me's guarantee, and if anything is found not to be as presented on the account, all donations are refundable.

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Northwest-Shoals hosting registration event

Submitted to the FFP

MUSCLE SHOALS — With the spring semester right around the corner, Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) will host a registration event this Saturday, January 5 on the Shoals Campus.

This Saturday, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., NW-SCC will help new and current students apply and register for the spring semester. The registration event will offer one-stop assistance in the registration process with admission to NW-SCC, course advising, financial aid, placement testing (for those who arrive by 12:30 p.m.), and with payments through the cashier's office.

The entire registration event will take place on the Shoals campus in the

Victor P. Poole Administration Building (building 100) with the exception of placement testing (held in building 127).

For those who have not yet applied for admission to NW-SCC, they can apply online at nwscc.edu. Students who have not already applied for financial aid are encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) immediately. The FAFSA can be submitted online at fafsa.gov, and the NW-SCC school code is 005697.

Spring semester classes begin January 7. The college reopens to the public following the holiday break on Thursday, January 3. For more information about the registration event, please contact Assistant Dean of Admission and Recruitment, Tom Carter, at tom.carter@nwscc.edu or visit nwscc.edu.

Rainfall totals keep climbing to record levels

Submitted to the FFP

As 2018 draws to a close, yearly rainfall totals for the TVA region continue to climb to near record levels, and the trend for above average rainfall totals continues right up to year's end.

"For the week before Christmas, rainfall averaged two inches in the eastern Valley and 1.4 inches in the western Valley," said James Everett, senior manager for TVA's River Forecast Center. "We began spilling and sluicing at several locations the day after Christmas to increase flows and increase flood storage capacity, and that will likely continue into the New Year."

Everett said TVA is spilling or sluicing this week through gates at South Holston, Wilbur, Cherokee, Douglas, Norris, Fontana, Apalachia, Ocoee 3, Great Falls, Fort Loudoun, Watts Bar, Chickamauga, Nickajack, Guntersville, Wheeler, Wilson, Pickwick and Kentucky reservoirs.

Most dams along the main stem Tennessee River have been in spill operations since mid-November and will likely be spilling well into 2019.

"Looks like 2018 is going to end with the same thing we've seen most of the year: Rain," said Everett. "It's possible further gate changes will be needed this last week of the year and into next week to adjust for changes in rainfall predictions."

The current forecast calls for rainfall beginning today (Thursday) continuing through Friday night. Total accumulations of one to four inches are expected with the heaviest amounts in the mountains of western North Carolina and north Georgia. Another round of heavy rain is also currently forecasted for early next week with additional two to three inch totals.

Rainfall FTYD is more than 140 percent of normal and runoff more than 200 percent of normal, Everett said, boosted by hurricanes Florence and Michael and Winter Storm Diego. Regional rainfall totals for the year over the 41,000 square-mile Tennessee River Valley have exceeded 62 inches, placing 2018 in the Top 10 all time for yearly rainfall in the TVA region.

Expected rains the last week of 2018 could possibly break the previous annual rainfall record of 65.1 inches set in 1973. The Tennessee Valley region normally averages 51 inches of rain a year.

"2018 has certainly been a rainy year, and it looks like that will continue right up to New Year's Day," Everett said. "We are ready for it and looking forward to continuing to serve the people of the Tennessee Valley in 2019."

TVA manages the 652-mile Tennessee River and its many tributaries using a series of 49 dams to meet vital public needs in six key areas: navigation, flood damage reduction, power production, water quality, water supply and recreation.

Six key traits of people who win with money

Meet the Smith family.

Both parents work, and they make good money. From the outside, life looks good—a new Tahoe, a big house and private schools for the kids.

But in reality, the Smiths are barely scraping by. With the help of credit cards and car loans, they spend more money than they make, and they're just one financial emergency away from being in serious trouble.

Then, there's the Williams family.

One parent works, and makes decent money, while the other stays at home and takes care of the kids. The Williams family lives on a budget, and even though they still have a lot of student loan debt, they've cut the balance in half during the last two years. They have a small emergency fund saved, and they expect to be out of debt completely in two years.

So, what do you think is the difference between the Smiths and the Williamses? Why is one family able to pay off thousands of dollars in debt on a tight budget, while another family barely gets by week after week? Why does one person succeed with money, while another person struggles?

There are dozens of factors, but many times it comes down to these key characteristics.

They're patient. People who win with money are patient. They can delay a short-term pleasure for a long-term gain. In other words, they can walk right by the shoe section without blinking.

They know \$100 shoes would be nice, but they have higher priorities. That's because they understand the bigger picture. It's about retirement and

college funds and that beach vacation they're dreaming about.

Believe me, I love the shoe section. But when I stop and pick up a pair of designer shoes in a store, I ask myself if we've budgeted for this and if buying that pair of shoes effect our priorities.

They're confident. When you're in control of your money, you're confident. You also don't care when other people look down their noses at you, because you're cutting back on lifestyle costs. Keeping up with the Joneses? Forget about it!

They aren't materialistic. They understand that you can have a bunch of stuff without being wealthy, and you can be wealthy without owning a bunch of stuff. Big houses, nice cars and fancy vacations are perfectly fine, but someone who wins with money understands all those things by themselves don't bring happiness. They live their lives with that in mind.

One of the mistakes people make is to fall into the social media comparison game. You pull up Instagram and see beautiful photos from your friend Sarah's Caribbean cruise. Meanwhile, you haven't been on vacation in a year because you're working so hard to get out of debt. But confident people stay focused on their goals and understand that sacrifices are temporary. They know they'll be able to take that cruise soon enough!



Rachel Cruze

They're goal-oriented. People who win with money approach goals with incredible passion. Save \$1,000? Check. Get out of debt? Check. Build a full emergency fund? Check. For them, setting goals is fun. This isn't some special skill you're born with. Anyone can develop the habit of goal-setting, and here are a few basic tips.

Write them down and put them in a visible spot. Seeing your goals written out every day will keep them at the front of your mind.

