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# Educators of the Year



RCS Educator of the Year Stephanie Mayfield with RHS principal Jason Goodwin and superintendent Heath Grimes (right).

## Mayfield 'an excellent role model' for students at RCS

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

With seven children and four grandchildren, Stephanie Mayfield has a personal investment in Russellville City Schools beyond her role as an educator.

That investment began with her education as a student in Russellville City Schools and carried on as her own children began their education. She's also been an educator for 29 years with Russellville City Schools, and the passion she has for teaching was rewarded last Tuesday night when Mayfield was named Russellville City Schools Educator of the Year at the 2019 Franklin

See 'MAYFIELD,' Page 8



Franklin County Schools Educator of the Year Cathy Jarnigan with Matt Cooper of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.

## Love for children motivates Red Bay's Jarnigan to serve

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

During her three decades as a teacher, Cathy Jarnigan has never been one to look for accolades or awards.

But one found her last Tuesday night as Jarnigan, a first-grade teacher at Red Bay School, was named Franklin County Educator of the Year at the 2019 Franklin County Partnership Awards Banquet.

The annual banquet, co-sponsored by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the Franklin County Development Authority, recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of individuals and businesses each

See 'JARNIGAN,' Page 8

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**Tilmon David "T.D." Baker**, Phil Campbell, age 81  
Died Monday, March 11, 2019. Funeral held at New Hope Methodist Church. Interment in East Franklin Cemetery. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family.

**Doris Marie McCarver Colburn**, Russellville, age 81  
Died Monday, March 11, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**William Paul Cooley**, Tuscumbia, age 27  
Died Tuesday, March 12, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Glendale Cemetery in Leighton.

**Linda Sue Farley**, Phil Campbell, age 72  
Died Saturday, March 16, 2019. A memorial service is planned for a later date. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

**James Owen "Lil Odie" Hines**, Russellville, age 57  
Died Thursday, March 14, 2019. Memorial service held at Mt. Zion Free Will Baptist Church in Russellville. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

**William Donnie Holaway**, Russellville, age 72  
Died Friday, March 15, 2019. Private graveside service held at Knights of Pythias Cemetery. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

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# Craig and Fred share their story with Friends of the Sheffield Public Library

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

SHEFFIELD - There was nothing regulation about how U.S. Marine Craig Grossi smuggled a dog home from war-torn Afghanistan.

But, then again, Fred was no regular dog.

The story of how the two met is the subject of the book *Craig and Fred: A Marine, a Stray Dog and How They Rescued Each Other*. Grossi and his dog were the guests of honor at a fundraiser last Thursday sponsored by Friends of the Sheffield Public Library.

In 2010, Grossi was part of a Marine RECON unit in Sangin, Afghanistan, one of the country's most dangerous areas and one of the last remaining Taliban-controlled districts.

**When Grossi first saw Fred, the young dog immediately stood out for several reasons.**

**"He was so different from not only the other feral dogs but from the whole environment we were in," Grossi said. "The idea a dog could just be a dog, and wag its tail, that's really about what we were fighting for. It says a lot about him, considering the environment he was in."**

While feral dogs were common in Afghanistan, Grossi said most were either vicious or skittish when it came to interaction with people. When Grossi first saw Fred, the young dog immediately stood out for several reasons.

"He was so different from not only the other feral dogs but from the whole environment we were in,"

Grossi said. "The idea a dog could just be a dog, and wag its tail, that's really about what we were fighting for. It says a lot about him, considering the environment he was in."

After he fed the dog some beef jerky, it began to follow Grossi. One of his fellow Marines shouted, "Looks like you made a friend." What Grossi heard, though, was "Looks like a Fred," so the dog's new name was born.

Through the assistance of employees with DHL at a makeshift office in Camp Leatherneck, Grossi began the process of sending Fred home to his father in Virginia.

It would be four months until he was reunited with his new friend.

After Grossi returned home he struggled with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression and the adjustment process after having been in a war environment. He looked to Fred for inspiration.

"If this dog has the presence of mind to wag his tail with absolutely no reason to, what excuse do I have?" Grossi asked. "I call it stubborn positivity—having to find a reason to wag your tail. It's not what happens to us that matters, but how we respond to it."

Grossi said he's working on a second book that will feature incarcerated Veterans and a service dog training program they are part of. He also said there are discussions ongoing to turn *Craig and Fred* into a feature film or a series.

The book is available in both an adult and a young reader's version from the website [www.fredtheafghan.com](http://www.fredtheafghan.com) as well as Amazon.com.

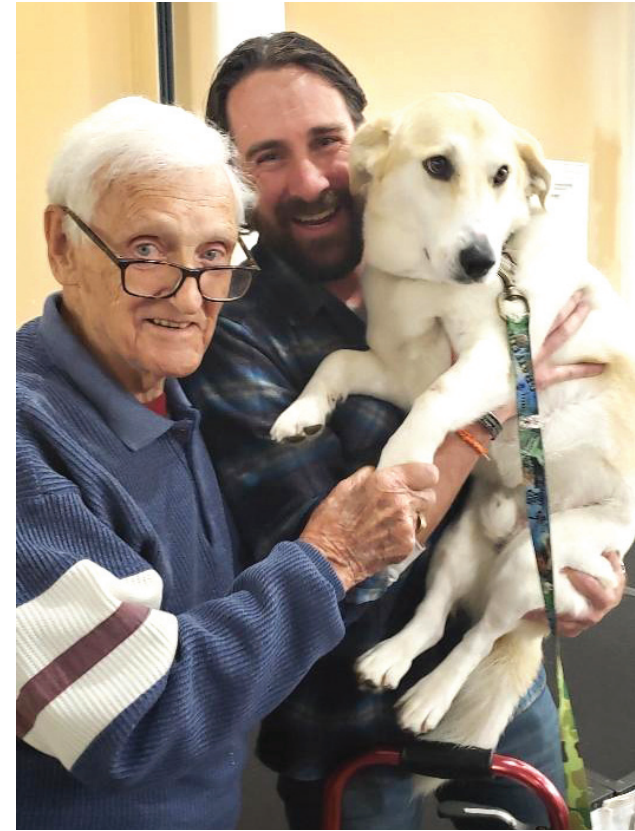


PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

U.S. Marine Craig Grossi and his dog Fred are pictured above with Karl Pilati (left) at last week's event in Sheffield. Grossi found Fred while serving in Afghanistan in 2010 and brought him back to the U.S.

# Commission approves resolution to support completion of AL-24 project

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved a resolution on Monday lending its support to the completion of the Alabama 24 project in Mississippi.

At the request of officials in Mississippi, the commission will send a letter of support to the Mississippi Department of Transportation supporting the award of a grant in FY 2019 to complete the 8.3-mile stretch from the Mississippi border to Interstate 22/U.S. 78.

The four-lane stretch, now complete in Alabama from the state line all the way to Decatur, abruptly ends in Mississippi with a dead end that requires motorists to travel a two-lane winding road into Tremont in order to access the interstate.

In other action, the commission:

- Approved the termination of Wesley Priest as a solid waste technician in the Solid Waste Department, and authorized Duncan Ward to hire a temporary technician. The commission also approved the hiring of Jeremy Cummings as a permanent solid waste technician.

- Approved Family Medical Leave Act time off of six weeks for Franklin

County Sheriff's Office employee Billy Burks.

- Approved vacating a 60-foot stretch of right-of-way along Hwy. 31 in Hodges. The request was made by Freida McDuffa, and no one spoke for or against the proposal at a public meeting held earlier Monday morning.

- Set the possible vacating of Carpenter Road for a public hearing Monday, April 15 at 8 a.m. at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex.

- Reappointed Chris Ozbirn as Appointment Director/Archivist for the Franklin County Archives at an annual appropriation of \$10,000.

- Reappointed Deborah Wilson to the Riverbend Center of Mental Health Board of Directors and tabled the appointment to fill another vacancy.

- Approved the adjustment of the county's mileage rate to \$.58 per mile, in accord with the new rate for the State of Alabama.

- Approved April 20-27 as "Don't Drop It On Alabama" Spring Clean-Up Week in Franklin County.

- Authorized Probate Judge Barry Moore to sign a one-year contract extension with the Shoals Solid Waste Authority to allow the SSWA to place and maintain recycling bins in Franklin County.

The next regular meeting of the Franklin County Commission is set for April 15, 2019, at 8:30 a.m. at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex.

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

# Honey Do: It's spring!

IT'S HERE! IT'S FINALLY HERE! SPRING IS HERE! March 20 is the official first day.

The temps are rising, the buttercups are blooming, Daylight Saving Time has kicked in and you are just itchin' to get out in that yard, get some dirt under your nails and start your spring projects.

The only way to treat that "spring fever" is to get out there and lay out the garden or flower beds, clean up the winter debris from the yard or maybe even paint something.

Here's an idea. Stand in front of your house or apartment and really take a look at what your guests or folks passing see. Could your home be a little more friendly, inviting or colorful? Consider these small projects to jazz up the place a little.

•**THE FRONT DOOR.** How about a new coat of paint here? Consider a vibrant color that will stand out from the rest of the house. Reds, bright blues, greens and yellows can really give life to the whole house. Freshen up other paintable areas such as railings, trim and steps with a neutral color or bright white to frame the door and really give a clean look.

