



# Local officers remove ten dogs from 'unbelievable' conditions

## Owner of Spruce Pine residence likely to face charges

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

In conditions he described as 'unbelievable,' Franklin County sheriff Shannon Oliver oversaw the removal of ten dogs from a residence in Spruce Pine as part of a search warrant executed April 10.

The search warrant was based on an investigation conducted by the FCSO and Franklin County Animal Control officer Joey Wingo after a social media post about abandoned and neglected dogs at the residence drew widespread attention from area residents.

The search warrant was executed at 1429 Highway 64, property that contains a double wide manufactured home, Oliver said. Ten dogs found in filthy living conditions were picked up by officers inside the residence, and two others that were running loose were picked up by a

concerned citizen earlier in the week.

Oliver said the owner of the property, who investigators believe is not living there, would likely face animal cruelty charges. The property owner's name is being withheld pending charges being made.

**The search warrant was based on an investigation conducted by the FCSO and Franklin County Animal Control officer Joey Wingo after a social media post about abandoned and neglected dogs at the residence drew widespread attention from area residents.**

Alabama Code Sec. 13A-11-14 makes it a crime for a person to "intentionally or recklessly subject any animal to cruel mistreatment, or subject any animal in his custody to cruel neglect."

Deputies have spoken with the property owner, Oliver

See 'DOGS,' Page 9

# Sibley Oil celebrates 100 years



John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

As he addressed a room full of friends and family at the 100th anniversary celebration of his company, Sibley Oil, Jim Sibley credited the people he considers the heart and soul of his business.

"Our employees are the key to this operation—the people my grandfather had and my dad had and I still have working with us are great people," Sibley said. "Our most important asset is our people, and it will always be, and I'm sure Chevron will tell you the same thing."

Sibley, along with several of his long-time employees, was the guest of honor at a special event held at Doe's Eat Place April 9. Sibley Oil Company began in 1919 when Neal Sibley started delivering fuel by a tank wagon pulled by his two mules, Sadie and Sally.

"He opened the first service station in the county in 1920, and he later had the first electric pumps in the county,"

See 'SIBLEY,' Page 3

Jim Sibley, far right, receives an Auburn baseball jersey, bat and a plaque from Chevron officials honoring 100 years of Sibley Oil Company.

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**Randy Dexter Bray**, Russellville, age 63  
Died Friday, April 5, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.  
Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**Alice "Alleyne" Dhority Collins**, Tuscumbia, age 80  
Died Saturday, April 13, 2019. Graveside service held at New Bethel Cemetery in Colbert County. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

**Annie Ruth Cook**, Russellville, age 88  
Died Monday, April 15, 2019. No services were planned at press time.  
Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

**Nancy Jane "Janie" Estes**, Tuscumbia, age 48  
Died Sunday, April 7, 2019. The family was planning to hold a memorial service at a later date. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family.

**Helen Juanita Fowler**, Phil Campbell, age 84  
Died Friday, April 12, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Shady Grove Cemetery, Liberty Hill.

**Margie Keller Pickens Gober**, Phil Campbell, age 82  
Died Monday, April 8, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery.

**Charles "Chuck" Allen Lawson**, Tuscumbia, age 68  
Died Friday, April 5, 2019. The family was planning to hold a memorial service at a later date.

**Melba Renae Morrow**, Russellville, age 52  
Died Sunday, April 7, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home.  
Interment in Hyde Cemetery in Littleville.

**Carolyn Sue Poston**, Phil Campbell, age 73  
Died Friday, April 5, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in East Franklin Cemetery.

**Bradley Jack Porter**, Northport, AL, age 45  
Died Wednesday, April 20, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Cherry Hill Cemetery.

**Mary Jo Puckett**, Gurley, age 63  
Died Monday, April 8, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Blue Springs Cemetery.

**Larry "Michael" Wade**, Russellville, age 46  
Died Wednesday, April 10, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home.  
Interment in Duncan Creek Cemetery.

**Margie Pennington Wade**, Russellville, age 65  
Died Saturday, April 13, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.  
Interment in Lime Rock Cemetery.

**Roy Lee Welch**, Russellville, age 62  
Died Wednesday, April 10, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.  
Interment in Belgreen Cemetery.



# Mize helps readers recognize answered prayers

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Clay Mize's latest book began as a discussion in his men's bible study class about answered prayer.

When the group was asked to share accounts of answered prayer in their lives, there was a deafening silence across the room.

The next day, Mize decided to pen *A Desperate God*, a book designed to strengthen the reader's relationship with God through 'the answered prayers of a nobody.'

"The class had a difficult time coming up with any answers when someone asked to share some of the prayers answered in their lives," Mize said. "That sparked my thinking. I wonder if I could create a book to get people talking about and thinking about that. I looked back at my own life to see what prayers I had answered, and that was my motivation."

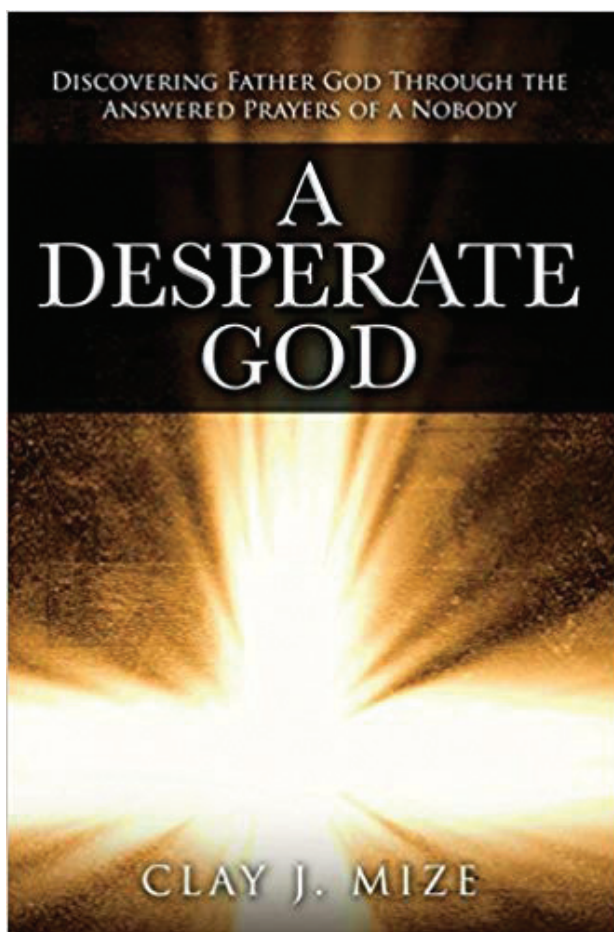
Mize, 60, is a Shoals resident who works as a youth tennis instructor, a real estate investor and author. *A Desperate God* is his second book, and it follows *The Power of Humility*.

**While God may not always answer prayer in the way or manner we expect or want, Mize's book reinforces that our prayers are heard and answered by the Lord.**

**"I think a lot of times we pray and get answers, and we later feel uncomfortable saying that's something God did," Mize said. "We kind of forget about it and think it just happened or worked out, but it's very difficult for us to really attribute it to God and to discuss that."**

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about it and think it just happened or worked out, but it's very difficult for us to really attribute it to God and to discuss that."

Mize's theory falls in line with the adage that many people only turn to God and pray when life presents us with low points and challenges.

"It's almost as if we say, 'Okay, I've got it now.' Things start going good, and we say, 'I got it,'" Mize said. "We can't forget that things were bleak at one time and we really cried out for help, got that help and then tend to forget we prayed."

While most of the feedback he's received since publishing the book last year has been positive,

Mize said there have been some who questioned the book's title and his reference to a 'desperate' God.

"You have to read the first chapter to understand what is meant by the word 'desperate.' I started thinking about the whole idea of the crucifixion. And that was a pretty desperate move," Mize said. "So my thought was there are some things here we don't fully grasp, because if you could do things any way you want to and that's the route you chose, maybe He chose that route because things are more desperate than we realize."

"God is doing some desperate moves in order to get the attention of people. To think He'd go to that measure to get a message across is kind of difficult for us to comprehend what's really going on."

Mize hopes to share his own experiences where he learned to trust God through answers to his prayers. He refers to the answered prayers of "a nobody" when sharing his story.

"I'm not a pastor, priest, elder or deacon. In the religious world, I'm a nobody, but God still answers my prayers, and He will answer yours, too," Mize said. "I'm just a regular guy, and I hope that helps resonate with readers."

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Mize's next literary project is a tennis book designed to help kids learn the game and sharpen their skills even without access to a tennis court. He expects to have the book ready for printing later this year.

To order *A Desperate God*, email Mize at [clayborne.mize@gmail.com](mailto:clayborne.mize@gmail.com) or purchase it through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## **Michael "Tyler" Owens Born July 5, 1989 in Russellville, AL Died March 23, 2019 in Shingletown, CA Buried in Wagoner, OK**

Tyler Owens got his Angel wings Saturday, March 23, 2019 in an automobile accident in Shingletown, California, at the age of 29.

Tyler was born in Russellville, Alabama to his parents Penny Cornelius and Mike Owens.

The love of his life was his beautiful daughter, Serenidy Rain Elizabeth Owens. She was his world. Tyler was the best daddy. He loved everyone and was loved by everyone.