Be specific. Exactly how much debt do you want to pay off each month? How much weight do you want to lose each month?

Set a time limit. Where's your finish line? And, remember, be realistic. You'll probably need more than a month to get out of debt!

They're responsible. They get it. They understand that in order to get to where they want to be financially, they might have to take a year off from vacation, skip dining out for a few months or cut back on grocery spending. And honestly, couldn't we all cut back on grocery spending?

When I talk with people about their budgets, food is one of the main areas where people overspend—either at the grocery store or dining out. Responsible people are willing to look at their money situation and make smart choices. I know sometimes "adulting" isn't fun. But those smaller, "boring" decisions, like budgeting and staying on top of your account balance, can put you in a place to have a lot more fun later. That's becoming a theme here, isn't it?

They aren't materialistic. They understand that



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JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Franklin County Commission will accept applications for the following position: Corrections Officer/Dispatcher for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office until 5:00 PM on Friday, January 11, 2019.

An application and job description may be picked up at the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, AL 35653, Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

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JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Franklin County Commission will accept applications for the following two positions: Solid Waste Technician for the Franklin County Solid Waste Department until 5:00 PM on Friday, January 11, 2019.

An application and job description may be picked up at the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, AL 35653, Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

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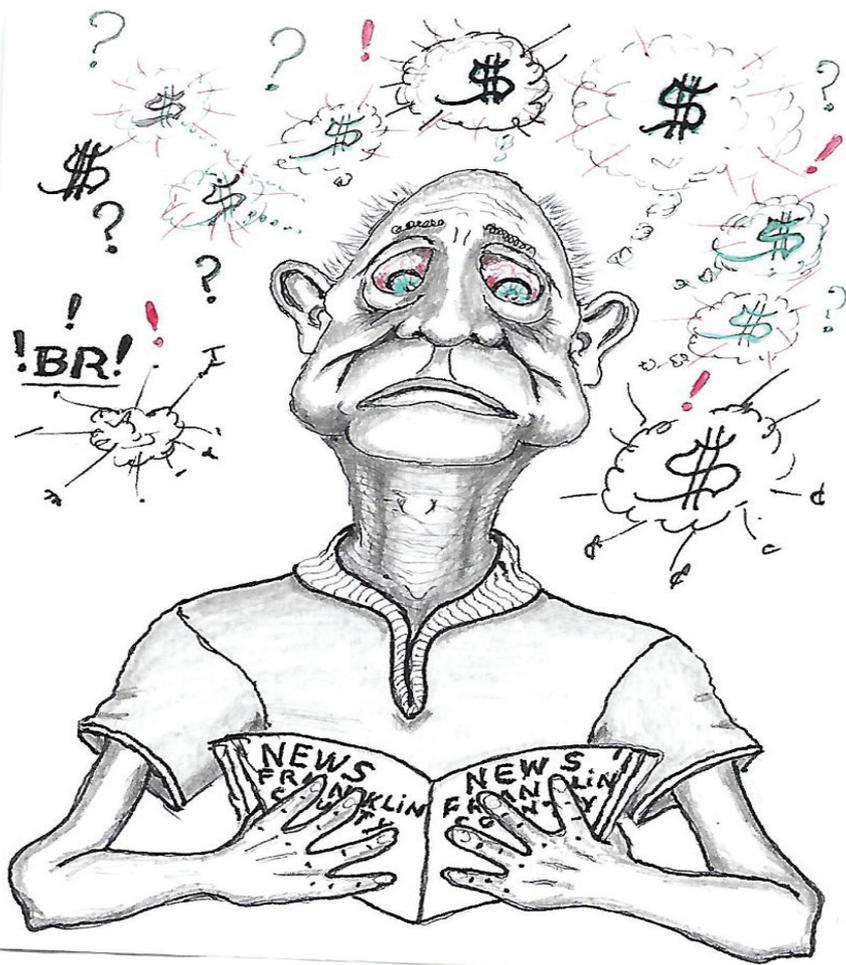
JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Franklin County Commission will accept applications for the following two positions: Sheriff Deputy for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office until 5:00 PM on Friday, January 11, 2019.

An application and job description may be picked up at the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, AL 35653, Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

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New Year, new issues....



CARTOON BY NORRIS DUNCAN

With 2019 having arrived, Americans are hearing a lot about the government shutdown, the need (and lack thereof) for a border wall, an erratic stock market and plenty of other financial issues—so much that it's caused a brain overload with this fella!

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'MONEY,' from page 9

you can have a bunch of stuff without being wealthy, and you can be wealthy without owning a bunch of stuff. Big houses, nice cars and fancy vacations are perfectly fine, but someone who wins with money understands all those things by themselves don't bring happiness. They live their lives with that in mind. That doesn't mean they're against owning stuff or they think wealthy people are somehow "evil;" they just get the fact that money isn't everything.

They're willing to sacrifice. They understand budget cuts are just temporary. Five years from now, once they're out of debt and winning with

money, they'll look back on those sacrifices with a smile. This is a big one, and it works closely with patience and responsibility. Sacrifice can't happen if you aren't patient or responsible, because you can't get past the immediate rush of having something or doing something *right now*. When it comes to sacrificing with money, you must look past today.

The great thing about these characteristics is you can develop them. Even if you aren't naturally patient, or you aren't a big goal setter, you can develop these character traits by working to create new habits in your life. And when these

habits turn into character traits, you'll be well on your way toward winning with money for good!

As a #1 New York Times best-selling author and host of The Rachel Cruze Show, Rachel 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 rachelcruze.com, youtube.com/rachelcruze or facebook.com/rachelramseycruze.



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SPORTS

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Russellville boys fall in Bracy final

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

TUSCUMBIA - A brutal second quarter proved too much for Russellville to overcome last Friday night as the Golden Tigers fell to Lauderdale County 73-66 in the championship game of the Helen Keller Hospital Bracy Invitational at Deshler High School.