•**GLASS.** Clean all glass windows and fixtures, including security light-

ing, with glass cleaner. This may require some ladder climbing, so be safe.

•**HARDWARE.** Polish or replace tarnished door knobs, house numbers and other metal surfaces.

•**THE MAIL BOX.** Whether it be mounted on the house or by the road, clean or replace it and make sure house numbers are in good shape and visible. Mail boxes that are in the yard or by the road are great places for colorful vines or flower beds, or maybe a hanging basket of flowers on the side away from traffic.

•**SOLAR LIGHTS.** Nothing is easier to install than solar lights, and the ones on the market now are more durable and brighter than ever. Sidewalk lights or pathway lights are great for ambiance and safety, while spots and floods add security to your home.

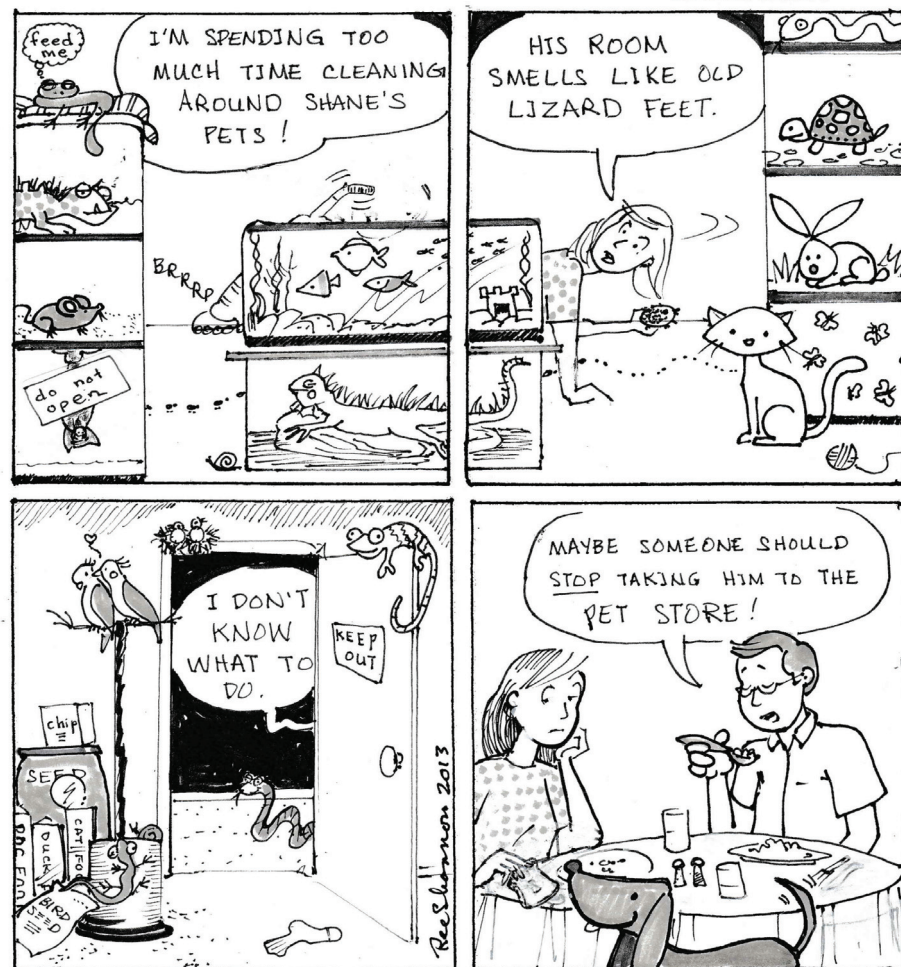
Each of these projects cost very little, can be done easily in one day and are sure to help cure that spring fever.

Be bold, have fun and remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

## OUR HOUSE by Ree Shannon



### FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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## Mississippians owe Morrow, Foshee a debt of gratitude

By Brandon Presley, Chairman  
Mississippi Public Service Commission

When Mississippi governor Phil Bryant signed the Mississippi Broadband Enabling Act on January 30, it was very appropriate for former Alabama state representative Johnny Mack Morrow to be present for the ceremony. Morrow and Tombigbee Electric Cooperative CEO Steve Foshee (who could not attend the ceremony due a scheduling conflict) were a huge part of helping my state take a step to connecting our digital divide by bringing high-speed internet service to our people.

On a cold night in December of 2017, I first met Johnny Mack and Steve at a public meeting at the Russellville City Hall that Johnny Mack hosted to discuss forming a Mississippi-Alabama coalition to help solve the lack of rural internet service in both the northwest corner of Alabama and the northeast part of Mississippi. I do not know that I have ever seen two people show more passion on an issue and more determination to solve the problem that is plaguing rural areas in both of our states.

I told someone later that night that I felt as if I had been to an old-fashioned camp meeting and that Johnny Mack and Steve converted me on the spot. Their raw passion, drive and determination sent me back across the state line that night determined to work together to bring high-speed internet service to rural areas of Mississippi. What stood in the way of change in



From left, Johnny Mack Morrow with governor Phil Bryant and Northern District Public Service commissioner Brandon Presley.

Mississippi? A 1942 law that prohibited electric cooperatives from doing exactly what Tombigbee Electric was doing in Hamilton, Alabama with their project to bring excellent internet service to their citizens.

First, Johnny Mack suggested that I form citizen-led task forces in each of the 33 counties that I am elected from to hone in on this issue. The result was that 1,310 Mississippians packed into courthouses, community centers and city

See 'MORROW,' Page 5



### Finances before (and after) the wedding

Dear Dave,  
I'm getting married this summer, and I'm on Baby Step 4 of your plan. My fiancé is getting on board with your advice, too, and she's currently in the process of paying down her student loan debt. Is it a good idea to go ahead and put most of my emergency fund savings toward helping pay off her debt now?

Aaron

Dear Aaron,  
You've got a generous heart, and I know you love this lady, but I wouldn't recommend being involved in paying any of her debt until after the wedding. At that point, you two are joined together as one, and the concepts of "mine" and "hers" and "his" disappear. It all becomes "ours," and you can adjust your money situation to reflect your marriage and your financial makeover as a couple.

Make sure that "we" have an emergency fund of *at least* \$1,000 in the bank at that point. Then, if you're both in agreement on the issue, you can throw the rest of what you previously had in your emergency fund at the debt. Both of you can also pile up cash between now and the big day, so that when you're "official" you'll have even more cash on hand.

Congratulations, and may God bless your lives together!

## 'MORROW,' from page 4

halls and signed up as task force members to change our law.

Secondly, Steve agreed to host Mississippi Legislators at Tombigbee Electric's headquarters in Hamilton in June of last year to show them firsthand how they were bridging the digital divide in their area. Forty-three members of the Mississippi Senate and House of Representatives came and spent the day learning from Steve and Johnny Mack.

Lastly, both men made the trip to Tupelo for an open forum with Legislators and leaders to answer questions just a few days before the Legislature gaveled into session and our bill was to be presented.

Because of countless phone calls to both men and trips to Red Bay and Hamilton, the first bill signed by the governor in this Legislative session was the very bill that Johnny Mack and Steve inspired me to push. Johnny Mack told me almost daily, "Brandon, state lines should be invisible lines when it comes to helping one another."

For decades to come, Mississippi communities that receive high-speed internet service from electric cooperatives will owe a debt of gratitude to two outstanding Alabamians that were willing to help. Johnny Mack Morrow and Steve Foshee are public servants of the first order and inspirational leaders who, without a doubt, helped transform my state. Alabama is lucky to have them both.

*Brandon Presley is the Chairman of the Mississippi Public Service Commission and is elected to represent the northern 33 counties of the state.*

Dave

### Length of coverage?

Dear Dave,  
My husband and I are 24, we're debt-free, and we're just a few weeks of saving away from having a fully funded emergency fund. Each of us has a 401(k) plan at work, and right now we're concentrating on life insurance purchases. You always recommend term insurance, but how long should the coverage last?

Jenny

Dear Jenny,  
Congratulations on being super smart with your money! It sounds like you two are starting out on the right foot.

Generally, I recommend 15- or 20-year level term policies—unless you have children. Since you didn't mention any kids, I can only assume they're not in the picture at this point. However, if you two decide to grow your family in the future, I'd advise converting those to 30-year term policies. You'll want the insurance there to protect *everyone* in the family, until the kids are grown and out on their own. In the years after, continued saving and wealth-building will lead you to a point where you're both self-insured.

You two have done an excellent job with your finances. Keep up the good work!

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 15 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at [daveramsey.com](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

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# 37th Annual Miss RHS Pageant

The 37th Annual Miss RHS Pageant offered an array of talent and beauty. The pageant was held in the Russellville City Schools Auditorium on Friday, March 1. The contestants participated in an opening number, judges' interview, evening gown competition and talent competition. The pageant is sponsored by the RHS Tiger Track Annual Staff. Ms. Cindy Coan is the pageant director, and Dr. AnnaKay Holland serves as pageant coordinator. Dr. Holland and Ms. Coan want to thank all of the pageant sponsors, the contestants, Little Sisters, Little Misses, parents and RHS administration, faculty and staff for a fantastic pageant week. This was an outstanding group of young ladies to work with.



Miss Elizabeth Pierce was crowned Miss RHS.



(Above) All Miss RHS contestants had received overall All-A grade point averages.