Preceding Tyler in his passing were his maternal grandmother, Ruby Brown; his uncle, Ricky Williams; and his paternal grandparents, Billy Jack Owens and Barbara Jean Kennedy.

Tyler is survived by his parents, Penny and Richard Cornelius of Phil Campbell, AL, and Mike and Kim Owens of Wagoner, OK; his fiancée, Val Kenton; his daughters, Serenidy Owens, Kiwi Richie, Michelle, Kayla and Sydnee; his sons, Jesse Tims and Cody Davis; his brothers, T.J. Wilson, Johnny Strickland, Jacob Cornelius, Zachary Cornelius and Nick Medlen; his sisters, Tasha Conley, Anna Cornelius and Melissa Bledsoe; his uncles, Kelvin Brown, Ronald McLemore and Josh Lucas; his aunts, Nancy Williams of Russellville, AL, Jennifer Owens, Trish Owens Holtzclaw and Sara Lisa Owens Lahti; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.



## **'SIBLEY' from page 1**

Sibley said of his grandfather.

Two of those pumps that were at his first station now stand inside Sibley's Legacy Chevron on Highway 43, opened as a tribute to his father David and his grandfather. Sibley recently opened a beautiful new Chevron station and convenience store, Heritage Chevron, in honor and memory of his mother, Hamilton native Betty Sibley, in her hometown.

Six employees with more than 20 years of experience with Sibley Oil attended the dinner, including Charles Montgomery, who has worked for Sibley, his father, mother and grandfather. Montgomery, who started with the company in 1963, said Sibley Oil was part of his family.

"Sibley Oil raised me. I went to work for them at age 18. It's been wonderful," Montgomery said. "I have nothing but good things to say about the Sibley family and their company."

Chevron officials presented Sibley with a framed Auburn baseball jersey featuring a 100 years Sibley Oil logo and a special Louisville Slugger bat commemorating the occasion, as well as a plaque recognizing Sibley Oil Company's 100 years of valued business association with Chevron.

"It's been a real pleasure working with Jim as his territory manager," said Wayne Johns with Chevron. "One hundred years is a long time. In ten years, 50 percent of businesses fail. In my territory, no one is close to the 100-year level. That's a real testimony to Jim Sibley, his family and employees."

Johns recalled some news events from 1919, Sibley Oil's inaugural year.

"In 1919, the life expectancy of a male was 53 years. We saw the passing of the 18th Amendment that began Prohibition, the Black Sox Scandal, and Oregon became the first state to tax gas, at one cent per gallon," Johns said. "It's interesting to see where we've been and how much things have changed. One thing that hasn't changed is Sibley Oil and the great job they've done and the legacy they have in this community."



# Honey Do: I remember

Yes, I remember and never shall forget the day of the tornadoes.

I remember watching the windows of our building in Russellville, wondering if the wind was going to blow them in on us. I remember having my employees come to the center of the building. I remember, after the wind had died down, seeing emergency vehicles, one after the other, speeding south on Highway 43. I remember wondering where they could possibly be going and what might have happened.

I didn't know what devastation had happened just about nine miles away. I never imagined the chaos that was going on with my neighbors and friends in Phil Campbell, Hackleburg and Mt. Hope. I watched the news reports closely. I heard the stories of tragic loss, miraculous escapes, heroic rescues and horrendous scenes from many that experienced them first-hand.

I didn't immediately visit the sites. We stayed busy in Russellville,

servicing chainsaws, sharpening chains and anything else we could do to support the recovery effort. It was not until Sunday morning, on the way to church in Haleyville, that we passed through Phil Campbell and first saw the damage.

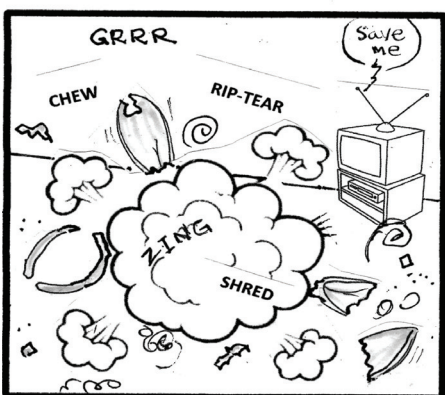
Even at that time, it was unbelievable and too much to take in. Just a few days later, travelling through Hackleburg, my jaw dropped again in disbelief.

Our community has learned from this event. Community storm shelters have been built, buildings have been improved and early warning systems have been enhanced. Each and every family should have an emergency plan in place, and EVERY MEMBER of the family should know it. Know where to go, what to do and where to meet in the event of an emergency such as a fire or storm.

As we remember and mourn the losses, let us celebrate the recovery and determine to be as prepared as possible should we be faced with this kind of catastrophic event ever again.



**Doug Green**



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

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# Spring cleaning your finances

Think of making a budget like spring cleaning: It's a great way to get things in order around your house, and you'll feel so much better after it's done.

I know lots of people think of a budget as something that limits freedom. (I know because I was one of them!) But just like getting all those old clothes out of a closet and into a yard sale or finally Marie Kondo-ing your kitchen cupboards, there's a sense of relief once it's done. Both spring cleaning and budgeting give you freedom and space to do more of what you want to do!

Here are three things to remember that will make budgeting and spring cleaning much easier:

#### 1. Tackle one area at a time.

Don't think you have to clean the entire house in one fell swoop. Pick a small room to start and go after it. Once you have a little task done, go on to something larger. Same goes for your budget. Don't focus on saving 15 percent of your income or tens of thousands for your kids' college fund—that gets overwhelming fast! Start with Baby Step 1: Get \$1,000 saved for emergencies. Then, tackle each Baby Step as you get there.

For more on the Baby Steps, go to [www.rachelcruze.com](http://www.rachelcruze.com).

#### 2. Start with a small task.

If you begin cleaning and organizing in your bedroom, do something small and simple like cleaning out a drawer to get yourself into a work groove and see some progress. Just like budgeting for your debt snowball, where you target one debt at a time (starting with the smallest), this approach will get you motivated to clean the rest of the rooms in your house.

Here's the next small thing to check off your list! It couldn't be easier to make sure your family, your savings and your identity are covered with the right insurance policies. Take this 5-Minute Coverage Checkup to see what you need and what you don't: [daveramsey.com/coverage-checkup](http://daveramsey.com/coverage-checkup).

#### 3. Give yourself plenty of time.

You don't need to have a schedule that would make the hosts of *Hoarders* beg for a rest. Set a timetable for yourself for each task. It's your house, so that means you get to operate on your clock. There's no need to compare your progress to anyone else's—and no need to think you're not winning because you're not at their level. Same goes for your progress as you budget, save money and pay down debt.

You may feel like your house and money situation are both in a mess—and who hasn't at one time or another? That's totally normal. But the good news is, both situations can change starting right now!

#### About Rachel Cruze

As a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author, host of *The Rachel Cruze Show* and *The Rachel Cruze Show Podcast*, 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 [www.rachelcruze.com](http://www.rachelcruze.com), [youtube.com/rachelcruze](http://youtube.com/rachelcruze) or [facebook.com/rachelramseycruze](http://facebook.com/rachelramseycruze).



**Rachel  
Cruze**





### Be intentional with your time

Dear Dave,  
As a business owner, how do you find a life balance between work and home? I have my own small business, and sometimes I feel like I'm putting in too much time at the shop and not spending enough time with my husband and kids.

Molly

Dear Molly,  
The idea of everything being in balance, on an everyday basis, is a myth. It's simply not possible to perfectly juggle every aspect of our lives every single day.

The key, I think, is to strive for an overall balance over time. You know first-hand the long hours and how work can interfere with other things if you're not careful. The answer lies in *really* being into whatever you're doing.

When you're not at your shop or taking care of work-related matters, actively participate in conversations with your spouse and kids—and *listen*. Spend time with them! Turn off your cell phone when you go on dates with your husband and when you take your kids on outings.

When you're with your family you should really be *with* them. Then, on those occasions when you have to work, chances are they won't be so upset, and you'll feel better about things, too!

Dave

## My take Well, hello on this... my friends

I had never considered how much a newspaper could make such a difference in a person's life until I became a contributor to one.

It gives the "shut-ins" access to the outside world. It is as close to a human hand as some ever get to relatives again. When a relative is thought about often but seldom or never seen, a newspaper can give them a feeling of being connected. That makes me happy, knowing the people involved in making a newspaper can bring smiles and happiness to someone who really needs and appreciates it.

Upon realizing that, I had to take my wondering mind a few thoughts further. What else draws a person to choose their favorite paper? could it be the phenomenal writers who share their ability to bring to life the local news stories and other articles?

That and so many other reasons are why the majority of readers choose the No. 1 paper, which is the Franklin Free Press. It's the best choice for hometown news at the most reasonable price. After all, a free paper is the same as saved money in your pocketbook. Who doesn't enjoy saving money?



Gail Motes

### Don't go too far

Dear Dave,  
Our son is 17, and he is in school. He has a good part-time job, and my wife and I started teaching him basic money management at a young age. He understands the importance of saving, giving and spending, plus he is setting aside money for technical school after he graduates from high school. Do you think it would be an appropriate real-world exercise if we started charging him a very small amount in rent each month to prepare him for life when he leaves home?