Leading 22-18 after knocking down four threes (including three by sophomore forward Chandler Dyas) in the first quarter, Russellville (10-4) abruptly went ice-cold. The Golden Tigers did not make a field goal in the second quarter and got out-scored 23-5 as Lauderdale County (12-6) took a 41-27 lead into the locker room.

"If you had told me we'd score five points in a quarter," Odom said, "I would have said you were crazy. But it happened tonight. That stretch was the difference in the game. In the second half, we played our tails off, but [being down] fourteen points against a good team is a lot to overcome."

"The final six minutes of the second quarter, we started rushing a little bit and got out of the flow," Russellville coach Patrick Odom said. "But we also had some of the same looks we were making in the first quarter, and they just didn't go. As it went on, I thought we started trying to force the ball in the hole. We had some guys who knew we needed to score and knew we needed to get it going. I told our guys during a timeout, 'They're giving us a taste of our own medicine.' They were getting stops and transitioning us a little bit. That's good basketball, and that's what good teams do.

"We just never could get in the flow. Some of it was self-inflicted, and some of it was missing shots. You never know in this game. We turned around and looked very efficient in the second half with the same types of looks. That's just basketball. Sometimes you can't explain it. If you had told me we'd score five points in a quarter, I would have said you were crazy. But it happened tonight.

"That stretch was the difference in the game. In the second half, we played our tails off, but fourteen points against a good team is a lot to overcome."

Russellville rallied to open the second half, getting six points from Devin Buckhalter, four from Will Bonner and a three-pointer from Lucas McNutt in a 15-5 run that cut the lead to four at 46-42. Lauderdale County responded with seven unanswered points and led 53-42 at the end of three.

"We had our opportunities," Odom said, "but give them credit. They know how to win. They're a tough team, and they know how to milk the clock. Every time we got close, they found a way to make a play. They're just tough."

See 'BRACY,' Page 17

Three from prolific RHS offense named All-State

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

More than once during this past season, John Ritter referenced Washington State head coach—and spread passing game guru—Mike Leach's philosophy on offensive balance.

"Mike Leach said that being balanced on offense doesn't necessarily mean you're fifty-fifty run-to-pass," said Ritter, who brought his own run-heavy, option-based attack to Russellville in March. "It's about getting all your playmakers the ball."

On a Golden Tiger offense that averaged 40.2 points per game (tops in Class 5A and the most by any team at RHS since the 2002 squad put up a school-record 44.5 per game), Ritter had plenty of playmakers at his disposal—none more capable or dynamic than the senior trio of quarterback Lucas McNutt, tailback Zaye Boyd and receiver Devin Buckhalter.

All three players posted monster numbers for a Russellville

See 'OFFENSE,' Page 16



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Boyd (3) became the first back in Golden Tiger history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season, averaging 189.5 yards per game and 10.7 per carry.

Red Bay seniors Bragwell, Ingle recognized by ASWA

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press



Ingle (66) and Bragwell (4) received All-State honorable mention in Class 2A.

There was no secret as to what Red Bay wanted to do on offense this past season: Run the football.

More specifically, the Tigers wanted to run the ball behind Elijah Ingle.

In his third year as a varsity starter, the 5'10, 245-pound Ingle moved from guard to right tackle midway through the season—but he didn't necessarily stay there.

"He was our right tackle," head coach Michael Jackson said, "unless we were running the ball left. Then he was our left tackle. That's exactly what we did. We just moved him to whichever side we wanted to run it and then ran behind him.

"That made it harder on him, because teams

See 'SENIORS,' Page 19

Bragwell scores career-high 33 to help Bulldogs get by Central in shootout win

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

TUSCUMBIA - Last Wednesday's action at the Helen Keller Hospital Bracy Invitational was highlighted by offense, offense and more offense, as teams played with pace, piled up the points and put on impressive shot-making displays.

Nobody, however, scored more points on day one of the Bracy than Belgreen.

The Bulldogs—one of five Class 1A teams in this year's field—staged an offensive clinic against Class 4A Central in the second quarterfinal game, shooting 53 percent (32-for-60) from the field with eight three-pointers and knocking down 17-of-21 free throws on their way to an 89-79 shootout win over the Wildcats.

Mason Bragwell led the way for Belgreen with a career-high 33 points, and fellow senior Brant Bragwell shook off a slow start to score 23.

Trailing by one at the end of one quarter, the Bulldogs proceeded to score 55 points over the next two quarters and led by as many as 17 in the fourth before holding off a late charge by Central to earn a date with Russellville in last Thursday's semifinals.

"I liked our effort, really," said Belgreen coach Clint Isbell, whose team missed matching its season-high for points by just one and survived 13 made threes by the Wildcats. "I felt like we got after it defensively. I know they scored 79 points, but they got hot from outside and just couldn't miss there for a while. I thought we were forcing them to shoot tough outside shots. We handled it pretty well defensively.

"Offensively, I didn't think we shot it all that great. We shot it pretty decent, but I didn't feel like we relied just on outside shooting—and we still had 89 points."

The Bulldogs, who were held to a season-low 39

points in their previous game against Brooks on December 18, hit the 40-point mark last Wednesday on a basket by Brant Bragwell with 1:30 left in the first half. Reserve guard Kostner Bryant buried his second three of the half moments later, and Belgreen took a 43-38 lead into the locker room.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Bragwell's big night upped his season scoring average to 18.5 points per game and put him over the 1,500-point mark for his varsity career.

The second quarter was an offensive bonanza on both ends, with the two teams combining to score 50 points on 17-for-31 shooting from the field (with eight threes) and 8-for-8 from the foul line. The Bulldogs shot 60 percent (9-for-15) from the floor and 100 percent (6-for-6) from the line in

quarter number two, getting 11 points from Mason Bragwell, nine from Brant Bragwell and eight from Bryant on their way to out-scoring Central 28-22.

"They shoot quick when they get a good look from outside," Isbell said of the Wildcats, who never met a three-point shot they didn't like. "I wanted us to push the tempo. I wanted us to grab the rebound and push it, and I feel like we did that.