Pictured at right (L to R):  
Best Evening Gown Winners:  
Madeline Cooper, 9th; Lauren  
Mae Sturdivant, 10th; Elizabeth  
Pierce, 12th; Emma Claire  
Bragwell, 12th; and Ashton  
ShIPLEY, 11th.



*The Free Press congratulates all the winners and contestants from this year's Miss RHS Pageant!*



The Miss RHS Court included (from left) Lauren Mae Sturdivant, 10th Grade Representative; Shelby Allison Carson, 10th Grade Representative; Emma Claire Bragwell, 1st Alternate; Elizabeth Pierce, Miss RHS; Kaydee Don Holland, 11th Grade Representative; Ashton ShIPLEY, 11th Grade Representative; and Madeline Elizabeth Cooper, 9th Grade Representative.



Viewer's Choice Award: Emma Claire Bragwell

COURTESY PHOTOS

# 37th Annual Miss RHS Pageant



(Above, L to R) Best Talent Winners: Madeline Cooper, 9th; Lauren Mae Sturdivant, 10th; Elizabeth Pierce, 12th, and Ashton Shipley, 11th.



(Above, L to R) Best Interview Winners: Madeline Cooper, 9th; Lauren Mae Sturdivant, 10th; Elizabeth Pierce, 12th; Emma Claire Bragwell, 12th; and Sydney Medley, 11th.



(Above, L to R) Most Photogenic Winners: Lauren Mae Sturdivant, 10th; Abby Brooke Montgomery, 11th; Sydney Holt, 12th; Emma Claire Bragwell, 12th; and Sophie Caroline Hill, 9th.



(Above, L to R) Academic Awards Highest GPA: Madeline Cooper, 9th; Shelby Carson, 10th; Elizabeth Pierce, 12th; Kaydee Don Holland and Madyson King, 11th.



(Above) Miss RHS Little Misses



(At right) Miss RHS Little Sisters

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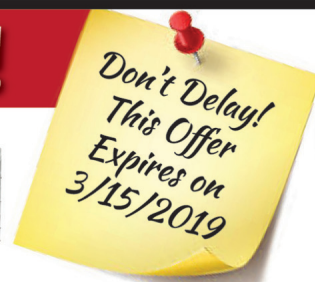


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## 'MAYFIELD,' from page 1

County Partnership Awards Banquet.

The annual event, co-sponsored by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the Franklin County Development Authority, recognizes outstanding contributions of individuals and businesses across Franklin County.

Mayfield, the daughter of Linda Madden and the late Billy Madden, is married to Mike Mayfield. Mayfield has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education and is a certified reading specialist for grades K-12 and a certified physical education teacher for K-12.

Her nearly three decades of classroom experience includes roles as Title I Reading Instructor, fourth- and fifth-grade teacher and English Language Learners instructor at Russellville High School.

Mayfield also serves as varsity cheer coach for RHS.

Outside of the classroom, Mayfield works for Franklin County Community Corrections as a drug testing officer and instructor for classes in anger management and defensive driving. She is also a reserve officer with the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.

Mayfield and her family are members of Calvary Baptist Church.

"She does a great job and is an excellent role model for the kids," said RCS superintendent of education Heath Grimes of Mayfield. "She's passionate about education and passionate about her ESL students. Stephanie is very deserving of this honor, and we want to make sure to recognize people like her who are truly making an impact on

kids' lives."

With nearly 50 percent of its enrollment Hispanic, Russellville City Schools must have passionate and dedicated instructors to work with those students whose communication skills are primarily in another language. Mayfield works with ESL students both with compassion and a drive to push them to learn.

"Receiving this recognition is a great honor," Mayfield said of her award. "I was thrilled just to be nominated. I feel blessed to work at my alma mater, Russellville High School. I've said many times, it's hard to believe that I get paid to do something that I love so much."

Other nominees for the Russellville City Schools Educator of the Year included Kim Burney (RHS), Amy Hamilton (WES) and John Ritter (RHS).

## 'JARNIGAN,' from page 1

year in Franklin County.

Other nominees for Franklin County Educator of the Year included Heather Fowler (Phil Campbell Elementary), Karen Jones (Belgreen High School), Janet Kennedy (Red Bay High School) and Shay Pounds (Red Bay High School).

"I'm very honored," Jarnigan said. "My family lives out of the area, and it was special for me to have them there when I received the award. I'm not one to be out on the front line looking for attention, but I appreciate that someone saw something in me worth nominating."

Jarnigan's teaching career began with a two-year stint at Carbon Hill Elementary. She came to Franklin County Schools 28 years ago. Jarnigan and her husband Phillip have three children, Betsy, Julie and Wes, all Red Bay High School graduates.

You might think that after 30 years in education Jarnigan would be looking forward to retirement, but she still holds the passion for teaching she had

in her first year.

"I've always loved kids, and that comes first," she said. "I've never gotten tired of it. When you watch them mature and grow and open up like a rose, and you know they've learned and see that spark light, that's what you do this for. I treat them as if they were my own children."

**"I've always loved kids, and that comes first," Jarnigan said. "I've never gotten tired of it...I want them to feel welcome when they come into the classroom."**

While much has changed inside the classroom in 30 years, Jarnigan realizes keeping up with those changes is important for children to be better prepared once their educations are complete.

"Technology is a big part of what's changed," she said. "When a new project comes along, what you learn is that's part of the activity of life, and it can be managed and learned. The changes we've

seen are preparing children more for college- and career-readiness that comes later in their lives."

Franklin County superintendent Greg Hamilton congratulated each of the nominees as well as Jarnigan for receiving the award.

"I'm proud of the hard work Mrs. Jarnigan puts in with the elementary kids at Red Bay, Hamilton said. "She is very deserving of this award, and I congratulate her and the other nominees."

Jarnigan said she works to create a classroom atmosphere of warmth and friendliness for her students, some of the traits she honed while attending nursing school.

"I want them to feel welcome when they come into the classroom," she said. "It takes a certain amount of patience to work with children, and that's something I learned when I worked in a newborn nursery while in nursing school."

"A lot of my teaching is in real-life skills these children need, along with the academic and core standards that are to be taught."

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# Find your passion, build a business you love

Has anyone ever told you, *do what you love, and you'll never work another day in your life?* But here's the thing, you can't do what you love unless you *know* what you're passionate about.

I have the best job in the world. As a certified business coach and creator of Business Boutique, I get to help women find their passion so they can make money doing what they love. Often when I meet with these women to brainstorm a business idea, the first question I hear is: *How do I figure out what I'm passionate about in the first place?*

As much as I would love to offer a quick solution, it takes a lot of hard work to find the answer. I always encourage women to take their time in this process. Don't expect it to come to you overnight, but know that the end result is well worth it. I've got three strategies to help get you started:

## The Self-Focused Strategy

It's so important that your passion be *your* passion, not someone's else's dream for you. To that end, brainstorm a list—maybe even create a timeline—of all the significant events and experiences in your life. As you do that, keep an eye out for any patterns.

For example, when I did this exercise, business seemed to be a running theme in every area of my life. I was raised by a single mother who started her own *business* to make ends meet. I literally grew up in her bakery sleeping on giant sacks of flour, while she baked at the break of dawn. When I went to college, I studied *business* and marketing and started a few side *businesses*

in my twenties. Eventually, I became a certified *business* coach. My passion was clear: helping women win in business. And that's exactly what I get to do today.

## The People-Focused Strategy

You don't have to work for a non-profit and solve world hunger to find meaning in your work. I believe you can find passion in almost anything you do if you *choose* to do so. That's why I love this strategy so much.

**The final strategy you can use to find your passion is to pray. Simple, yes, but so important. God cares about you deeply. John 10:10 says, "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." God doesn't want you to just coast through life. He wants to see you living in the passions and gifts He gave you. Take time not only to ask God to reveal this to you, but to also listen for His answer, as well. I know He will show up for you.**

Maybe you enjoy restoring antique furniture. You can choose to see your work as simply refinishing old furniture. But try to dig a little deeper. Remember on the other side of every business transaction is a real, live person—someone you're helping, serving, and loving.

Suddenly, that beat up table you restored takes on a whole new meaning. Because of your work, that table becomes the place where a family gathers, where meals are shared, and where memories are made.



Christy Wright

When you focus on the people, your work is about so much more than just a table—or whatever you create.

## The God-Focused Strategy

The final strategy you can use to find your passion is to pray. Simple, yes, but so important. God cares about you deeply. John 10:10 says, "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." God doesn't want you to just coast through life. He wants to see you living in the passions and gifts He gave you.

Take time not only to ask God to reveal this to you, but to also *listen* for His answer, as well. I know He will show up for you.

If you're still feeling stuck and want to learn more about finding your passion and building a business you love, dig into the topic on Episode 65 of the Business Boutique podcast. God created you *on purpose for a purpose*. I can't wait to watch you step into that!

*\*Christy Wright is the #1 national best-selling author of Business Boutique, host of the Business Boutique Podcast, a Certified Business Coach and a Ramsey Personality with a passion for equipping women with the knowledge and steps they need to successfully run and grow a business. Since joining Ramsey Solutions in 2009, she has spoken to thousands across the country at women's conferences, national business conferences, Fortune 500 companies and her own sold-out live events. You can follow Wright on Twitter and Instagram @ChristyBWright and online at christywright.com or facebook.com/OfficialChristyWright.*

## RCS Education Foundation banquet to be held April 8

Submitted to the FFP

If you walk into any of the four schools in the Russellville City School System, it won't take long to notice that many students are using updated technology to further enhance their learning experience.