Barry

Dear Barry,  
I appreciate the fact that you're looking for teachable moments, but I think charging a teenager rent while he's living at home is going too far. Now, if he was 28 or 29, that'd be a different story. But as parents, it's still your responsibility to provide a home for your 17-year-old child.

It sounds like you've done a fantastic job already of helping your son grow into a responsible young man. He knows how to work, and he has grasped the basic concepts of managing money. I meet people three times his age on a regular basis who still haven't done that.

With this kind of start, I've got a feeling your kid will be fine. I also think he has a great chance of becoming wealthy some day!

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

**W**e 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 Ozbirn (256-332-8827 or archive@hiwaay.net) for more info.

**I**t's mowing season! Time to remove old flowers from the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on Hwy. 724 in Newburg. If you have relatives buried in this cemetery, please consider making a donation for cemetery upkeep. Donations may be mailed to: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Fund, 941 Hwy. 87, Russellville, AL 35654.

**T**he dates for West Elementary Kindergarten registration and verification are April 1-12, 2019. Registration packets may be picked up at the Russellville City Schools Board of Education and returned with the required documents. A kindergarten screening will be administered to all registered students. Please refer to the following information to determine the appropriate time for you and your child to be present for the screening. All screening will be conducted at the RCS Board of Education building located at 1945 Waterloo Road, Russellville. Hours are 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-2 p.m. Students whose last names begin with the letters A-M will be screened on Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Students whose last names begin with the letters N-Z will be screened on Thursday, April 18, 2019.

**R**evival services with evangelist Bro. Brian Bridges will be held at Bethsaida Missionary Baptist Church on Hwy. 48 in Russellville April 15-19 at 7 p.m. each night. Pastor Bro. Stanley Hargett and congregation invite you to come and worship!

**T**here will be an Easter Egg Hunt at Belgreen Baptist Church this Wednesday, April 17 at 6:30 p.m. Everyone welcome! Also, Belgreen Baptist Church will host its Easter Sunrise Service Sunday, April 21 at 6 a.m.

**K**athryn Tucker Windham's book *Alabama: One Big Front Porch* will be discussed at the April 17 meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club at 10 a.m. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 105 West Sixth Street, Tuscumbia. For more info, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

**S**tronger, a cancer survivor group, will hold its next meeting this Saturday, April 20 at Isbell United Methodist Church on Hwy. 43 South. This month the meeting will be held from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. For more information, you may text 256-366-3724. Together, we are stronger than cancer. We welcome cancer patients, survivors, friends and family of cancer patients. We welcome those dealing with all types of cancer, and those wishing to learn how to be there for those fighting cancer.

**T**he Phil Campbell High School Alumni Association will hold a scholarship fundraiser with your choice of William Bishop's smoked chicken or barbecue plates, including baked beans, slaw, roll, dessert and drink. Plates are \$10 each and will be available for pickup on Saturday, April 27 from 3-5 p.m. at the Phil Campbell Rescue Squad Building. Walk-ins are welcome, but chicken plates are limited. Purchase your ticket from any member of the Scholarship Committee. All monies go to the Scholarship Fund. Each year the association awards two \$500 scholarships to PCHS students. Donations may also be made at any time to the PCHS Alumni Scholarship Fund Account at any CB&S Bank. For more information, contact Lynn Landers at 256-810-4572.

**C** 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!

**T**he Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces its third production of the season, *They'd Hang You In Nashville*, by William Gleason and directed by Scotty Kennedy. The performance dates are April 25-27 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 28 at 2 p.m. at the Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. Tickets are \$8.00 each and go on sale at the Weatherford Centre Monday, April 15. You may go by or call 256-356-9829 between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m. to purchase or reserve your tickets. Groups are welcome also.

**R**evival services at Mtn. Home Missionary Baptist Church (3600 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia) will be held Sunday, April 28 through Wednesday, May 1. Bro. James McCullar will preach at 11 a.m. on Sunday, April 28, and a fellowship meal will be held at 5 p.m. that evening. Services will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 29 (Bro. Frank Chaney); Tuesday, April 30 (Bro. Truman Kimbrough); and Wednesday, May 1 (Bro. David Kiel). You are invited to attend!

**D**ecoration Day at Osborn Hill Cemetery will be on May 4, 2019. The first Saturday of May has been observed as Decoration Day for well over 100 years. All old flowers will need to be removed off the graves. Please make plans for that special day to come to the cemetery. Also, it's time again for annual donations. If you would like to donate to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, please send your donations to: Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan, 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674.



## Alumni honored



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville High School alumni (from left) Orland Britnell, Bill Foster and Chris Meeks were honored for their service to community at the Russellville City Schools Education Foundation Scholarship Dinner.

# RCS shines brightly at annual Education Foundation Dinner

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

On a night where Russellville City Schools shined brightly, 12 RHS students, three alumni and one outstanding educator were honored at the annual Russellville City Schools Education Foundation Scholarship Dinner.

The 12 RHS seniors received \$1,000 scholarships to be sent to the college or university of their choice. Eight students received Education Foundation Scholarships, including Will Rushing, Josie Willis, Lauren Rogers, Jessica Morrow, Scarlett Winsted, Kelsey Montgomery, Brayden Bendall and Karlie Greenhill. Addie Scruggs received the Lanny Norris Scholarship. Patrick Crummie was honored with the Patti Kimbrough Scholarship. The Dr. Wayne Ray Scholarship went to Hunter Fuller, and Luke Patrick was the recipient of the Raymond Grissom Scholarship.

Stephanie Mayfield received the Dan C. Hindman Star Polisher Award, presented to an educator who takes students in whatever shape they come and polishes them into a bright, shining light for all to see.

Mayfield is a 28-year Russellville City Schools employee who currently serves as the English Second Language coordinator for Russellville High School. The award was presented by Sharon Hester, an RCS Foundation Board Member and daughter of Hindman, who was a former RCS principal.

"Tonight, we recognize an individual who has excelled in leadership, integrity, honesty beyond reproach in teaching, and who is strongly involved in our community," Hester said. "We are proud to present this year's Dan C. Hindman Star Polisher Award to Stephanie Mayfield."

The three RHS alumni honored for their service to community were Orland Britnell, Bill Foster and Chris Meeks. Foundation member Judy Pounders presented this year's alumni awards.

**ORLAND BRITNELL:** Britnell, a 1952 RHS graduate, is a veteran of the U.S. Army, who returned to Franklin County after his service. He married Grace Pace Britnell, and the couple raised three daughters, Vonda, Paige and Misty.

Britnell's service in the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association and the Alabama Cattlemen's Association spans 55 years. He was president of the county chapter for four years, regional vice president, state vice president,

See 'DINNER,' page 9

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# After 66 years, Wood-Thompson Insurance still proud to serve 'loyal, good' customers

Taylor Thornton  
Franklin Free Press

As the oldest insurance agency in Russellville, Wood-Thompson Insurance Agency has been serving this community since 1953.

Though the Thompson family now resides in Madison, the agency remains in good hands here in Russellville under owner Sheila Underwood.

Underwood purchased the agency from Bill Thompson on June 1, 2000. Thompson, who also trained Underwood, is the son of one of the founders of the company, William Thompson.

Wood-Thompson is an independent insurance agency, meaning that they can represent more than one company. All companies represented by Wood-Thompson are "A" and best-rated. This allows them to shop coverages through different companies, offering their customers the best prices in any situation. Wood-Thompson has represented Auto Owners Insurance for more than 60 years.

The company has remained in its original location at 130 North Jackson Avenue since opening its doors in 1953. Wood-Thompson prides themselves on being available to all of their customers by opening their doors on Saturdays as well as Monday through Friday. They have been serving many of their customers for more than 30 years.

"We have many loyal, good customers in the area of Franklin County and the city of Russellville," Underwood said.

True to the company's well-respected name, Underwood expressed her appreciation to the citizens of Russellville and surrounding areas she has had the privilege of insuring.

"We have many loyal, good customers in the area of Franklin County and the city of Russellville," Underwood said.



Sheila Underwood



Melanie Ward



Jadonna Bowen

Underwood has two employees, Jadonna Bowen and Melanie Ward, who have each been with her and the company for more than 15 years. Bowen manages the personal lines, while Ward is the office manager.

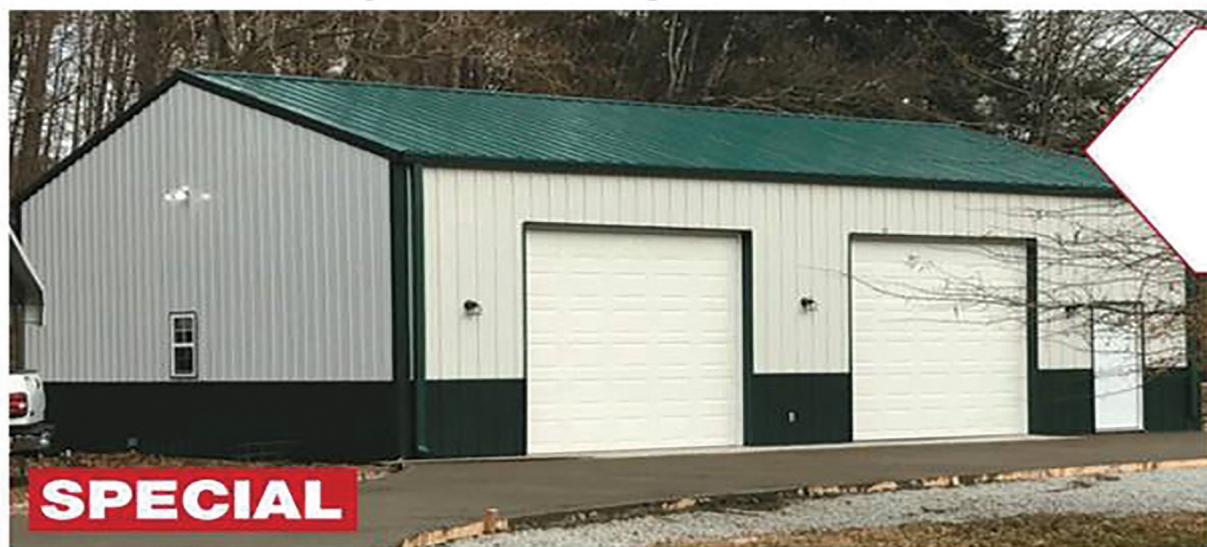
Wood-Thompson Insurance recently acquired Iron Mountain Insurance. Underwood and her staff are excited about serving the insurance needs of the former Iron Mountain insureds.