"When you shoot a lot of outside shots, it produces long rebounds, which gives us the advantage of pushing the ball up the floor. When you're getting the rebound out near the free-throw line or the three-point line, you can push the ball up the floor a little quicker than if you're catching it under the goal. That helped us out, too, and I thought we ran the floor really well."

The onslaught continued in the third quarter, when the Bulldogs shot 12-for-22 from the field, made three threes and did not commit a single turnover on their way to out-scoring Central 27-16. Mason Bragwell scored 12 third-quarter points and Brant Bragwell added nine, helping Belgreen open up a 70-54 lead heading to the fourth.

The Wildcats opened the final period with a 21-9 run, cutting the lead to four at 79-75 on a three-point play by Dalton Hanback with 3:09 remaining. Mason Bragwell responded, hitting a free throw and then finding sophomore post player Isaac Willingham for an open layup to push the lead back out to seven. Bragwell then hit two more free throws with 48 seconds left to make it 84-75 and essentially seal the deal.

Bragwell, a 6'6 senior whose previous career-high had been 32 points against Covenant Christian when he was a freshman, shot 11-for-17 from the field and 7-for-8 from the line last Wednesday. His four threes were a career-high, and he also finished with eight rebounds and three assists.

"Mason did a great job tonight," Isbell said of Bragwell, who upped his scoring average to 18.5 points per game on the year. "He shot it well, but he also worked inside. I've told him for a long time, if you work inside, that outside game will open up. When you work them inside, they'll respect that, and then you can shoot it from outside."

Brant Bragwell shot 8-for-20 from the floor and 6-for-7 from the line last Wednesday night on his way to topping the 20-point mark for the fourth time this season. He also grabbed five rebounds, helping Belgreen hold a 29-20 edge on the glass. Bryant scored all 10 of his points in the first half, shooting 3-for-4 from the field and 2-for-2 from the line. Scout Bragwell scored eight points, and Willingham finished with seven points, six rebounds and four steals.

Gaven Taylor added four points, and Koby Collins and David Plott each had two.

Lane McCay and Jaden Carter hit six threes apiece for Central. McCay finished with 28 points on 11-for-20 shooting, and Carter had 27 on 10-for-20 from the field. Tyler Inman added 12 points. The Wildcats made 13 threes to Belgreen's eight, but they were just 4-for-6 from the foul line.

This Christmas season was already a special one for Isbell and his wife Christina. The couple welcomed their first child on Wednesday, December 19, when Carter Drake Isbell was born.

"He's our first one," Isbell said. "It's been an exciting time for both of us."

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COURTESY PHOTO

The Russellville Middle School seventh-grade boys (pictured above) beat Wilson, Central and Mars Hill to take home the RMS Christmas Classic title in mid-December.

RMS seventh-graders win Christmas Classic

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Middle School seventh-grade boys basketball team recently captured the annual RMS Christmas Classic, held December 14-15 at the RMS gym. Coached by Mason Willis, the team defeated Wilson 47-9, Central 42-17 and Mars Hill 38-30 in the championship game.

Team members include Brandt Cummings, Michael Scofield, KJ Murray, Reece Carson, Gavin Hyde, Brock Reathford, Malachi Duncan, Amir Williams, Brodie Vandiver, Devin Jones, Ethan Fretwell and Jeremy Winston. Many of the teammates have played together since the second grade, part of the reason for the team's success this season.

Fans will have several more opportunities to see the seventh-grade Golden Tigers in action. The team plays at Hamilton on January 3 at 4:30 p.m. and has home dates remaining January 5 vs. Deshler at 10 a.m., January 8 vs. Winfield at 4:30 p.m., January 12 vs. Brooks at 10 a.m. and January 14 vs. Central at 4:30 p.m.

2019 Franklin County Junior High Tournament (at Vina)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

- 9 a.m. - Tharptown vs. Belgreen - 7th/8th Girls
- 10:15 a.m. - Vina vs. Red Bay - 7th/8th Boys
- 11:30 a.m. - Tharptown vs. Phil Campbell - 7th/8th Boys
- 12:45 p.m. - Phil Campbell vs. Belgreen - 9th Girls
- 2 p.m. - Tharptown vs. East Franklin - 9th Girls
- 3:15 p.m. - Phil Campbell vs. East Franklin - 9th Boys
- 4:30 p.m. - Belgreen vs. Vina/Red Bay - 7th/8th Boys
- 5:45 p.m. - East Franklin vs. Tharptown/Phil Campbell - 7th/8th Boys

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

- 9 a.m. - Vina vs. Tharptown/Belgreen - 7th/8th Girls
- 10:15 a.m. - Red Bay vs. Phil Campbell - 7th/8th Girls
- 11:30 a.m. - Red Bay vs. Phil Campbell/East Franklin - 9th Boys
- 12:45 p.m. - Tharptown vs. Belgreen - 9th Boys
- 2 p.m. - Championship - 7th/8th Girls
- 3:30 p.m. - Championship 7th/8th Boys
- 5 p.m. - Championship - 9th Girls
- 6:30 p.m. - Championship - 9th Boys

Lucas McNutt Senior Guard, Russellville

Coming off a career-high 33-point outing against Rogers on December 18, McNutt kept it rolling last week at the Bracy Invitational.

The 6'1 senior averaged 22.3 points in three games, leading the Golden Tigers to a runner-up finish. McNutt opened the tournament with 30 points in a 73-60 win over Mars Hill. He then hit five threes and scored 21 in a rout of Belgreen before putting up 16 points in the final against Lauderdale County.

For the season, McNutt is averaging 17.2 points per game with 50 threes made.



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‘OFFENSE,’ from page 13

team that finished 9-2, and Boyd and Buckhalter both received All-State honors in Class 5A from the Alabama Sports Writers Association.

“He had great vision,” Ritter said of Boyd. “He did a phenomenal job of setting up his blocks and knowing where the creases were. More than anything, he did what he was supposed to do and what he was coached to do. That includes blocking for other guys when they ran the ball and blocking in the pass game, too.”