A good portion of these technology and instructional upgrades would not be possible without the help of grants, many of which come from the Russellville City Schools Education Foundation—a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that functions separately from the school system to raise money for teacher grants and student scholarships. These grants provide the kind of instructional aides that allow students to keep up with the latest technology and stay ahead of the curve. And the scholarships provide assistance to RCS seniors who are furthering their education after high school.

"We have seen so much good come from the grants and scholarships the Foundation has given out over the years," RCS superintendent Heath Grimes said. "This organization is vitally important to our system and to our teachers and students."

The annual RCS Education Foundation Banquet will be held April 8 at the A.W. Todd Centre with a silent auction beginning at 5 p.m., opening remarks at 6 p.m. and a catered dinner and entertainment beginning at 6:30 p.m. A Chinese auction and a time of recognition of scholarship winners and honoring past alumni will round out the evening. The banquet and auction serve as the main fundraiser for the Foundation so they can continue to provide these necessary grants and scholarships that have benefited so many teachers and students since the Foundation's inception in 2012.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased at the RCS Central Office on Waterloo Road or from any RCS Education Foundation board member.

"Our system appreciates all of those who actively support our schools, whether through events like the RCS Education Foundation Banquet or through countless other ways such as volunteering time and resources, coming out to school-sponsored events, and positively promoting our achievements," Grimes said. "We are fortunate to be part of a community that takes pride in our successes and strives to partner with us as we educate and uphold the future generations. We hope to see many of our supporters at this year's banquet."

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**BUSINESS**

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**YARD SALES**

Two-family Yard Sale this Friday/Saturday, March 22-23 from 8 am-until at 2560 Hwy. 75 in Phil Campbell. Lots of household items, women's clothes (sizes 4-16), kids' clothes, lots of misc.

Yard Sale. Friday, Mar. 22/Saturday, Mar. 23, 2176 Hwy. 122 in Frog Pond. Take 43 South to top

of the mountain, turn right on Hwy. 22, go 4.5 miles then left on 122. Third home on left. No offers refused. Everything must go! Come see us! Coffee maker, toaster oven, heater, lots of small ladies' clothing, records, VCRs, DVDs, CDs, and MUCH MORE!

Huge Yard Sale, seven families, this Friday/ Saturday, March 22-23 from 8-4 in Franklin Estates Subdivision south of Russellville near Isbell. Full-size BR suite w/mattress, Queen mattress, lots of clothes (formal dresses), end tables, hall tree, rocking chair. Come check us out! Great buys!

**HOUSES/ APARTMENTS/ PROPERTY FOR RENT/SALE**

House for sale. Indie

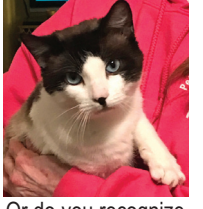
home. 28X60 with 15 acres of land. Owner financing. With or without furnishings. Call 256-436-9758. (1)

3 BR, 2 BA Home for Sale. 716 Kent Street, Phil Campbell. Includes app. one acre with house. Vinyl Siding. 24x24 garage. 2 car carport. Roof recently replaced. New refrigerator and stove. Call 256-460-7055. (4)

3 BR brick ranch for sale in Hester Heights, Russellville. 2 full BA, remodeled kitchen, 2-car attached garage, 2 1/2 car detached garage, large storm-house, and large lot. \$149,000. Call 256-263-8589. (5)

**LOST AND FOUND**

Is this your cat?



Or do you recognize this cat? White with light and dark brown on head, ears and tail. Black dot on tip of nose. Wearing a green collar. Came to a house on the corner of Underwood Road and Jo Anne

Avenue East in Russellville. Call 256-668-7899, 256-460-5899 or 256-332-6940. (1)

Found: Child's billfold on Hwy. 81 in Oak Grove Community. Call 256-331-9858 to identify and claim. (1)

Lost Dog! Black and White female. Missing from St. Clair St. in Russellville. Please call 256-332-7743. (4)

**AUTO**

Ford truck for sale. F-250 with a 7.3 motor. Call 256-436-9758. (1)

**FURNITURE**

Queen Size Sealy Posturepedic Mattress for sale. Excellent condition. Call 256-331-9686. (1)

**LOOKING TO BUY**

**I WANT TO BUY CHICKENS AND DUCKS. PLEASE CALL 256-627-9691.**

Wanting to Buy Small Birdcage. Also looking to buy Swing Set. Please call 256-324-2917.

I'm looking to buy a

Rocking Horse for a toddler. Please call 256-324-2917. (4)

**HELP WANTED**

**LEGAL SECRETARY WANTED: FULL-TIME POSITION. LEGAL EXPERIENCE REQUIRED. PAY BASED ON EXPERIENCE. SEND RESUME TO P.O. BOX 781, RUSSELLVILLE, AL, 35653.**

**MISC. FOR SALE**

Franklin Free Press Classified Rates Yard Sale Rates: FREE, Deadline Monday at Noon; Real Estate-Homes, acreage, lots for sale or rent. \$25 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 40 words per ad; Vehicles, Boats, RVs, Motorcycles for sale. \$15 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Pets For Sale only \$10 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Free of Charge: Lost & Found, Giveaways, and Items Under \$100 (Private Parties Only). 15-word limit; Commercial Classified Rates: \$25 for Businesses, 15 words or less for six weeks. Ads

exceeding word limit add \$10 per additional 15 words. The number in parentheses represents the number of times the ad has appeared. Call us at 256-332-0255 to place, cancel or renew your ad. Payment is required in advance of publication for ads.

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# What's Happening


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


 Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Easter hams. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup will be Saturday, April 20 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.


 We are searching for descendants of people buried in Russellville's Old Town Cemetery and Sadler Cemetery to give personal info and stories about their ancestors for a cemetery tour as part of Russellville's Bicentennial Celebration. Contact Doris Hutcheson (256-332-4085 or dorishutcheson@msn.com) or Chris Ozborn (256-332-8827 or archive@hiwaay.net) for more info.


 AARP Tax-Aide will be providing FREE income tax preparation at the Department of Human Resources in Russellville on Thursdays through April 11. You do not have to be a member of AARP, retired or a certain age to use this service. Call Ben at 256-332-0252 to schedule an appointment, which is required.


 As part of its Bicentennial Celebration, the city of Russellville will host a Church Tour this Friday, March 22. The tour bus will leave from the parking lot of First Baptist Church (213 N. Jackson Avenue) at 9 a.m. People interested in taking part in the tour should be at the church by 8:45 a.m. The tour will begin with a stop at Washington Avenue Church of Christ, where a tour will be offered and the history of the church will be shared. At 9:45 a.m., the tour will continue at First Presbyterian Church, where a tour will be offered and the history of the church will be shared. There will also be organ music and singing, and coffee will be served. From there, the tour will move on to First United Methodist Church at 10:30 a.m. In addition to a tour of the church and a presentation on the church's history, music will also be played. The tour will return to First Baptist Church at 11:30 a.m., where Doris Woodruff will share a presentation on the history of the church. There will also be a Power Point presentation featuring old photos, and refreshments will be served. The tour is free of charge, but people interested in taking part should call the Franklin County Archives by Wednesday, March 20 at 256-332-8827. All churches on the tour are handicap-accessible. The tour bus seats 31 people. Other tourists may also participate in the tour in their own vehicles.


 Belgreen kindergarten registration will be held this Friday, March 22, 2019 from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. in the school library. Children registering must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2019. Please bring your child's birth certificate, social security card, immunization record, and proof of residency (copy of current utility bill, deed, or rental agreement) to register. For more information, please contact Belgreen High School at 256-332-1376.


 Tharptown Elementary is holding on-line pre-registration for its Pre-K program through March 22. Child must be four years old on or before September 1, 2019. If you have already registered your child online, please bring the following forms to the school on Friday, March 22: Child's birth certificate, immunization record (blue slip), Social Security card and proof of where the child lives (copy of power bill, gas bill, water bill, rental agreement/lease or deed). Pre-register your child at <https://alprek.asapconnected.com>. Drawing for registration will be March 22.


 Franklin County Schools Pre-K registration is NOW open for the 2019-20 school year. Pre-registration is open online at <https://alprek.asapconnected.com> through March 22. Random selection will be held on March 22 in the Pre-K classroom. These dates are for all six Franklin County Pre-K programs. Some classrooms still have space for THIS school year for students who will be attending kindergarten next school year. Enrollment is open to all children four years of age on or before 9/1/19 who are residents of the state of Alabama. Children who are eligible for kindergarten are ineligible for this program. Enrollees must provide copy of child's birth certificate, proof of residence (utility bill or lease or copy of mortgage). There is no registration fee for this program. Upon enrollment, child's immunization record must be provided.


 Tharptown Elementary will hold Kindergarten registration this Friday, March 22 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. in the K-2 Building. Child must be five years old on or before September 1, 2019. Please bring the following forms: Child's birth certificate, immunization record (blue slip), Social Security card and proof of where the child lives (copy of power bill, gas bill, water bill, rental agreement/lease or deed).