"We will be happy to assist you with any questions about this transition," Underwood said. "We will work for you with the same service and dedication offered to our insureds the past 66 years."

In appreciation to their customers, Wood-Thompson will be giving away a free car wash to one person per week for the month of April. All that a person must do to enter this giveaway is like and share the posts made on the Wood-Thompson Insurance Agency Facebook page.

For more information on Wood-Thompson Insurance Agency, or to receive a quote, call 256-332-1381.

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## ‘FRIENDS,’ from page 5

For those of you who have family members or friends who have moved away and are so very heartbroken because they can't read their favorite newspaper, I have some wonderful news! Help is only a website away, and you can be proud of yourself for bringing them a renewed happiness. And, of course, you are very welcome. LOL. I just had to throw that in. It wouldn't be me if I wasn't doing the unexpected. Anyway, go online to [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net).

Speaking of this wonderful paper, there is no way I would want to miss an opportunity to thank my friends and such a great way of expressing my opinions. You mean more to me than you could ever know.

For my followers, just know that I'm thankful you have enjoyed my past articles. I want everyone to know that this paper nor these people should ever be held responsible for anything I have ever said. There have been many times they have been as surprised as you. Of course, all my friends

of many years are never surprised at anything I say or anything I do, for that matter.

If you enjoy expressing what's on your mind from time to time, then look no further. They would enjoy your contribution. I know there are lots of opinions out there, because many of you have asked me to write your stories for you. Well, I have declined, because your opinion means just that—it is yours, not mine! I would enjoy reading them, so I'm still waiting! After all, even bravery is just an opinion someone has of another person. It just boils down to how much your opinion means to you. After all, I'm sure there have been opinions of my articles that you have liked and disliked. That doesn't change my enjoyment of putting my thoughts to paper.

Remember, everyone at this paper is very appreciative that you choose us as your No. 1.

Until later...

## ‘DOGS,’ from page 1

said, and he was supposed to meet officers at the time the search warrant was executed, but he did not show up and deputies were unable to locate him.

Oliver described the conditions inside the trailer as ‘unbelievable.’

“Some of the dogs have mange. They were all in neglected condition, and some have pretty severe cases of mange,” Oliver said. “They had some access to food, but there was feces and urine all around the house to the point that you couldn't walk in the house unless you walked on top of feces.”

Oliver said the investigation showed most of the dogs were trapped inside with no way to get out. The animals were sent to shelters to be treated and taken care of pending the resolution of the case, Oliver said.

“After the case is over, we hope they may be able to be adopted out,” Oliver said.

Oliver said there were three more dogs on the property who were running loose, and deputies were unable to find them, so they could be seized at a

later time.

“We do expect charges to be filed,” Oliver said. “There has been some communication with the owner, but we don't even know if he's coming there or not. It's very obvious no one is living there. We will continue to work on obtaining warrants.”

**“Something needed to be done, or these dogs were going to die from neglect or disease. It's unbelievable the condition these animals were in....”**

Oliver said that without intervention, the dogs would not have survived.

“Something needed to be done or these dogs were going to die from neglect or disease. It's unbelievable the condition these animals were in, and it was progressively getting worse,” Oliver said. “People want to have dogs and animals, but they need to take care of the responsibility of making sure they are properly fed, watered and cared for.

“That was obviously not the case here.”

## ‘DINNER,’ from page 7

state president-elect and served as the 63rd state president of the 12,000-member organization.

Perhaps the local chapter is best known for its regular steak sandwich sales, which raise funds for scholarships for local students. Britnell has been chairman of the Scholarship Committee for the past 17 years. During that time, 352 scholarships have been presented to Franklin County and Russellville City seniors totaling \$176,000.

All monies raised by the steak sandwich sales are given back in the form of scholarships to local students. The Franklin County Cattlemen's Association is now 547 members strong, the largest chapter in Alabama.

“We recognize Mr. Britnell for his hard work, commitment to education and continued service to our community,” Pounders said.

Britnell, never one to shy away from a microphone, used the opportunity to promote an upcoming steak sandwich sale.

“I certainly appreciate this award. A lot of folks have helped with the efforts we've had,” Britnell said. “I appreciate every one of them. We wish we could do more, but we thank each and everyone who has helped us. This next Friday you'll have another opportunity to buy steak sandwiches at our sale.”

Britnell also expressed his appreciation to his long-time friend and fellow Cattlemen's Association member Thomas Harbin for his efforts in starting the steak sandwich sales in the association.

**WILLIAM JOSEPH FOSTER:** William “Bill” Joseph Foster graduated from RHS in 1949. Foster and his wife, the former Judith Scharnagel, have two children, Joe and Ann, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Both Foster and his wife, their children and all of their grandchildren graduated from Russellville High School.

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force and a former instructor at the Air Force Mechanic School in Texas, Foster is a graduate of Florence State College who opened his own accounting office in Russellville. He volunteered as a youth football coach and served as treasurer and president of the Russellville Jaycees.

He's a charter member of the Russellville Rotary Club where he served as president. Foster and his family are members of North Highlands Church of Christ, where he has served as deacon, treasurer and song leader.

Foster has served leadership roles in the Russellville Chamber of Commerce and the Alabama Association of Public Accountants and Tax Preparers. He is chairman of the board of directors at Russellville Hospital.

The Foster family's contribution to Russellville High School runs deep and includes six football players, one band member, three cheerleaders, one Miss RHS, three basketball players, four baseball players and four golfers.

Foster remains actively involved in the day-to-day practice of accounting at his Foster and Foster CPA's office.

“Bill, we feel blessed to have you in the Russellville community,” Pounders said. “We thank you for your years of commitment to Russellville and to education in this community.”

Foster, who grew up in Hackleburg and transferred to RHS his junior year, recalls instantly realizing how special Russellville City Schools were.

“The school system here is something for our entire community to be proud of, and I'm proud I've had the opportunity to tell everybody about that. Thank you so much for this honor,” Foster said.

**CHRISTOPHER BOWDEN MEEKS:** Chris Meeks is a 1983 RHS graduate, whose post-secondary education continued at the University of

North Alabama and Birmingham Southern College.

Meeks started his career in the medical industry at St. Vincent's Hospital, where he was promoted in 1992 to Director of Marketing and Business Development.

The following year, Meeks was hired by the UAB Department of Surgery, where he served until 2012 as Executive Administrator for the Department of Surgery.

Meeks became Executive Director of Legacy of Hope, formerly known as the Alabama Organ Center, in 2012. Under his leadership, more people than ever in its history are receiving life-saving organ transplants through Legacy of Hope.

Chris and his wife, the former Dare Underwood, have four children, Riley, Allie Claire, Hayden and Merritt. The family lives in Homewood, where they attend Trinity United Methodist Church.

Meeks has served on the Homewood Park and Recreation Board for 10 years. He has held leadership positions in numerous professional organizations, including the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation, the University of Miami Tissue Bank Advisory Board and the Association of Organ Procurement Organization By-Laws Committee.

“We are so proud of you Chris and proud for you tonight as we honor you for your service to your profession and community,” Pounders said.

The Russellville Education Foundation was established in 2012 as a nonprofit organization created solely to provide educational opportunities for students, today and in the future. Its board of directors includes RCS superintendent Heath Grimes, Pounders, Mike Mayfield, Gene Ellison, Sarah Terry, Brandi Rogers, Rodney Bolton, Alma Martinez, Jeff Barksdale, Nina McNatt, Monica Moon, Lanny Norris, Matt Cooper, Elaine Vaughn and Hester.



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# Ten local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

All 10 of the Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of April 1-5 had scores that fall into the “satisfactory compliance” range.

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

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

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

All 10 Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range. The highest score was 100, received by Little Tigers Preschool,

LLC, 1003 East Lawrence St., Russellville.

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

•Yogi's Food Co., 501 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 90. (Toxic items stored on shelf with single service, handsinks not reaching required 100 degrees).

•Russellville Foodland #110, 14001 Hwy. 43, Suite 11, Russellville, 91. (Dented cans).

•Dollar General Market #13757, 212 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 93. (Chemical spray bottle not labeled).