“I think that speaks to the unselfishness of our offense,” Ritter said. “People were calling those guys our three-headed monster all year, and when you’ve got three guys like that it would be easy to have complacency or jealousy start to creep in. But that never happened. And that’s part of the reason we had the second-best offense that’s been at Russellville and the number one offense in 5A. We were very multi-dimensional.”

Back at RHS after one year in Moulton, Boyd set a new single-season school rushing record in 2018 with 2,084 yards (an average of 189.5 per game) on his way to earning first-team All-State honors from the ASWA. Remarkably, the 6’1, 210-pound senior became the first back in Golden Tiger history to surpass the 2,000-yard mark despite carrying the ball—on average—less than 18 times per game. He was incredibly explosive and efficient, averaging a staggering 10.7 yards per attempt on the season.

“Zaye had a phenomenal year,” Ritter said. “I don’t know how many 2,000-yard backs there were in 5A or in the whole state. He was a guy who was very coachable and worked very hard. He had a phenomenal year, and his stats back that up.”

Of Boyd’s 30 rushing touchdowns this season, seven covered at least 60 yards, two more covered at least 50 yards and four more covered at least 40 yards. A true home run hitter, Boyd averaged an astonishing 54.6 yards on his 16 touchdown runs of 30-plus yards.

“He had great vision,” Ritter said. “He did a phenomenal job of setting up his blocks and knowing where the creases were in the schemes we were running. More than anything, he did what he was supposed to do and what he was coached to do. That includes blocking for other guys when they ran the ball and blocking in the pass game, too.”

Boyd opened the season with a bang, rushing for 185 yards and five touchdowns in an overtime win over rival Deshler. He didn’t really get rolling until mid-season, though, posting a prolific four-game run with 242 rushing yards against West Point, 275 against Haleyville, 195 against Lawrence

County and 210 against Hamilton.

Boyd saved his best for last, setting his own personal single-game high with 281 yards (and four touchdowns) on 27 carries against Dora—and then topping it one week later with 286 yards (and five scores) on just 14 attempts against Central.

Healthy again after missing his entire junior season with a broken bone in his foot, Buckhalter was more dynamic than ever in 2018 and earned second-team All-State honors from the ASWA. He scored 16 touchdowns on the season in five different ways—nine receiving, three on punt returns, two rushing, one passing and one on a pick-six. [He started at safety for the Golden Tigers in their final three games.]

“Devin was a guy who made plays for us in a variety of ways,” Ritter said. “There were multiple games where he scored in every phase. He was

the type of guy who was a very smart football player, and that allowed us to do a lot of different things with him.

“Devin was a guy who made plays for us in a lot of ways,” Ritter said. “There were multiple games where he scored in every phase. He was the type of guy who was a very smart football player, and that allowed us to do a lot of different things with him. We put him at a lot of different positions on offense, and he excelled at all of them.”

“We put him at a lot of different positions on offense, and he excelled at all of them. He did a great job of stretching the field vertically and horizontally, just like Zaye. Then, when we put him on defense for the last three games, Devin averaged ten tackles a game. He had an outstanding year.”

Electric with the ball in his hands, the 6’0, 190-pound Buckhalter was a big play waiting to happen. Of those 16 total touchdowns, nine covered at least 40 yards. He had touchdown catches of 70, 57, 56 and 49 yards; punt return scores of 65, 50 and 48 yards; a rushing touchdown of 42 yards; and a 40-yard interception return for a score.

Buckhalter broke out in Week 4 at West Point with six catches for 138 yards and two touchdowns; two weeks later, he had a 42-yard touchdown run on Russellville’s first play from scrimmage and later caught two scoring passes—including a 70-yarder—in a 53-32 win over Lawrence County. The following week, in a 65-34 rout of Hamilton, Buckhalter caught four passes for 106 yards and two touchdowns while also taking a punt 65 yards to the house.

Buckhalter finished the season with a career-high 702 yards on 39 catches, an average of 18.0 yards per reception.

Helping pave the way for skill guys like Boyd and Buckhalter to put up those eye-popping numbers was an offensive line led by 6’0, 220-pound senior Will Rushing, who earned All-State honorable mention from the ASWA. After starting at left tackle as a junior in 2017, the versatile Rushing moved inside as a senior and anchored the Golden Tiger line at left guard. He graded out as the team’s top lineman on the year and helped pave the way for a prolific rushing attack that averaged 292.6 yards per game on the ground.

“Will was the catalyst for what we did up front,” Ritter said. “He was a leader. He’s another guy we did a lot of different things with. We played him at guard, we played him at tackle, and the last three weeks we played him at the tight end spot a good bit. He did whatever we asked him to do, and he did it all a hundred miles an hour. Those are the types of kids you really love to coach.”



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Buckhalter set a new career-high with 702 receiving yards and caught nine touchdown passes in 2018. He also scored three times on punt returns, twice on runs, once on a pick-six and even threw a touchdown pass.

Wildcats run past Phillips

Staff reports

Tharptown's boys got a double-double from Colton Simmons, five threes from Hayden Moss and huge second-half performances from Edward Lopez and Winston Nolen last Thursday, rallying to beat Phillips 76-66 in a tournament at Shoals Christian School.

The Wildcats trailed 18-17 at the end of one quarter and 39-33 at the break before turning things around. Tharptown got 14 second-half points from Lopez and 13 from Nolen, out-scoring the Bears 43-27 to turn a six-point deficit into a double-digit win. The Wildcats owned the fourth quarter, closing the game on a 21-10 run.

Simmons, a sophomore post player, finished with a season-high 20 points and 10 rebounds. Lopez, a 6'3 junior, also posted a double-double, putting up 18 points, 11 boards and five steals. Moss, a sophomore guard, hit four first-half threes on his way to scoring a season-high 17 points.

Nolen added 15 points, and Les Montgomery and Tristian Brasuell each had three.

'BRACY,' from page 13

There were a couple of stretches where we got four and five consecutive stops. To do that against them, we were having to earn it.