 The Red Bay Museum/Civitan Club will be dedicating its Native American Display in honor of Johnny Mack Morrow at the Red Bay Museum this Sunday, March 24 at 2 p.m. The museum will be open from 1:30-4 p.m. with free admission. Donations will be accepted, and the public is invited to attend this event. The Red Bay Museum is fortunate and very thankful to have had someone in Johnny Mack Morrow's position to help the museum from its beginning in a variety of ways. We will be forever grateful for his dedication in serving the people in his district and improving the way of life for its citizens now and for future generations. This is an excellent time for anyone to visit the museum, especially for those that are not able to come during the week at the regular hours. The museum contains exhibits on landmarks from Red Bay with the actual items including the lobby to the Hotel Red Bay, soda fountain, theatre, church, bank, school and many more. The tour of the museum ends with a display on Tammy Wynette, who was born, raised and schooled in Itawamba County, MS, but called Red Bay her hometown, since it was the closest town she lived to.


 There will be a ribbon cutting for a Little Free Library at the Phil Campbell Memorial Park on Monday, March 25 from 10 a.m.-noon. Book swap, local authors, snacks and crafts for kids. For info, call 256-627-7489.

 Spring Revival at St. Paul CME Church will be held March 27-29 with services at 7 p.m. each night. Theme: "The Need for Revival in This Present Day," II Chronicles 7:14. Guest evangelist will be Rev. Pernell Perkins of St. Peters M.B. Church in Iuka, MS. St. Paul CME Church is located at 406 Hamilton Street in Russellville. Everyone is welcome to attend!


 The 15th annual Relay for Life Open Bass Tournament will be held at Cedar Creek at Slick Rock Boat Ramp on Saturday, March 30 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Entry fee is \$70 per boat. \$10 per boat for Lunker (100% payback). \$1,000 guaranteed to first-place winner! Second and third place will pay out based on number of entries. Five-fish limit per boat. Only two contestants per boat. Large mouth, small mouth and spotted bass only will be counted. Fish must measure 12 inches with mouth closed and roll tail. Make all checks payable to American Cancer Society. For more information, contact Rhonda Boyles (4125 Waterloo Road, Russellville, AL 35653 or 256-627-4112) or Jamie Sumerel (256-762-5123).


 Revival at My Father's House (104 East Lawrence Street) will be held March 31-April 3 with Sunday services at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday services at 6:30 p.m. each night. Evangelist will be Ron Day. Everyone is welcome!


 Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Spruce Pine Community Center in Spruce Pine. Next meeting will be April 2. All members and friends are urged to attend.

 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 April 4. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317. The Sons of Confederate Veterans 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.

 The next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be Thursday, April 11 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

 The Belgreen Alumni Banquet will be held Saturday, April 13 with a social hour beginning at 4 p.m., a meal at 5 p.m. and a program at 6 p.m. The class of 1969 will be honored. Everyone is welcome! If you plan on attending, please RSVP by calling 256-277-1211 or 256-740-9501.

 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 256-389-0529 and ask for Paula Pardue. 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.

 **Letters to the Editor**

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

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## Raper tosses perfect game for PC in rout of Sheffield

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Phil Campbell baseball coach Jonathan Raper and his son Ridge, the Bobcats' sophomore ace, have had many discussions about pitching, as one might imagine. Among other things, Raper's curveball is a frequent topic of conversation.

"He's always been curveball-fastball-curveball," Jonathan said with regard to his son's preference for pitch sequencing. "He wants to do everything with the curveball. The thing we're trying to get him to do is go with the fastball more to set his curve up. It's backward from the way he's always pitched. It's been a little adjustment for him, but with as hard as he's been throwing, if he has his command, he'll be better off doing that than the way he's always pitched."

"He's young, though. He's gotta sort of believe in it, too."

If last Friday's performance against Sheffield doesn't make a believer out of Raper, nothing will.

Relying primarily on pinpoint fastball command, the talented young right-hander dominated Sheffield for five flawless innings, striking out 12 and needing only 57 pitches to throw his first

See 'PERFECT,' Page 18



FILE PHOTO

**PICTURE PERFECT** - In his perfect game against Sheffield, Raper was as sharp as his head coach has seen him since his playoff gem last April (above) against Mars Hill.

## RHS junior selected to take part in United World Games

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The mission of the USA Student Athlete World Games is to select young men and women of high character, who demonstrate athletic and academic success, to represent their country in the sports they love.

Russellville High School boys basketball coach Patrick Odom believes there's not a better example of a student who exemplifies those traits than Bryant Hubbert.

Hubbert was recently selected to represent the United States in this summer's United World Games in Austria. Hubbert, an RHS junior, will be part of two boys basketball teams that will compete in the week-long competition.

**"This is a program that looks at the entire kid. It's a tremendous opportunity for kids chosen to be a part of it,"** Odom said. **"Bryant fits every part of it. He's a good kid and a good student who works really hard, and I'm excited for him to get the opportunity to go."**

Hubbert, a member of the Golden Tiger varsity basketball team, is also an outstanding student who holds a 3.9 grade point average.

"This is a program that looks at the entire kid. It's a tremendous opportunity for kids chosen to be a part of it," Odom said. "Bryant fits every part of it. He's a good kid and a good student who works really hard, and I'm excited for him to get the opportunity to go."

Hubbert was recommended for the World Games after one of the program's representatives saw him play at a basketball camp last summer.

See 'GAMES,' Page 17



COURTESY PHOTO

**UNITED HE STANDS** - Hubbert, a member of the Golden Tiger basketball team who also holds a 3.9 GPA, will head to Austria for the United World Games in June.

## Bendall to play golf at Calhoun

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - Sibling rivalry is hardly a new phenomenon; brothers have been competing against one another in some form or fashion since the human race began.

Blake and Brayden Bendall are no different. Blake was a senior on the 2015 Russellville High School golf team that won the first state championship in program history; Brayden, only an eighth-grader then and still splitting his time between golf and baseball in the spring, was also on the roster. Watching his older brother help the Golden Tigers bring home a Blue Map prompted Brayden to give up baseball and make golf his primary athletic focus.

"After we won state, that was a big moment of change for me," Brayden said, "knowing we had a good golf team and had a chance at competing in the future. That's what really got me into it as well."

"Blake was the three-man on that team," he added. "He was beating me back then. I beat him a few times, but he was definitely beating me at that point."



Brayden Bendall

See 'BENDALL,' Page 16



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

One of a handful of first-year starters, Lindsey (5) was batting a team-best .412 through Sunday and hit his first career varsity home run in Saturday's 10-0 rout of Scottsboro, helping Heaps and the Golden Tigers (below) right the ship following a 1-9 start.

# Back on track

## A pair of wins on Saturday gave Russellville some much-needed momentum going into area play

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - The post-game vibe Saturday night at Russellville Baseball Stadium gave no indication whatsoever that, roughly 24 hours earlier, the Golden Tigers (yes, *those* Golden Tigers, the ones coming off four consecutive trips to Montgomery, the ones with three Blue Maps on display in the home clubhouse beneath the grandstand) had been in crisis mode after losing nine of their first ten games to open the season.

"It feels like, at 1-9, the wheels have come off," head coach Chris Heaps said. "But you know what? I feel, I think, less pressure this year than I ever have. I don't know why that is. I feel less pressure because we're playing a lot of young guys. It is what it is."

As the losses piled up amidst a brutal opening stretch that included games against Class 6A No. 2 Russell County, Class 7A No. 4 Vestavia Hills, Class 7A No. 2 Bob Jones and three other 7A schools (James Clemens, Austin and Florence) that received votes in the first ASWA poll of the year, Heaps kept urging his players—many of whom are getting their first taste of varsity action—to stay the course and trust the process.

"The culture is what it is," said Heaps, now closing in on his 200th win in seven seasons at RHS. "I told the guys, we're not gonna compromise our standards and our culture just because we're 1-9. I said, 'Listen, all I wanna do is be in every game with a chance to be competitive.'

"There are three things we need to do every day. Number one, have fun. If we're not having fun, we're not playing the game right. Number two, play the game the right way, like your hair's on fire—energy on and off the field. That's what [the fans] come to see. They don't care if you win or lose. They wanna

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## 'BACK', from page 14

see somebody that gives you energy, somebody that gives you enthusiasm. And number three, let's learn something every day. If you do those three things, you've had a heckuva day."

The Golden Tigers had done their best to play with passion and learn a few lessons during those challenging first three weeks. But having *fun*? There's nothing fun about 1-9, tough schedule or not. That's why the on-field scene following Saturday's much-needed doubleheader sweep of Scottsboro and Westbrook Christian was such a sight for sore eyes for Heaps and his staff.

Devin Buckhalter (the team's senior centerfielder and one of only three returning starters from last year's state runner-up) was fielding questions from a local sports writer just outside the home dugout when sophomores Nick Smith and Jackson Lindsey rushed in to crash the interview.

"That's my brother right there!" Smith exclaimed, while Lindsey mostly just clapped and shouted, grabbing Buckhalter by the shoulders and slapping him on the back.

"Get outta here! I ain't on TV," Buckhalter said, grinning from ear to ear as he chastised his younger teammates. "Move! Just get outta here!"

That sense of jubilation, relief and camaraderie was palpable on Saturday, largely because the Golden Tigers had just put together 12 innings of the best baseball they've played all season—and at a critical time, no less, with some very meaningful games on the horizon.

"We needed it really bad, because area play starts [this] week," said Buckhalter, who went 3-for-6 with a home run and a double in Saturday's two wins and was batting .382 through Sunday with four multi-hit games. "We needed some momentum going into it. Today definitely got that done for us—for everybody."