•J&L Convenience and Bait, LLC, 23791 Hwy. 24 West, Russellville, 93. (Dented cans).

•Subway 37464, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 97.

•Pollo Lo-Quillo, 115 Franklin St., Russellville, 98.

•Fourth Street Grill and Steakhouse, 15300 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 98.

•Subway 24292, 15300 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 98.

•Mason Jar on Main, 102 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 99.

Of the 15 inspections done in Colbert County from April 1-5, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 100 was received by Dollar General #8913, 819 Hwy. 72 West, Tuscumbia.

Health ratings are available at [www.foodscores.state.al.us](http://www.foodscores.state.al.us) and may be viewed by city or county.

# State Farm announces auto insurance rate decrease

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

For the second consecutive year, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company announced an auto insurance rate decrease in Alabama.

The recently announced decrease of 2.1 percent on auto insurance policies takes effect on April 22, 2019. New insureds will see the decreased rates factored into all quotes after that date, while existing insureds will see any applicable rate decrease applied on their next scheduled policy renewal.

State Farm Insurance agent Rhett Bradford said the 2.1 percent is welcome news for insureds, but he wanted to clarify that amount is a state average and may not apply to every insured with an auto policy with State Farm.

“Everyone is different in that regard, but when you figure up all the State Farm automobile policies in Alabama, that's the average decrease,” Bradford said. “Some will see less, and some will see a 2.1 percent decrease based on each insured's individual policy and selected coverage.”

State Farm announced a rate decrease on automotive policies in 2018 of 3.0 percent. Combined, the two rate decreases are expected to save

Alabama State Farm customers approximately \$39 million, with \$15.8 million in savings from the 2019 decrease.

Bradford explained that the rate decrease was derived by improved loss totals and expense data for State Farm automobile insureds last year.

“A routine review of State Farm auto rate indications, including improving expenses and losses, supported State Farm's decision to make this rate change,” Bradford said.

State Farm regularly evaluates its rates and rate adjustments are never guaranteed. Additionally, the rate adjustments are unique to each state for which they are announced.

“State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company always looks to create long-term value for our customers with the products and services we offer. State Farm is in a position to now create even more value for our customers in Franklin County as well as across Alabama,” Bradford said.

State Farm insures almost one million customers operating private passenger vehicles in Alabama, according to company data.

State Farm insureds are encouraged to contact their agent to discuss their individual situation as rate changes for individual customers will vary depending on the specific details of the cus-

tomers policy and chosen coverages, Bradford explained.

Through the month of April, Bradford is helping the Calvary Baptist Church Missionary Team with State Farm's *Quotes for Good* program.

When you contact Bradford's office for an insurance quote, mention the Calvary Baptist Church Missionary Team when you complete an auto, fire, life or health quote and the mission team will receive a \$10 donation.

For the quote to qualify, the individual can be a new or existing State Farm customer, but the quote must be for a product line that the individual does not currently have from State Farm. Also, insureds represented by one of the other two State Farm agents in Russellville are not eligible for the program.

Calvary's mission team will travel to Guatemala later this spring to work on an addition to a school previously built by a mission team.

The funds raised through the *Quotes for Good* initiative will be used to purchase medical and building supplies for students and residents in the community.

To contact Bradford, call 256-332-0540 or visit his office at 201 Washington Ave. NW in Russellville.



# City to use automated garbage trucks starting June 1

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

City of Russellville residents will have to use a little more care when placing their garbage cans for pickup when the Franklin County Solid Waste Department puts two new automated garbage trucks into service June 1, 2019.

The International trucks are fully automated and contain an arm that reaches out to the can and lifts it. The trucks will be operated by one employee, unlike the current two-employee system with a rider on the back of the truck. "Lawrence County, Florence, Muscle Shoals and other areas have gone to these trucks, and it gets a man off the back of the truck. Hopefully, we'll eventually be able to service the entire county with automated trucks," said Gene Ward, Franklin County Solid Waste officer.

The Russellville Street Department will continue to pick up brush and debris with its clam bucket truck. Only household garbage pickup will be affected by the new trucks being placed into service.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

The Franklin County Solid Waste Department will put two new automated garbage trucks into service June 1, 2019. The International trucks are fully automated and contain an arm that reaches out to the can and lifts it. The trucks will be operated by one employee, unlike the current two-employee system with a rider on the back of the truck.

One change, although Ward said it's already supposed to be policy, is that city garbage will need to be in plastic bags in order to keep the can clean and prevent it from littering garbage when emptied.

Residents are asked to leave space between the cans and other objects, at least five feet in all directions. Multiple cans should also be spaced at least five feet apart, and wheels of cans should be placed toward the resident's house, not the street.

Other guidelines include:

- No overload of cans or items placed on top of cans. Lids should be completely closed.
- Automated trucks can not pickup extra garbage bags that are placed on the ground next to cans.
- Cans must be curbside to be emptied. Place cans with handle and wheels facing house.
- Position cans at least five feet from other objects, including mailboxes, trees, poles, fences, vehicles, basketball goals, etc.
- Do not block cans or curbside access with parked cars.
- Do not place cans under wires or low tree branches.
- Do not obstruct lid openings with ties, cords, chains, etc.

For more information on the new automated trucks or to order an additional can, contact the Franklin County Solid Waste Department at 256-332-8412. There is a monthly charge of \$11.75 per additional can.

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# Beat goes on for Bobcats as new faces step forward

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

After bidding farewell to five senior starters—including former Class 2A Hitter of the Year and UNA signee Peyton Thomas—last May, Phil Campbell baseball coach Jonathan Raper was prepared for his team to take an inevitable step back in 2019.

“We really thought we’d have a chance to play for it all last year,” said Raper, whose team won 25-plus games for the second straight season in 2018 before falling to perennial nemesis Mars Hill in the second round of the Class 2A playoffs. “Our kids were so disappointed. We were losing all those older kids, and we had a lot of young guys stepping in. I thought we’d be in the playoffs and have a chance to win the area, but to be where we’re at right now, it’s....I’m extremely happy. I’ve been blessed, for sure. These guys have gone above and beyond my expectations this year.”

**“We were losing all those older kids,” Raper said, “and we had a lot of young guys stepping in. I thought we’d be in the playoffs and have a chance to win the area, but to be where we’re at right now, it’s....I’m extremely happy. I’ve been blessed, for sure. These guys have gone above and beyond my expectations this year.”**

Where the Bobcats are right now is essentially the same place they’ve been the last few years—on the short list of teams from northwest Alabama capable of making a deep playoff run. Since starting the season 5-4, Phil Campbell has ripped off 19 wins (the vast majority of which were lopsided in nature) in 21 games to run its record to 24-6.

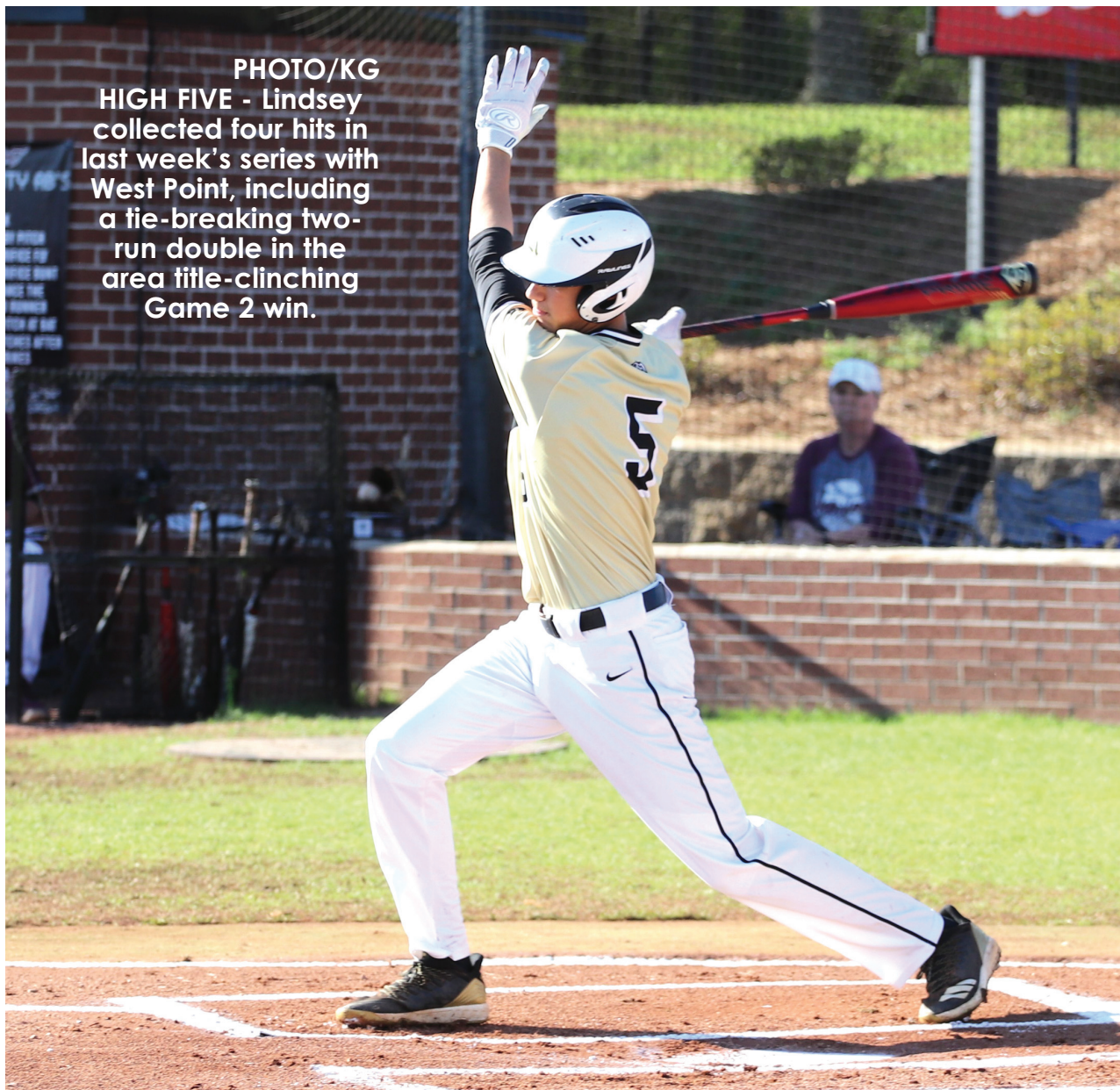
The drop-off Raper anticipated never came to be; instead of taking a step back, the youthful Bobcats (who typically start four sophomores and a freshman in a lineup that also includes three seniors and one junior) have charged full speed ahead, out-scoring their opponents by a staggering margin of more than six runs per game.