"We probably ran out of gas at the end. You're not gonna beat good teams having a quarter like we did, and that's the lesson we have to leave with tonight. We played hard enough. We did a lot of things well, and there were other things we didn't do so well. But good teams will do that to you. We have to play with consistency. We've been doing better with that, but tonight that one stretch crippled us."

Down by double-digits midway through the fourth quarter, Russellville made one final run. Bonner made a pair of free throws, and then McNutt scored in the paint and drilled a deep three in transition to cut the lead to five at 64-59. The Golden Tigers had a chance on four straight possessions to cut further into the lead, but they came up empty each time.

"Three of those four possessions, we had multiple scoring opportunities, and the ball just wouldn't go down for us," Odom said. "We talked about that at halftime. When you're missing shots, you've gotta get offensive rebounds, and we didn't do that at all in the second quarter. We were getting some second and third shots during that last stretch, but they wouldn't go down."

"You feel like, down five, if we could ever get it to a one-possession game....and we were close. Our guys fought their tails off. We had opportunities. Even after we started putting them on the line, they missed some free throws the first couple of times, but we couldn't take advantage. Down 14, it's a tall mountain to overcome. You almost have to play perfect. Our guys answered the challenge. We told them, 'Let's make it manageable. Let's give ourselves a chance.' We did that. We just couldn't finish."

After missing the front end of two one-and-one situations, Lauderdale County ultimately sealed the deal at the foul line. Connor Smith, who finished with a team-high 19 points, and Blade Wisdom each went 5-for-6 from the line in the fourth quarter, helping the Tigers close out the game and snap a three-game win streak by Russellville for the second time in 11 days. [The two teams met on December 17 in the TimesDaily Classic, and Lauderdale County prevailed 77-64.]

Dyas hit four threes on Friday and shot 5-for-5 from the foul line, finishing with a career-high 21 points. McNutt made three threes, giving him an even 50 on the year, and scored 16 points. The senior guard averaged 22.3 points in three games at the Bracy.

Bonner went a perfect 6-for-6 from the line and finished with 14 points on Friday, and Buckhalter scored 10 before fouling out in the final minute. Brooks Scott and Collin Bonner each had two points, and Jeb Bishop added one. The Golden Tigers made seven threes and shot 15-for-17 from the line.

Lauderdale County hit eight threes, including four by Smith. Wyatt Newton scored 12 points before fouling out, and Juvonne Shanes added 11.

Despite Friday's loss, the Golden Tigers finished the November/December portion of their schedule at 10-4, with two losses to Lauderdale County (a Final Four team a year ago in Class 3A), one to Deshler (a Final Four favorite this year in 4A) and one on the road at Winfield. Most importantly, Russellville has started 2-0 in area play.

"We feel good," said Odom, whose team will open 2019 with an area game at home against West Point this Friday, January 4. "This tournament, I thought we played well. We'd love to have about a six-minute stretch back tonight, but you have to look at the big picture. We're healthy, we like our pieces and we're playing hard."

"Lauderdale County, when you look up in February, that's a team that's going to play in a championship setting, so this was a really great test for us tonight. For us, it's about growing, and eliminating that lull you saw tonight. But it's still December. We feel real good about our team."

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PC girls win two of three in Rogersville

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

ROGERSVILLE - During a timeout early in the second quarter of last Thursday's top-five showdown with fellow Class 3A contender Susan Moore at the Keith Davis Memorial Tournament, Phil Campbell coach Craig Thomas could be overheard issuing a stern warning to his players in the huddle.

"If we don't start playing ball," Thomas seethed, "we're fixin' to get beat by thirty."

Trailing by 12 at that early juncture, the fourth-ranked Lady Bobcats responded with a 12-2 run to get back within two at 26-24. Susan Moore (ranked third in 3A, one spot in front of Phil Campbell) had an answer, though, closing the half on a 10-1 run to take a 36-25 lead into the break.

By the time junior guard Abby Floyd opened the fourth quarter with a three, Susan Moore's lead had swelled to 16 at 59-43, and Thomas's dire prediction from that second-quarter timeout appeared on the verge of becoming a reality.

"When they went up sixteen," Thomas said, "I thought, 'O, Lord, this is gonna tell us how much guts we've got.'"

The answer? Plenty.

With the game seemingly all but decided, Phil Campbell circled the wagons, dug down deep and fought back. The Lady Bobcats held Susan Moore to just one field goal over the final seven minutes and closed the fourth quarter with a stunning 18-2 run, tying the game 61-61 on a three by Caitlynn Mills with roughly a minute remaining.

Phil Campbell had two chances to win the game in regulation but couldn't convert. The game went to overtime, where the Lady Bobcats ran out of gas and ultimately suffered their first loss of the season to an in-state opponent, 73-64. Along the way, however, they demonstrated the kind of grit and determination under fire that should serve them well in their quest to get back to Birmingham.

"Lot of effort," said Thomas, whose team dropped to 11-3 overall on the year. "I challenged them at halftime. I didn't think the effort was there. In the second half, they came out and really showed they had a little guts to them. I'm proud of that part. I'll brag on their effort all night.

"[Susan Moore] was hitting some unreal shots. They shot the ball very, very well, and we were forcing a few things. We got settled in and got on a roll. We started pressing and got a couple of turnovers, which got us some fast-break points. We just kept cutting, cutting, cutting, cutting [into the lead], and we hit a few key shots. We were able to get it into overtime."

Mills, a sophomore guard, spearheaded the late comeback with 10 fourth-quarter points. Her transition layup with 4:15 remaining capped off a 10-0 run and cut the lead to six at 59-53. Floyd scored on a putback for Susan Moore, but Mills buried a three to make it 61-56.

A jumper by Trinity Vandiver brought the Lady Bobcats within three, and then Mills tied the game with her fifth three-pointer of the night off an inbound pass from Kallie Allen.

"Caitlynn is a very good shooter," Thomas said of Mills, who matched her season-high with 19 points last Thursday. "I love to see her shoot it."