Heaps wholeheartedly agreed.

"We needed it like...well...not like we need the rain, because we've had plenty of it," said the coach, who is now 195-89 (a .687 win percentage) as Russellville's head coach. "But we needed it badly."

In particular, the Golden Tigers needed to get something good going at the plate, where they entered Saturday batting just .222 as a team with one home run and a total of 29 runs scored in ten games. That all changed drastically in the bottom of the first inning against Scottsboro right-hander Brody Hyde, when Buckhalter and Lindsey went yard on back-to-back pitches and sophomore infielder Gordon White blasted a three-run homer to cap off a five-run outburst that had Heaps feeling downright nostalgic.

"It felt like a Reed Smith—Judd Ward—Landon Oliver kind of thing," said Heaps, referencing the fearsome one-two-three punch at the top of the order that powered Russellville to the first two of those three consecutive state titles from 2015-17. "It really did. I told the guys, 'That's what we need.' I told Buck, 'You are a table-setter for us.' Buck swung the bat well today. Everything he hit was hard. When you're staying between those poles [here Heaps points to light poles just beyond the fence in left- and right-center field] with all your swings, you know things are going good."

"That's what we've been working on the last couple of days. I said, 'Hey, in batting practice, let's see how far we can hit the ball through the middle of the field.'"

Buckhalter's bomb was pulled to straightaway left; Lindsey, a 6'4 first baseman with a powerful left-handed swing, hit his out to right-center; and White, a righty, went deep to left-center. All three long balls had this in common, however—they were the first career varsity home runs for all three players.

"It felt really good," said Buckhalter, who later drove in a run with an infield hit to help the Golden Tigers win game one 10-0 and then delivered a key RBI double in a 6-2 win over Westbrook Christian. "For all of us, it was the first time we've hit a home run in a varsity game, including myself. It set the tone for the whole day. I don't know where it came from. I guess it was just time to do it. It needed to happen, and it happened."

The first-inning fireworks provided more than enough offensive support for senior right-hander Caden Parker, who held Scottsboro to four hits and struck out four in four scoreless innings to pick up his second win of the season.

"Caden pitched great in game one," Buckhalter said, "and Gordon pitched great in game two."

Indeed, White followed Parker's performance with a solid outing of his own against Westbrook, allowing just two runs (one earned) on six hits in six innings. He struck out five batters, walked just two and threw 60 of his 92 pitches for strikes, earning his first career win at the varsity level.

Parker—a veteran who went 8-3 with a 2.51 ERA last season and got the ball in Game 1 of the state finals against Faith Academy—and White will both figure prominently in Russellville's pitching plans for area play, along with sophomore right-hander Rowe Gallagher and Buckhalter.

"I thought Parker and Gordon were both good today," Heaps said. "Parker...there's nothing fancy about him, but he's pretty smart. He doesn't throw two fastballs the same speed back-to-back. He can throw a changeup. He can throw a breaking ball, and he can bury it if he needs to. He has good

baseball IQ, which a lot of these young guys don't have yet. Gordon is developing it. Parker's a pretty good role model in that case."

The Golden Tigers backed up White with another productive game at the plate; this time, though, timely hitting and execution were the order of the day rather than the long ball. Trailing 1-0 in the bottom of the second, Russellville got an infield hit from Parker and a single from White to put two men aboard with nobody out. After Nathan Brockway got down a textbook sac bunt to move the runners over, Gallagher brought them home with a two-run single.

**"We needed it really bad, because area play starts [this] week," said Buckhalter, who went 3-for-6 with a home run and a double in Saturday's two wins and was batting .382 through Sunday with four multi-hit games. "We needed some momentum going into it. Today definitely got that done for us—for everybody."**

Westbrook tied the game with an unearned run in the top of the third, but the Golden Tigers put together the decisive four-run rally in the bottom of the fourth. It started with two outs and the bases empty when Gallagher was hit by a pitch. Eighth-grader Casen Heaps (one of Chris's two twin sons) followed with his first career varsity hit, a single through the hole on the left side.

Sophomore leadoff man Cole Barnett came through with an RBI single to left to put Russellville on top, and then Buckhalter drove a double down the left-field line to bring home Heaps and make it 4-2. Barnett dashed home on a wild pitch, and then Lindsey (the team leader through Sunday with 14 hits, a .412 average and five multi-hit games) stroked an opposite field single to left to score Buckhalter and make it 6-2.

White went two more innings before turning things over to Buckhalter, who worked a scoreless seventh to give the Golden Tigers (3-9) their first back-to-back wins of the season.

"A winning streak!" Heaps exclaimed with a smile before heading home.

Russellville was set to take that two-game streak and the momentum that went with it into Tuesday's area opener at home against Hamilton. Buckhalter, for one, was excited to begin another quest for a playoff berth.

"Very excited," he said. "That's what I look forward to, is area play. Win the area, host the [first round of the] playoffs after that, and see what happens—that's what we're looking for."



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## 'BENDALL,' from page 13

Naturally, Brayden has fond memories of the first time he ever got the better of big bro on the golf course.

"Oh yeah," he said with a grin. "Cherokee Ridge [in Union Grove]. We were just out there playing for fun with my family."

And how did Blake handle losing to his younger brother for the first time?

"Not very good," said Brayden, still grinning. "It was great for me, though."

Not surprisingly, Blake's recollection of that momentous occasion is a little hazy.

"Roughly," he says, brow furrowed, when asked if remembers losing to his younger brother for the first time. "I try to deny it. I try to blame it on one hole or a couple of shots instead of saying that he just played better than me."

The mention of Cherokee Ridge seems to jog Blake's memory a bit.

"That course is rough," he said. "I always love playing there, because it's beautiful. But it's hard to play, though."

This little detour down memory lane took place on Monday afternoon at the RHS field house, where Brayden—himself a senior now—signed an offer to continue his golfing career next year at Calhoun Community College in Decatur. Among the proudest of the supporters gathered for the ceremony were Brayden's parents, Brett and Natalie Bendall, and—of course—big bro.

"I'm really proud of him," said Blake, now closing in on a business degree at Auburn University and preparing to get married in October. "He's one of the hardest workers I've ever seen. Every time I come home, he's inside putting in the den, or he sets out a mat with a heater over it and hits under the porch on out into the yard. He's practicing all the time. I'm really proud of him."

According to Golden Tiger golf coach Patrick Odom, that work ethic and the rock-solid character from which it stems are the primary driving forces behind Bendall's success. [He shot 76-74 at Robert Trent Jones in the Shoals last May, finishing third overall at the Class 5A state tournament and helping Russellville bring home a runner-up Red Map.]

"He's such a great young man, a great student, and he does things the right way," Odom said at Monday's signing ceremony. "He represents his family and our school the way a young man is supposed to. I think, when you do things that way, I'm a big believer in the good Lord blessing that."

"Brayden has put a lot of time in. He's one of the

hardest-working kids I've ever seen. I think, in the seventh or eighth grade, he got the golf bug, and has just committed himself to getting to this point. It's fun to see kids work hard, do things the right way and then be blessed with the opportunity and the option to move on.

"It's a great program. Calhoun is repeatedly putting guys at four-year schools. It'll be a great place for Brayden, and his golf career won't end there. I really believe he'll have an opportunity to move on. I'm just proud of him. This is the epitome of the hard work he's put in and the type of kid he is."

**"He's such a great young man, a great student, and he does things the right way," Odom said at Monday's signing ceremony. "He represents his family and our school the way a young man is supposed to. I think, when you do things that way, I'm a big believer in the good Lord blessing that. Brayden has put a lot of time in. He's one of the hardest-working kids I've ever seen."**

Bendall, who is joined by fellow senior Jaceton Murray and sophomore Eric Boutwell in a talented top three that should have Russellville right back in the state championship hunt again this spring, said he's excited to have the chance to continue his career at Calhoun.

"I'm pumped," he said. "I've put in a lot of hard work over the years, and just the fact that it's finally paying off means a lot to me. I'm ready to get out there and get ready for the next step. Calhoun has a great program and great facilities. I think they'll be able to develop me as a player for the next two years after Calhoun. I just can't wait."

Calhoun golf coach Richard Morgan, who attended Monday's ceremony, believes that Bendall is more than capable of following in the footsteps of many of his former and current players who have parlayed their time at Calhoun into opportunities to play at four-year schools like Louisiana Tech and Charleston Southern.

**"I'm pumped," Bendall said of his opportunity to play in college. "I've put in a lot of hard work over the years, and just the fact that it's finally paying off means a lot to me. I'm ready to get out there and get ready for the next step. Calhoun has a great program and great facilities. I think they'll be able to develop me as a player for the next two years after Calhoun. I just can't wait."**

"Most certainly," said Morgan, an alum of Muscle Shoals High School and a 1987 graduate of the University of Alabama. "Brayden seems like a really great kid. He's got a great personality, and he can play some golf, it looks like. We're looking forward to coaching him. We have a really good system in place, TPI (the Titleist Performance Institute), as far as training and working on golf-specific muscles. We work hard, we practice hard, and I think we're gonna have a really good team next year."

Bendall is certainly no stranger to hard work. In fact, he embraces it. One of his favorite things about the game of golf is that there's always work to be done.