“These kids have worked their rear ends off,” said Raper, whose team was averaging 9.7 runs per game through Sunday while allowing only 3.4 per contest. “All summer long and even during the school year, they just worked and got after it. I was worried about us hitting, and we’ve hit the ball. We’ve pretty much played good defense all year, and we throw strikes and give ourselves a chance to win.

“It’s a testament to the kids working their rear

See ‘BOBCATS,’ Page 15

# Still the CHAMPS



## Russellville wrapped up a fifth consecutive area title with a tight win over West Point

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - In the biggest of games, Chris Heaps is a big believer in being who you are.

With an area championship (and, as it would turn out, a playoff berth) on the line against West Point last Thursday and Devin Buckhalter striding to the plate in the sixth inning of a tie game with runners at first and second and nobody out, the last thing the Golden Tigers needed was an identity crisis.

“It’s a pretty big game,” Heaps would later say, “to not be who we are.”

Who the Golden Tigers are—and who Heaps has been since he took over the program as head coach seven years ago—absolutely dictated that

Buckhalter would be bunting. There were extenuating factors to consider, though.

For starters, Buckhalter has been the team’s best hitter all year, and he’d been swinging the bat especially well last week against the Warriors, smoking a double off the left-field fence in Tuesday’s series opener and then collecting two more hits in his first three at bats Thursday to raise his season average to .437 (38-for-87).

Secondly, there was the strong possibility that if Buckhalter did put down a sacrifice bunt, West Point would take advantage of having first base open and intentionally walk Jackson Lindsey to set up a force play at the plate and the potential for an inning-ending double-play groundball. Lindsey,

See ‘CHAMPS,’ Page 16



# Senior-laden Tigers eye playoff breakthrough

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Red Bay has been no stranger to playoff baseball the previous four years, making three postseason appearances and knocking on the door of the state quarterfinals in 2015 before dropping the final game of a best-of-three second-round series against Mars Hill.

This year, however, feels different.

With seven seniors—including two-time All-State selection and Shelton State signee Kolby Bragwell—in the starting lineup and perpetual roadblocks like the aforementioned Panthers (now in Class 1A) and Phil Campbell (now in Class 3A) no longer in the way, the Tigers are approaching the 2019 playoffs with a greater sense of urgency than ever before.

"Absolutely," said Richard Maggerise, whose team won the Class 2A, Area 14 championship during the regular season and will host Collinsville in a first-round series starting with a doubleheader on Friday at 5 p.m. "We've felt like we've had that opportunity [to make a deep run] a few times, but we just ran into a buzz saw, whether it be Mars Hill or Phil Campbell [which dealt Red Bay a first-round exit in the 2016 playoffs] or whoever. We've had opportunities before, but this year we feel like the bracket really sets up for us. If we take care of business, I think we can make some noise."

**"We've felt like we've had that opportunity [to make a deep run] a few times," Maggerise said, "but we just ran into a buzz saw, whether it be Mars Hill or Phil Campbell or whoever. We've had opportunities before, but this year we feel like the bracket really sets up for us. If we take care of business, I think we can make some noise."**

In addition to having a senior-laden roster and—for the first time under Maggerise—home-field advantage in the first round, the Tigers have something else going for them, too. They're hot, having won 13 of their last 16 games heading into Tuesday's regular-season finale at Waterloo.

"At the beginning of the year, we took the same scheduling mindset we always want to take," said Maggerise, whose team owned a 3-5 record on March 12 after dropping three straight games to Phil Campbell and Deshler by a combined margin of 39-3. "We opened the year with Hamilton, a 5A school that played Lawrence County and Russellville really, really well. We should have won, but we didn't. [Red Bay lost to the Aggies 10-6.] We sprinkled those kinds of teams throughout our schedule. We played Phil Campbell four times, we played Winfield—we played really good competition above our level, as far as 2A. You want to be exposed.

"Some coaches have a different mindset. They want to get as many wins as they can, but we've never taken that approach. You want to sprinkle some wins in there, of course, but you also want to be tested."

The Tigers (16-8 through Sunday) weren't always up to the test in that early-season stretch, but two factors helped them turn things around. For starters, Bragwell—a hard-throwing right-hander who flashes elite potential on the mound—returned to the rotation after being shut down for three weeks early in the season due to an arm issue. The 6'2 senior tossed a pair of one-hitters in area play, including an 11-strikeout gem last week in a 16-0 rout of Colbert County that clinched the Area 14 title.

"He's good to go," Maggerise said of Bragwell, who will carry a 4-0 record and a 0.45 ERA into the playoffs, with 48 strikeouts and a paltry 10 hits allowed in 31 innings across eight appearances. "He's almost back to a hundred percent. The last area game, we pushed him to 75 pitches. He'll be good to go for Friday night, especially with the extra rest built in. We feel pretty confident with him on the mound. Multiple coaches tell us that he would be the ace for a lot of the larger schools in our area. When he's a hundred percent, he puts us in a great position to be successful.

"As far as where he goes in a series, that's yet to be determined, but it'll probably be a situation where we'll just give him the ball on Friday in that first game [against Collinsville] and let him go. This is the first time Red Bay has hosted [a first-round series] in seven or eight years. We've been [area] runner-up a few times, but this is our first time to host in a while. I think it would be big for our community to go ahead and get that first win."

A healthy Bragwell to front the pitching staff has been one driving force behind the Tigers' turnaround. Another has been the steady veteran leadership provided by the members of that deep senior class. Maggerise points to a 13-0 loss to Deshler on March 12—and, more specifically, his seniors' reaction to that humbling defeat—as the primary catalyst.

"Deshler exposed us," said Maggerise, whose team had been beaten 11-1 and 15-2 by Phil Campbell in a doubleheader just four days previously. "We'd had a bad week there, and we were not playing very good baseball. We were coming off the Phil Campbell games, and we'd had some bad losses to teams we should have competed with better. We finished the Deshler game at seven o'clock, and those kids were in the facility at 5:30 the next morning.

Back when I first started, those guys used to do that all the time, four or five days a week, but we had kind of gotten away from that. They wanted to get back to that routine, to getting in those extra swings.

"It was their decision. It was something they wanted to do. When you have a group that wants to put in the extra work like that, it's hard as a coach to not do whatever you can to make sure they have that opportunity."

Since that loss to Deshler, the Tigers have gone 13-3, sweeping two games from each of their three area opponents (Sheffield, Tharptown and Colbert County). Those early-morning sessions in the cage paid major dividends at the plate.

"We went from hitting about .230 as a team right after we played Deshler to hitting about .316 as a team now," said Maggerise, whose team was averaging a robust 7.6 runs per game through Sunday. "It's quite a jump we've been able to make. For our guys, and for baseball players in general, it can be slight changes that make a big difference. We were a little too far out on our front foot, or maybe we were opening our hips instead of staying inside the baseball and trying to drive the right-center gap. We were able to make some small adjustments that helped us out a lot."

In addition to those mechanical adjustments at the plate, Maggerise also tweaked the lineup a bit, moving junior Kaleb Bragwell to the top of the order and bumping senior Alex Burroughs down to the two-spot right in front of Kolby Bragwell. Senior Cade McKinney was relocated from the two-hole to the No. 6 spot, where he has thrived as a run producer behind fellow seniors Chase Allen and Peyton Green while adding some much-needed length to the lineup.

"We had Cade in the two-spot early in the year, and I think he felt the pressure of hitting in front of Kolby. He felt like he had to get on," Maggerise said of McKinney, who was batting .385 (25-for-65) through Sunday with two triples, eight doubles, 19 RBIs and 26 runs scored. "He was pressing a little bit in that spot, so we moved him down in the order. We moved Kaleb to the top and Alex to the two-spot, and it just transformed our lineup. It gave us more pop in the middle, and it allowed Cade to relax at the plate and just hunt fastballs in a lot of those situations."