A three-second violation by Susan Moore (13-1) gave possession back to the Lady Bobcats, but senior Abby Davis (who would finish just one blocked shot shy of a triple-double) missed a three-pointer from the top of the key. Susan Moore missed on the other end, and Allen (who finished with her second double-double in as many days) grabbed the rebound.

Thomas called timeout to set up a final play, but a defensive adjustment by Susan Moore foiled Phil Campbell's final chance in regulation.

"They sort of surprised us, and that's partly my fault," Thomas said. "We should be seasoned enough now to adjust on the fly. They had been playing us a two-three matchup zone the whole night, and they came out that last possession in hard man-to-man. That's my fault. I had one timeout left, and I should have used it. We were gonna try to hold it for the last shot."

Instead, Mills was called for an offensive foul on a push-off, and Susan Moore got one final possession in regulation. The Lady Bulldogs fared no better, however, as a steal by Davis sent the game into overtime.

Susan Moore took control quickly in the extra period, getting a three-point play from junior post player Morgan Holland right off the tip to go up 64-61. After an empty trip by Phil Campbell, senior post player Mekenzie Standridge scored in the paint to push the lead to five, and the Lady Bulldogs never looked back.

"We just ran out of gas," said Thomas, whose team was playing without injured starter Olivia Taylor and also without reserve guard Kaci Harris, who had scored nine points in last Wednesday's double-overtime win over Mars Hill. "We made two bad mental mistakes, one right off the tip. Then we forced a shot we probably shouldn't have been taking, and we didn't get back on

defense."

Holland scored 10 of her 18 points in overtime and also pulled down 14 rebounds. Standridge also posted a double-double with 20 points and 10 boards, helping Susan Moore dominate the glass on both ends to the tune of a 44-26 advantage.

"We didn't block out very well," Thomas said. "Their post players are good. I watched them play yesterday [in a 62-53 win over Central]. Number three [Holland] was their main girl, and I thought Katie [Thomas] did a great job on her in the first half. I think she only had one point at halftime. We were sort of cheating off number four [Standridge] to help on [Holland], and she made us pay."

Standridge scored 12 points in the first quarter, helping Susan Moore open up a 19-12 lead. She finished with 20 points, and Floyd added 14. Sophomore guard Hallie Holmes hit a couple of timely threes and finished with 10 points. The Lady Bulldogs shot 35 percent from the floor but made up for it by going 21-for-28 from the foul line.

Phil Campbell was just 6-for-9 at the line and shot 43 percent (26-for-60) from the field. Both teams made six three-pointers.

Davis, a 5'11 forward who has signed with UAH, finished the night with 14 points, 10 rebounds and nine blocks. She also had four steals and two assists. Allen, a junior guard, had 17 points, 10 boards, three assists and three steals, all despite picking up her fourth foul in the opening two minutes of the second half. She stayed on the floor and didn't come out of the game until she finally fouled out early in overtime.

Thomas said he had no inclination whatsoever to take Allen out after she was whistled for her fourth foul.

"Nope. None. Kallie was gonna play until she fouled out," Thomas said. "I'm really proud of her. She played well. I had no intention of taking Kallie out. We were gonna win with her or lose with her, but she was gonna be on the floor."

Vandiver chipped in with seven points and three boards. Kenner Scott scored four points, and Katie Thomas added three points, three assists and two rebounds.

Despite the loss, Thomas believes last Thursday's showdown is precisely the kind of game the Lady Bobcats need to be playing as they prepare for the season's second half.

"I love it. This is what we came here for," he said. "These are the kind of teams we're gonna see on the way to Birmingham, and we have to learn how to win the close ones. I thought we played with a lot of effort in the second half."

In other action at the Keith Davis Memorial Tournament:

Phil Campbell 61 Giles Couty (TN) 47

Abby Davis scored 14 points to lead five Phil Campbell players in double-figures last Friday afternoon, and the Lady Bobcats used a big third quarter to pull away from Giles County in the third-place game of the tournament's Lower Division.

Davis, Caitlynn Mills and Katie Thomas all connected from beyond the arc in the first quarter, helping Phil Campbell (12-3) jump out to a 19-15 lead at the end of one. Leading 30-25 at the break, the Lady Bobcats got seven points apiece from Davis and freshman guard Kenner Scott in the third quarter to out-score Giles County 18-8 and open up a 48-33 advantage.

Davis, a senior post player, had seven rebounds, four steals and three assists to go along with her 14 points. She knocked down two threes and was 2-for-2 from the foul line. Scott shot 3-for-3 from the line and scored a career-high 13 points while also pulling down five boards.

Mills, a sophomore guard, hit two threes and finished with 12 points, four assists and two steals. Katie Thomas, another sophomore, made three threes and scored 11 points. She also had six rebounds and three steals. Junior guard Kallie Allen shot 5-for-6 from the line and finished with 11 points, seven rebounds, four assists and two steals.

As a team, the Lady Bobcats made seven threes and shot 10-for-11 from the line. Giles County hit three threes and went 10-for-18 from the line.

Phil Campbell 67 Mars Hill 61 (2 OT)

Kallie Allen eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for her varsity career last Wednesday afternoon, scoring 10 of her season-high 22 points after regulation to help Phil Campbell's girls out-last Mars Hill.

Caitlynn Mills added three threes and 18 points for the Lady Bobcats. Allen, a junior guard, had 12 rebounds and three blocks to go along with her big scoring night.

Mills had five steals to go along with her 18 points. Kaci Harris scored a season-high nine points for the Lady Bobcats, and senior post player Abby Davis chipped in with seven points, six rebounds, five steals and four assists.

Freshman Kenner Scott scored six points, and sophomore Katie Thomas finished with five points, 11 rebounds and four assists.

Vina girls win Waterloo Christmas Tournament

Staff reports

Emma Humphres hit six threes and finished with 23 points and 11 rebounds for Vina last Thursday, leading the Lady Red Devils to a 65-47 win over Whitesburg in their third and final game of the day at the Waterloo Christmas Tournament.