"Golf is a hard sport," Bendall said. "I just enjoy the pursuit of getting better. You can't perfect golf. It's impossible. You can't do it. But there's always that grind to get better and be the best you can be."

To hear Odom tell it, Bendall is nothing if not a grinder.

"He's such a competitor," Odom said. "He's our guy that grinds his way through a golf course. Every shot, his mental approach gives him a chance. That's what's fun to see. It's fun to see a kid invest that much. That's why he's here today."

Part of Bendall's investment into improving and developing his game has been receiving private instruction from his swing coach James Porter, who also attended Monday's ceremony. Porter first worked with Blake and then later took on Brayden as a pupil as well.

"It's been kind of an off-and-on thing for a few years," said Porter, a native Australian who played golf at UNA in the mid-2000's and played professionally for eight years. "I was with Blake first when he was coming through high school golf. Being the younger brother, Brayden took to it, just like his older brother. He's developed a lot in just a short period of time. Last summer was his first taste of competitive golf."

"He's got a wonderful demeanor about him and a great work ethic. This year will be interesting to see. We've had to do some refining with a couple of areas of his game. He's come a long way, and it'll be interesting to see how he goes."

Bendall's appetite for work and his ability to grind are defining traits, to be sure, but he has other, more tangible, strengths as well. He may not bash it off the tee, but he's accurate with his irons and proficient on the greens, according to Porter.

"He has a wonderful ability of, like, self-control," Porter said. "He swings within himself. A lot of kids try to hit the ball too hard and overpower the golf course. Brayden has this wonderful control. He's really straight with his irons, and his putting has come a long way—and that's without me even doing anything. He's gone away on his own and worked on his putting and become a great putter."

"Driving is gonna be the thing for him. We spend a lot of time trying to maximize ball flight. He's a little bit smaller, so he doesn't have the ball speed of some of the bigger kids. We're gonna look at trying to maximize the ball flight he gets so he can get the most out of his game. We're trying to take the side-spin off a little bit, because he's been fading too much. We're trying to straighten that out. That's the direction we're going."

That extra work off the tee should help Bendall now in his final season at Russellville but also at the next level, where Morgan said the biggest challenge for incoming freshmen is often the sheer length of the courses as compared to high school.

"The toughest adjustment is the length of the golf course," Morgan said. "From where we tee off, we play 7,000 yards—maybe 7,100 or 7,200 yards. The courses are shorter in high school, probably 6,600 or 6,700 yards. That's the biggest thing. And it's so competitive [in college] with the short game. At the JUCO level, you have a lot of players who will go on to play on the PGA Tour and things like that."

Bendall's goal is to ultimately earn an opportunity with a four-year program after leaving Calhoun. For now, though, he's focused on sinking a few more putts in the den at home, grinding his way through a few more courses and making a few more memories as a Golden Tiger.

"I just enjoy the tournaments we go to and the atmosphere around us," Bendall said. "Just being together at the golf course with all my friends. When we're playing good, it feels great to know we have each other around us and supporting us. It's just great."

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# Holding Court

## COURTESY PHOTO

The Russellville High School varsity girls tennis team beat Lauderdale County 8-1 on Saturday at the RHS Tennis Complex. Team members pictured at right (L to R) are Natalie Busler, Anna Woods, Emma Claire Bragwell, Peyton Parrish, Kaydee Holland, Ellyse Strickland and Avery Miller. Woods is the team's No. 1 singles player, followed by Bragwell at No. 2, Strickland at No. 3, Parrish at No. 4, Holland at No. 5 and Busler at No. 6. Woods and Strickland play together at No. 1 doubles, with Bragwell and Parrish teaming up at No. 2 and Holland and Miller at No. 3.



## 'GAMES,' from page 13

Bryant's parents, Jackie and Christy Hubbert, checked out the USA Student Athlete World Games and, once satisfied it was a legitimate organization, they gave the green light for their son to apply.

That process included a letter of representation from Odom, along with one from Hubbert's Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) summer coach, an application completed by Bryant and a highlight video.

Hubbert and his family will meet his teammates and their families in New York on June 16 before the group flies to Europe to begin their ten-day odyssey.

**"I'm thankful someone noticed my hard work I've put into basketball and nominated me for the program," Hubbert said. "And I want to thank Coach Odom for writing that letter, or this opportunity would never have happened."**

In addition to sightseeing tours through Italy, Germany and Austria, the students will take part in an opening ceremony representing their country as part of the international competition.

"One of the things that interested me the most about this is to explore the world and play at a different level internationally," Hubbert said. "It will be a different experience for college coaches to see us play. I'm thankful someone noticed my hard work I've put into basketball and nominated me for the program. And I want to thank Coach Odom for writing that letter, or this opportunity would never have happened."

The United States team will have only a few practice sessions before beginning their competition, but Hubbert's not worried about bonding with his teammates in such a short period of time.

"I feel like even though we don't have as much time to work together and mend together as a team, I feel God will give us the right path to come together correctly and succeed throughout the world games," Hubbert said.

Hubbert's summer of basketball will also see him attend several basketball camps, take part in summer workouts with the Golden Tigers and participate in AAU once again. He hopes to continue playing basketball at the collegiate level, but, more importantly, the rising senior wants to study forensic medicine and make an impact in the field of criminal justice.

"I feel I could help reduce the crime rate working in forensic sciences and help get justice for crime victims through the criminal justice process," Hubbert said.

Last year, the United World Games included teams from 36 countries. The United States returned home with three gold medals from the competition. But the program goes way beyond just athletics by providing sightseeing and opportunities for personal growth and leadership development through international travel.

For more information on the USA Student Athlete World Games, visit their website at [www.studentathleteworld.com](http://www.studentathleteworld.com).

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# 'PERFECT', from page 13

career perfect game in a 10-0 win by Phil Campbell.

"He had really good command of his fastball," Jonathan Raper said. "He threw it more than he's been throwing it here lately. His changeup was really good tonight, and he had a good breaking ball. All three pitches tonight were working."

Ironically, it was Raper's curveball that provided his head coach with the first clues that a special outing might be in the works on Friday. The sharpness with which he threw his breaking ball was a surefire sign of a pitcher rounding into form after a somewhat slow start to the season.

"His first start [an outing against Curry in which Raper gave up six runs on four hits and four walks in two innings], the only thing he could throw for a strike was his fastball," Jonathan said. "He played basketball this year, and I tried to tell him—last year at this time he had already thrown a lot. That's not the case this year. Basically, his first start, all he could throw consistently for a strike was his fastball. The first inning he looked really good, and then in the second inning he didn't look very good. He had to throw fastball, and they hit it. We had a couple of mental errors, too, but it wasn't a good outing."

"The other day, he pitched really good against Red Bay [holding the Tigers to one hit in five innings and striking out 11 in an 11-1 win]. His fastball and changeup were good. But his breaking ball had not been good at all. He had worked on it some this past week. Tonight he had all three pitches working well."

Raper went to a full count on the first batter of the game on Friday before ultimately striking him out. He struck out the next two batters on a total of six pitches and was ultra-efficient the rest of the way, only going to a three-ball count one other time. In fact, he went to a *two-ball count* only three times the entire game, retiring 12 of the 15 batters he faced without ever getting past ball one.

"I'm not saying Sheffield is the same caliber of team as Mars Hill, but today was almost like the day he faced Mars Hill in the playoffs [last year] and gave up one run," Jonathan said. "He's throwing the ball harder this year than he did last year, but he didn't throw it as hard today. He just had better command. He was 84 to 86 [miles an hour] against Curry, and the other day against Red Bay he was 85. Today, he was 82-83; he might have hit 84. But mostly he was 82 all day. He hit his spots with the fastball, his changeup was really good, and even though he didn't throw his breaking ball a whole lot, it was a good pitch for him when he

did throw it."

Raper (2-0 through Sunday) struck out the side again in the top of the second, giving him six K's just six batters into the game. He got a groundout and two more strikeouts in the third, then a flyout and two more K's in the fourth. After inducing a pop-up to short to start the top of the fifth, Raper recorded strikeouts No. 11 and 12 on the day to make it 15 up and 15 down.

Leading 7-0, the Bobcats scored three runs in the bottom of the fifth, getting an RBI double from Ty Leindecker, an RBI single from Eli Smith and a game-ending RBI single from Mason Swinney. Raper's perfect game concluded in unusual fashion—with him watching from the dugout.

"It took a little bit of the glamour and the glory out of it," Jonathan Raper said. "It was still a perfect game, and it was good, but it's different when it ends like that instead of ending with him on the mound."

Of Raper's 57 pitches on Friday, 44 were strikes. He threw first-pitch strikes to 12 of the 15 batters he faced. None of those batters reached base safely, obviously, and Jonathan Raper said his son had a pretty good idea of what was happening—even if not everyone else in the home dugout did.

"Nobody said anything about it," the coach said. "Cole Motes, one of our seniors, he's had the flu and hasn't played all week. He wasn't there tonight. He would have known. It probably would have been him and Austen Baker, but Austen's hurt right now, so he's not playing either. We had a lot of younger kids in there. We probably had all tenth-graders, with one eleventh-grader and one senior. We're a lot younger this year than we've been being. With all of them in there, they may have not realized what was going on."

"Except for Ridge. I think Ridge knew and understood. It was good for him, especially after he struggled that first outing. This is sort of what he wants to do if he ever gets a chance in college. [Pitching] is the main thing he focuses on. It's good that he's had two good outings before he pitches in area play next week."