McKinney has flourished in the six-hole, but the lineup reshuffling was made possible largely by the effectiveness of Kaleb Bragwell as the team's new leadoff hitter. Through Sunday, Bragwell was batting .307 on the year with a .416 on-base percentage, 25 runs scored and 27 stolen bases in 27 attempts. He and Burroughs (26 runs scored and 17 stolen bases in 18 tries) are the key to the offensive attack, according to their head coach.

"It all starts with the one-two guys, Kaleb Bragwell and Alex at the top," Maggerise said. "When those guys get on, we score in bunches. Those two guys are gonna steal. Everybody we play knows they're gonna go at some point; it's just a matter of finding the right pitch. Even if [opponents] walk Kolby after those guys steal, we're still in a very good situation because of the guys we have coming up behind him."

Opposing coaches would just as soon not have to deal with Kolby Bragwell, who was batting a career-high .574 (31-for-54) through Sunday with two home runs, 10 doubles and 12 multi-hit games on the year. The senior slugger had walked drawn 30 walks, driving his OBP all the way up to an absurd .736. Colbert County elected not to throw a single pitch to Bragwell in last week's series opener, intentionally walking him four times. He scored all four times, and Allen drove in seven runs out of the cleanup spot.

"Colbert County walked Kolby four straight times," Maggerise said. "They walked him once to load the bases with nobody out, and they walked him another time to lead off an inning. I had never seen that strategy before, but Chase Allen had seven RBIs that game.

"Chase has done a good job this year in those situations, hitting behind Kolby. Plus, Kolby is our best base runner, too. He can swipe a bag with the best of them."

Bragwell had stolen 22 bases in 23 tries through Sunday, and his 40 runs scored in just 24 games give testament to the productivity of the guys hitting behind him—namely Allen, who was batting .431 (28-for-65) through Sunday with a team-leading 38 RBIs. Green (.353 with 20 RBIs and eight multi-hit games) and McKinney have also been reliable run-producers.

With the lineup squared away, the duration of Red Bay's postseason run may well be determined by how well the pitchers behind Bragwell perform. That group is led by Allen, who leads the team in starts (six), complete games (three) and innings pitched (41); Green, who was 4-1 through Sunday with two saves and a 3.14 ERA in 29.1 innings; and Burroughs, who 4-2 with 28 strikeouts in 25.2 innings pitched.

Maggerise believes his team has sufficient pitching depth behind Bragwell to stick around for a while.

Without a doubt," he said. "We have a great group of guys. They're not gonna come out and light up the strikeout column, but they'll pitch to contact



## 'BOBCATS', from page 13

ends off. The kids have done it. I feel like our kids expect to win in baseball, and that helps a little bit. It doesn't matter who we play—we think we've got a chance if we show up and don't make errors and don't walk people."

Seniors Nate Owens, Cole Motes and Ty Leindecker, along with junior Rilan Garrison, have all played vital roles this season, but a young core led by sophomores Ridge Raper, Luke Barnwell, Austen Baker, Trey Leindecker and Brett Saint, plus freshman Mason Swinney, has helped to ensure that Phil Campbell's standard of success continues to be met.

"We want to make the playoffs, we want to win the area, we want to win the county every year, and we want to play for a state championship," Jonathan Raper said. "That's what we talk about every year. I've been blessed and fortunate to be part of some good teams here, and that's what they wanted to do. For these young kids we've got now, there's nothing any different. That's where these kids are at, too.

"They came in and got after it, and things just fell into place. This group is really, really close. They're tight. I guess that's the biggest thing. We've got two seniors that play everyday, one eleventh-grader and another senior who swings it sometimes, but the core is that tenth-grade group that's been together so long."

Raper points to an early-morning game against Morristown West in the Gulf Coast Classic over spring break as something of a turning point for this year's team. Down three runs in their final at bat, the Bobcats rallied to take the game and then prevailed 9-8 in extra innings, stretching their win streak at the time to 11 in a row.

"This group just doesn't panic," Raper said. "When we got down in that game at the beach, they just stayed calm and cool and said, 'We're eventually gonna score in the fifth, sixth or seventh and win.' Listening to them talk and then seeing us come back and win, that's when I said, 'We may actually be on to something here.'"

"These kids are gonna be ready to get after it. And they have."

As they prepare to open the Class 3A playoffs on Friday with a doubleheader at home against first-round opponent New Hope, the Bobcats have a team that has been dominant in every phase of the game this season. Through Sunday, they were batting .349 as a team with 75 extra-base hits and nearly as many walks (147) as strikeouts (164). There may not be a hitter the caliber of Thomas in the middle of the order [although Owens has done a pretty fair impression], but the lineup is deep and dangerous one through nine.

"We've had great balance top to bottom," Raper said. "Nate Owens has hit pretty much all year long. He's cooled off a little here lately, but he had been unreal the way he was swinging the bat. I told him he didn't have anywhere to go but down. He's batted third all year long for us, and Luke Barnwell has been our leadoff guy. Everything else, we've switched guys around.

"These kids just work so friggin' hard on stuff. They're real coachable. They pester you sometimes when they make an out, and you have to remind them, 'You're not gonna get on every time.'"

Barnwell, however, has managed to reach safely *most* of the time; through Sunday, the sophomore leadoff man had posted a .517 OBP and was batting .391 with nine doubles, three triples, 24 RBIs and a team-leading 42 runs scored. Baker, who started last season as a freshman, has been highly productive as a sophomore, batting .324 with two home runs, eight doubles and 35 RBIs (second-most on the team).

Despite cooling a bit recently, Owens was still batting .455 through Sunday with team-highs in hits (40), home runs (four), RBIs (37) and multi-hit games (14)—numbers that wouldn't look at all out of place on the back of Peyton Thomas's baseball card. Garrison has been a steady producer in the cleanup spot, batting .407 with six doubles, 27 RBIs, 11 multi-hit games and a stellar .561 OBP fueled by a team-high 26 walks (with only seven strikeouts).

Ridge Raper has been hot of late and entered the week batting .355 with three triples, four doubles, 25 RBIs, 36 runs scored and more walks (15) than strikeouts (12). The freshman Swinney has made rapid strides at the plate and was batting .369 through Sunday with 21 RBIs, 23 runs scored, a .500 OBP and an outstanding 18/8 walk/strikeout ratio.

Ty Leindecker, who often fills the designated role, entered the week batting .309 with seven doubles and 18 RBIs, and Motes has been a solid stick near the bottom of the order with a .271 average and 21 RBIs. Then there's sophomore Trey Leindecker, who has put up eye-popping numbers (.316 average with one home run, two triples, six doubles, 22 RBIs, 33 runs scored and 14 stolen bases) in the No. 9 spot.

All told, that's eight .300 hitters in a lineup that also gets solid contributions from guys like Brett Saint and Levi Crittenden.

The Bobcats are just as deep on the mound, where the hard-throwing Raper (5-0 with a 1.75 ERA, 52 strikeouts and only 12 walks in 32 innings) leads a talented staff that also includes the lefty Owens (4-1 with a 2.47 ERA and 45 strikeouts in 34 innings) and right-handers Motes (4-0 with a 3.18 ERA and a 27:8 strikeout/walk ratio), Baker (1-1 with a 0.95 ERA and only one walk in 22 innings), Barnwell (3-1 with a 2.55 ERA and just 15 hits

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allowed in 22 innings), Saint (4-3 with a 3.11 ERA in eight outings) and Swinney (2-0 with a 0.47 ERA and a sparkling strikeout/walk ratio of 32/5 in 15.1 innings).

"I've got five or six guys I'm comfortable with," Jonathan Raper said, "guys who you feel like can get the job done."

Only Raper and Owens have significant playoff experience on the mound, but that deep stable of arms has the Bobcats gearing up for a deep run—the kind that has eluded them in recent years, despite the gaudy win totals.

"We've been close. We just haven't been able to get over the hump," Raper said. "Every year, there's only gonna be one team happy when it's all over with. I like the fact that our goal every year is to play for a state championship. We haven't obtained that the last few years, but that's what these kids want to do.

"Barring injury, we should be good enough to compete year in and year out the next few years, with these young kids getting after it."

Raper had a chance last week to scout New Hope in person.

"They're a solid baseball team," he said. "Mostly seniors, an older team. They can hit, and they tried to bunt the ball a good bit. They hit the ball well, and they threw the ball well. They're a very good ball club. I expect a very tough series, and hopefully when it's over, we're on top."



## 'CHAMPS,' from page 13

as it happens, has been Russellville's *second-best* hitter this season, carrying a .420 average with a team-best 11 extra-base hits into last Thursday's action.

So, essentially, if Heaps stuck to his 'we-before-me' philosophy and remained true to his small-ball principles, he would run the risk of taking the bat right out of the hands of his two best hitters with nothing less than the season on the line. The notion of just letting Buckhalter and Lindsey take their hacks and try to drive in the go-ahead run had to be tempting.

But Heaps hasn't built a dynasty at Russellville on the foundation of asking individual guys—no matter how talented—to be heroes; instead, he just asks them to take themselves out of the equation and make the right baseball play to help the team succeed.

That principle formed the basis of his conversation with Buckhalter just prior to the most significant plate appearance of Russellville's season.

"I said, 'Devin, listen. Right here, man, you've been so hot. But the chances of you doing it over and over and over again and being the hero...it's just not realistic,'" Heaps said. "I told him, 'I feel like if I don't bunt you here and we end up popping up or hitting into a line-drive double play, I deserve...my job needs to be compromised. Let's get the bunt down.'"