Sara Scott also posted a double-double for Vina (10-4), scoring 17 points and pulling down 10 rebounds. Scott had 11 points in the fourth quarter, helping the Lady Devils out-score Whitesburg 16-7 to seal the win and the tournament title.

Whitesburg opened the game with a 10-0 run and led 19-9 at the end of one quarter. Vina battled back in the second, getting two threes and nine points from Humphres and out-scoring Whitesburg 20-5 to take a 29-24 lead into the locker room.

Humphres, a senior forward, stayed hot in the third quarter, hitting three more threes as the Lady Red Devils out-scored Whitesburg 20-16 to stretch the lead out to nine at 49-40. Scott, a freshman, helped seal the deal with her big fourth quarter.

Freshman guard Rayleigh Guin scored 14 points for Vina and also had seven assists and six steals. Kaitlyn King chipped in with six points (on two threes), four rebounds and four assists. Sarah Johnson had three points and three assists, and Abbie Petree scored two points.

The Lady Devils made nine threes as a team and shot 10-for-16 from the foul line.

In previous action at the Waterloo Christmas Tournament:

Vina 57 Waterloo 45

Rayleigh Guin scored 23 points for the Lady Red Devils, who shot 23-for-40 from the foul line to get by Waterloo in their second game of the day.

Guin was 11-for-19 from the line and also finished with six assists and five steals. She scored nine points in the first quarter, helping Vina build an early 17-15 lead. The Lady Devils led 27-24 at the break and then out-scored Waterloo 15-7 in



COURTESY PHOTO

The Lady Red Devils won three games in a single day, beating Cherokee, Waterloo and Whitesburg to take home the tournament title.

the third quarter to take control.

Emma Humphres (10 points, 12 rebounds) and Sara Scott (11 points, 10 boards) each posted a double-double for Vina. Humphres was 5-for-6 from the foul line. Kaitlyn King scored seven points, and Sarah Johnson added five points and four steals. Abbie Petree had one point.

Vina 66 Cherokee 34

The Lady Red Devils led by 20 at the end of one quarter and never looked back, cruising past Cherokee in their tournament opener.

Vina got three threes from Emma Humphres and nine points from Sarah Johnson in the first quar-

ter, racing out to a 26-6 lead. The Lady Devils out-scored Cherokee 23-9 in the second to take a 49-15 lead into the locker room.

Rayleigh Guin led Vina with 14 points and also had 10 assists, seven steals and four rebounds. Humphres hit four threes on the day and scored 12 points, adding eight rebounds and four assists. Johnson finished with 13 points.

Sara Scott finished with eight points and 10 rebounds. Hailey Cantrell scored seven points, and Kaitlyn King had six points, five rebounds and three assists. Abbie Petree, Annabelle Humphres and Kassidie Gesler scored two points apiece.

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always put their best lineman on him.”

Ingle excelled under the weight of that responsibility, paving the way for a Red Bay rushing attack that averaged 5.2 yards per carry and 252.4 yards per game. The Tigers finished 9-3, and Ingle received All-State honorable mention in Class 2A from the Alabama Sports Writers Association. Fellow senior Kolby Bragwell, another three-year starter, also received All-State honorable mention as a defensive back.

“They both worked extremely hard to be the players they were,” said Jackson, who just finished his fifth season at Red Bay and his 17th overall as a head coach. “They were both three-year starters, and their leadership this year was as good as I’ve ever had as a head coach. This team had to overcome a lot of adversity. We had to overcome injury. At one point, we had four casts on the field at one time. We had to fight back from a couple of tough games in the middle of the year.

“We faced our share of adversity, and this team had to show more leadership than any team I’ve had. Those are the two guys that did it all.”

Jackson said Ingle had his best season in 2018, largely because he was finally healthy.

“His whole career, he’d been plagued by shoulder issues,” Jackson said. “His whole junior year, he couldn’t work out before that season. This past year, he did not miss a single workout during the

summer. He finally got to work out and train for the first time in a few years, and it really helped him a lot.

“He’s got extremely good feet and technique, too, to go with that base strength.”

Ingle was also a key piece of Red Bay’s interior defensive line, drawing regular double-teams and finishing the season with 44 tackles.

“They both worked extremely hard to be the players they were,” Jackson said of Bragwell and Ingle. “They were both three-year starters, and their leadership this year was as good as I’ve ever had as a head coach.”

A two-time All-Area selection by the *Free Press* at safety, Bragwell once again provided physicality, leadership and play-making skills on the back end of the Tiger defense. He finished fourth on the team with 56 tackles, including 41 solo stops.

The 6’1, 208-pound Bragwell was a beast in Week 2 against Hatton, recording a team-high 10 tackles and also returning a Hornet fumble 59 yards for a touchdown in a 32-6 win. Later, in critical back-to-back mid-season wins over region rivals Sheffield and Colbert County, he recorded a total of seven tackles for loss.

“I think he was one of the best defensive backs in north Alabama,” Jackson said. “His size was a real asset, but the main thing about Kolby in the

secondary—especially in those big games in the middle of the year against Sheffield and Colbert County—was the way he just dissected their offense and knew exactly what they were gonna do.

“You don’t have many free safeties that make seven tackles for loss in high school in a two-game stretch. He did that in those two games, because he knew when they were running outside, when they were running jet, when they were throwing it—he just did a wonderful job with his knowledge of the game. He was getting to the ball before our linebackers got there.”

Bragwell’s contributions on defense were made all the more impressive by the fact that, when he wasn’t leveling ball-carriers and breaking up passes, he was running Red Bay’s offense as a third-year starting quarterback. [He threw for 764 yards and six touchdowns this season while also rushing for more than 500 yards and 11 scores.]

The Tigers will return 17 starters in 2019 from this year’s nine-win team, but Jackson knows how challenging it will be to fill the void of leadership and production left behind by Ingle and Bragwell.

“It’s gonna be hard to replace both of those guys, on both sides of the ball,” he said. “With the numbers we’ve got coming back, we’ll probably need more than one guy to step in and do what each of those guys did.”

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