The Bobcats finished with 10 hits in support of Raper on Friday. Swinney was 3-for-3 with an RBI and a run, and Rilan Garrison went 2-for-2 with an RBI. Trey Leindecker had a two-run single to spark a four-run second inning and finished 1-for-2. Eli Smith was 1-for-2 with three RBIs and two runs scored, and Luke Barnwell and Levi Crittenden each went 1-for-3. Nate Owens was also 1-for-3 and scored a run.

Phil Campbell was set to open area play this week against East Lawrence with Raper at the forefront of a deep pitching staff.

"We've got five kids on the mound we feel really good about," Jonathan Raper said. "Nate has pitched well, and Cole Motes has been lights-out for us, until he got sick. Austen Baker and Luke Barnwell have pitched good, too. We've got a lot of different arms we can put out there."

In other recent action:

### Phil Campbell 20 Winston County 6

Phil Campbell pounded out a season-high 20 hits on Monday afternoon, extending its win streak to four with a rout of Winston County.

The Bobcats (9-4) led just 5-2 before erupting for 15 runs in the top of the fourth inning. They had 14 hits in the inning, including a leadoff double by Cole Motes, a pair of RBI singles by Brett Saint, a two-run single by Mason Swinney, RBI singles by Luke Barnwell, Rilan Garrison and Tyler Weeks, and a two-run homer by Nate Owens.

Owens also had an RBI single in the big inning and finished 3-for-4 with a double, five RBIs and

four runs scored. Swinney was 3-for-4 with two RBIs and three runs scored, and Motes was 2-for-2 with two runs scored. Saint went 2-for-3 and drove in two runs, and Trey Leindecker was 2-for-2 with two runs scored. Garrison was 2-for-4 with an RBI and a run.

Barnwell went 1-for-2 with two RBIs and two runs scored, and Ridge Raper was 1-for-3 with an RBI and two runs. Levi Crittenden went 1-for-3 with an RBI and a run.

Saint pitched a complete game to earn the win, allowing five earned runs on seven hits in five innings. He struck out three and walked four.

### Phil Campbell 11 West Limestone 5, Phil Campbell 11 Central 1

Nate Owens continued his red-hot start at the plate for Phil Campbell on Saturday, and the Bobcats got two good pitching performances from Cole Motes and Luke Barnwell on their way to earning a pair of wins over West Limestone and Central-Florence

Owens, a senior, went 4-for-6 in the doubleheader with two doubles and five RBIs.

He had plenty of help in the run production department on Saturday. The Bobcats broke open a scoreless tie in the first game against West Limestone with four runs in the top of the third inning, getting a double from Trey Leindecker, a two-run triple from Luke Barnwell, a sac fly from Owens and an RBI single from Levi Crittenden.

Phil Campbell added five more runs in the fourth on RBI singles by Leindecker and Rilan Garrison, a two-run single by Ridge Raper and an RBI double by Owens. West Limestone scored three times in the bottom of the fourth and twice in the fifth to cut the lead to 9-5, but Owens came through with another RBI double in the sixth. Phil Campbell then added an insurance run in the top of the seventh to stretch the lead to 11-5.

Motes (4-0 through Sunday) picked up the win, allowing three earned runs on seven hits in five innings. The senior struck out five batters and did not issue a walk before giving way to Crittenden, who finished off the win with two scoreless innings.

Owens finished 2-for-3 with two doubles and three RBIs, and Trey Leindecker was 3-for-4 with two runs scored. Barnwell went 2-for-5 with two RBIs and two runs, and Raper was 1-for-3 with two RBIs and two runs. Crittenden was 2-for-4 with an RBI and a run, and Mason Swinney went 1-for-2 with two walks and two runs.

The Bobcats finished game one with 11 runs on 13 hits and then matched those totals exactly in their second game against Central. They were trailing 1-0 in the top of the third before rallying for four runs. Trey Leindecker tied the game with a sac fly, and Swinney put Phil Campbell in front with an RBI single. Owens followed with a two-run single to make it 4-1.

Leading 5-1, the Bobcats broke open the game with a six-run fifth inning highlighted by a two-run double from Garrison and a two-run triple from Raper.

Barnwell (2-1 through Sunday) got the win, holding Central to one hit and one unearned run in a five-inning complete game. The sophomore struck out four and walked one, throwing just 52 pitches (37 for strikes).

Owens went 2-for-3 with two RBIs, and Raper was 2-for-3 with three RBIs and two runs scored. Swinney and Crittenden each went 2-for-3 and scored twice, and Motes was 2-for-3 with two RBIs. Ty Leindecker was 1-for-2 with a run, and Garrison went 1-for-3 with two RBIs. Barnwell was 1-for-2 with a run.

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# Tharptown, Red Bay open with area wins

Staff reports

Tharptown rallied from a late three-run deficit to force extra innings against Colbert County on Monday and then scored five runs in the top of the eighth before holding on to beat the Indians 12-9 in the area opener for both teams.

The Wildcats (7-1 overall, 1-0 in Class 2A, Area 14) trailed 7-4 before taking advantage of a walk, two hit batters, an error and a wild pitch to score twice in the top of the sixth. They added another run in the top of the seventh on three walks and an error, tying the game 7-7. The 'Cats had a chance to take the lead but left the bases loaded.

After reliever Hunter White worked a scoreless bottom of the seventh, Tharptown put up five runs in the top of the eighth. Colton Simmons sparked the rally with a base hit, Jackson Clement drove in the go-ahead run with a groundout, and Jessie Mitchell had an RBI single. The Wildcats also took advantage of two walks and two more errors by the Indians.

Colbert County scored twice in the bottom of the eighth and had a man on with just one out, but Jordan Austin lined into a double play to end the game.

White picked up the win with three hitless innings of relief. He allowed two runs (both unearned), striking out one and walking three. Starter Britton Kennamore went five innings, allowing four earned runs on six hits. He struck out six and walked five.

The two teams combined for 19 walks and 10 errors on the day.

Simmons went 2-for-5 with two runs scored, and Clement was 1-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs. Jessie Mitchell went 1-for-2 with an RBI, two walks and two runs. Jayden Mitchell doubled and scored twice, and Greyson Studdard was 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run. White drove in two runs and scored one.

In other Class 2A, Area 14 action on Monday:

## Red Bay 7 Sheffield 3

Chase Allen struck out seven batters in a complete game and also went 3-for-4 with two RBIs on Monday, helping Red Bay open area play with a win.

Kaleb Bragwell and Cade McKinney also had three hits apiece for the Tigers (5-5 overall, 1-0 in Class 2A, Area 14), who jumped out to an early lead with four runs in the top of the first. The rally started with two outs and the bases empty when Kolby Bragwell doubled. Allen followed with an RBI double to left, and Peyton Green was hit by a pitch. McKinney then came through with a two-run double to center and later scored the final run of the inning on an error to make it 4-0.

Sheffield scored twice in the bottom of the third and once in the fifth, cutting the lead to 4-3. Red Bay answered with a run in the top of the sixth, loading the bases on singles by Colbie King and Kaleb Bragwell and a walk to Kolby Bragwell. Allen then delivered an RBI single to make it 5-3.

McKinney's leadoff triple in the top of the seventh sparked a two-run rally that gave the Tigers a little more breathing room. Zac Humphries had an infield hit, and both runners eventually scored on a two-run single by Kaleb Bragwell to make it 7-3.

That was enough for Allen (1-3), who held the Bulldogs to just three hits and walked only one batter in seven innings. He gave up two earned runs, throwing 70 of his 101 pitches for strikes.

Kaleb Bragwell finished 3-for-5 with two RBIs, a run and three stolen bases, and McKinney was 3-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs. Kolby Bragwell went 2-for-2 with two walks and a run scored. Green was 2-for-3 with a run, and Humphries, King and Alex Burroughs each had one hit. Red Bay finished with 16 hits as a team.

# BHS hosting Donkey Basketball

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

On a court that's seen its share of memorable basketball through the years, donkeys will take center stage Thursday evening at Belgreen High School's old gym.

Belgreen High School will host Donkey Basketball at 6:30 p.m., with teams consisting of Belgreen High School staff, students and community members. Doors open at 5:45 p.m. Presale tickets are \$8 and will be

\$10 at the door. Proceeds benefit Belgreen High School.

The event is sponsored by Sanovo Technology, State Farm agent Rhett Bradford, Miller Furniture, probate judge Barry Moore, Mid-America Roofing, Dr. Eddie Britton, Campbell Vision Center, Franklin County Board of Education member Shannon Oliver, Community Spirit Bank, Piggly Wiggly of Red Bay, Fourth Street Grill, Road Gear and McKinney RV.

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## Legacy CHEVRON PRESENTS ATHLETE of the WEEK


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### Nate Owens

Senior, Phil Campbell

Owens was on a tear at the plate last week, going 7-for-12 with two doubles, five RBIs and four runs scored in four games. He stayed hot on Monday, finishing 3-for-4 with a home run, a double, five RBIs and four runs scored in a 20-6 rout of Winston County.

Entering Tuesday's area opener against East Lawrence, Owens was batting an absurd .595 (22-for-37) on the season with one homer, seven doubles and 16 RBIs for the 9-4 Bobcats. He had collected multiple hits in nine of the team's 13 games, including six of the last seven.



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