"I asked him, 'Where are you most comfortable getting the bunt down, first or third?' He said, 'I like first.' And I said, 'Okay, you do that. Get behind it and push it, and you might even beat it out.'"

He didn't, as it turned out, but Buckhalter's bunt to the right side—his first sacrifice bunt of the season, but the team's second of the game and 19th overall on the year—was plenty good enough to advance Nate Green to third and Will Rogers to second. Lindsey, batting in the two-hole behind Buckhalter for the first time after hitting cleanup most of the season, was up next, and the Warriors surprisingly elected to pitch to the sophomore first baseman.

Based on Russellville's advance scouting work on West Point, Heaps had told his hitters to expect a steady diet of fastballs away from Warrior pitchers. Typically, that calls for a go-with-the-pitch, hit-it-the-other way approach, but there was another factor last Thursday—the wind, which was "howling" (Heaps' word) toward the right-field foul pole. With that in mind, Heaps had given Lindsey a little pre-game advice to help the young lefty slugger make the most of his prodigious pull power.

"I told Jackson, 'You take the plate away,'" Heaps said, "and yank everything."

Lindsey took ball one from right-hander Will Cochran and then launched a towering fly ball down the right-field line that had three-run homer written all over it. ["I thought it was going out—easily," Heaps said.] The ball stayed in the park but eluded a diving attempt by right-fielder Carter Thornton and settled into the corner for a go-ahead two-run double. Lindsey was thrown out trying to stretch it into a triple, but the damage was done.

Heaps' decision to trust the process and play the game right had paid off.

"Coach Smith [Jess, a varsity assistant] has a saying that I really like," said Heaps, who rarely hears a saying he *doesn't* like. "The game *knows*.' Devin has been so good for us, but I just felt like I can't put that weight on his shoulders every time. Somebody else has gotta hit. Jackson's gotta hit. Cole Barnett's gotta hit."

"I was hoping Devin's bunt would create some havoc for us and we'd end up with the bases loaded. But it worked out."

Sophomore pitcher Rowe Gallagher, who surrendered a game-tying RBI double to Levi Farley after relieving starter Gordon White in the top of the sixth, came back out to finish things off in the seventh. With runners at the corners and two outs, Gallagher got Thornton to chase a nasty slider down and away for strike three to seal a 5-3 win that clinched the Golden Tigers' fifth straight area championship and their sixth in seven seasons under Heaps.

"Gordon started off really good," Heaps said of White, who took a 3-0 lead into the sixth before surrendering a solo home run to Aubrey Cleghorn and a pair of two-out singles to Thornton and Whitt Laney. "He started getting the ball up a little because of fatigue, maybe. It was 83, 84 degrees, so you have to take that into account. Rowe did a really good job. His slider is so good. On that hit that tied the game [Farley's RBI double on a two-strike slider down and away], the kid did a good job and hit a great pitch."

After Farley's hit pulled the Warriors even in the sixth, Gallagher retired leadoff man Hunter Persall on a grounder to short with runners at second and third to keep it a 3-3 game. Green was hit by a pitch to start the bottom of the sixth and stole second. Rogers, intent on dropping down a sac bunt, walked on four pitches instead, and then Buckhalter and Lindsey took care of the rest.

West Point (15-17, 3-3 in Class 5A, Area 14) wound up winning the third and final game of the series 5-4, spoiling a stellar outing by RHS senior Tanner James, but last Thursday's opener was the one that counted. By winning it, the Golden Tigers (14-15 overall) secured a 4-2 finish in area play and eliminated the Warriors from playoff contention. Lawrence County also finished 4-2 in the area and will be the No. 2 seed out of Area 14. [Russellville took two of three from the Red Devils last week to earn the tie-breaker advantage.]

White ended up with no decision in Thursday's opener but pitched well, allowing three runs (just one earned) on nine hits in 5.2 innings. He struck out three and did not issue a walk. Gallagher got the final four outs to earn the win, allowing two hits with two strikeouts and one walk.

Buckhalter went 2-for-3 with an RBI, singling home Green in the bottom of the fourth to extend Russellville's lead to 3-0. The Golden Tigers had gone in front in the bottom of the third on a two-out, two-run double by senior Caden Parker.

Parker finished 1-for-2 with a walk, and senior catcher Hunter Briles also had a double. Lindsey was 1-for-3 with a walk and a run, and Green went 1-for-2 with two runs scored. Rogers was 1-for-1 with a walk and a run.

James, one of five seniors honored between games on Senior Night, was terrific in last Thursday's second game, striking out seven and walking none in six innings of work. He was leading 2-1 before giving up a two-run homer to Rylan Jones in the top of the sixth that put West Point on top 3-2.

Russellville regained the lead in the bottom of the inning on a two-run double by Buckhalter, but the Warriors rallied again with two runs off the Golden Tiger bullpen in the top of the seventh to go back in front 5-4. Russellville loaded the bases in the bottom of the inning on a two-out single by White and a pair of walks, but West Point held on when Laney made a nice catch on a sinking line drive to short off the bat of eighth-grader Casen Heaps for the final out.

Lindsey went 2-for-3 in Thursday's nightcap, and White was 2-for-4. Buckhalter went 1-for-3 with two RBIs, and Briles was 2-for-3 with two RBIs. Rogers added one hit.

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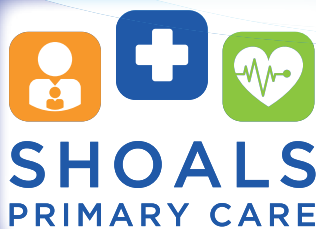
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# Golden Tigers gear up for another playoff run

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

This Friday at Russellville Baseball Stadium, the Golden Tigers will open the playoffs with a first-round series at home for the fifth consecutive year.

Whether or not this postseason journey leads to the same destination as the previous four remains to be seen. But this much is certain—head coach Chris Heaps isn't conceding anything.

"If we can show up in the first round and win it, we can go to the second round and start that roll all over again that we started the last four years," said Heaps, whose team won three straight Class 5A state titles from 2015-17 before finishing runner-up to Faith Academy last May. "It might be...some people would call it 'overachieving,' but if you over-believe, you might overachieve. That's how you have to do that—you have to over-believe. You show up everyday believing, not that it's supposed to happen, but that it's a byproduct of what you're doing because you're doing things right."

"I heard Coach [Jess] Smith say this the other day, and I liked it. 'The game knows.' The game knows who's been working hard. The game knows when you don't hustle. The game knows when you don't have a great attitude. It's karma. And it'll bite you."

Doing things right is a multi-layered concept in the game of baseball, but Heaps is stressing a couple of particular aspects to his players this week as they prepare for Friday's doubleheader with first-round opponent Sardis (10-10 through Sunday).

"We've gotta get better at hitting, in the sense of being more productive with our outs," Heaps said. "I think we can pitch well enough to be in games, but if we're giving up a lot of unproductive outs—strikeouts, hitting pop-ups on the infield that don't advance or move anybody—that's the key."

"When you get to the playoffs, it ain't always the best team on paper. It's the team that's doing the little things right and maybe catches fire and says, 'Hey, we got a little chemistry rolling,' and says, 'Hey, we're supposed to win, because we're doing the things the game expects us to do at a high level. Therefore, we're winning.' But I think our approach at the plate has gotta get better, because we're gonna see some better arms."

Russellville (14-15 through Sunday) certainly saw more than its share of big-time arms early in the season and struggled accordingly, totaling just 29 runs during a 1-9 start that made the notion of a home playoff series seem overly optimistic at best. Heaps, however, preached patience.

"When we started off," he recalled, "we said, 'There's gonna be a lot of adversity early.' Of the first eleven pitchers we [faced], eight of them have committed to D-One schools. So we told our guys, 'It's not gonna be like that every day.' At some point, we were gonna see an ordinary guy. That showed up when we played Scottsboro [a 10-0 win on March 16 in which the Golden Tigers bust-

ed out of their offensive slump with three first-inning home runs], and we kind of caught fire. I think that helped us a lot."

"Our really good hitters have looked really good at times. The more experience we get, I think, the more they'll look really good. But against really good pitching, everybody is gonna look suspect."

Through Sunday, the Golden Tigers—who returned only three starters from last year's 30-win team—had posted modest offensive numbers: A .274 team average with 49 extra-base hits (including just seven home runs, down from 23 a year ago) and 5.4 runs per game (down from 6.6 a year ago). Executing the short game and wringing every last ounce of production from their 21 outs will be paramount if they hope to put together another deep playoff run.

It's also crucial that the team's best hitters swing the bats well. That starts at the top of the lineup, where Buckhalter has been a dynamic force in the leadoff spot since taking over that role late last month. Through Sunday, the senior centerfielder was leading the team in average (.433), hits (39), home runs (two), RBIs (20), stolen bases (14) and multi-hit games (11).

"I like Devin in the," Heaps said. "If it's a one-run game and we're gonna get one more at bat out of somebody, I want him."

Heaps tweaked the batting order for last Thursday's critical area game with West Point, moving sophomore first baseman Jackson Lindsey up from the cleanup spot to the two-hole right behind Buckhalter. Lindsey responded by delivering a tie-breaking two-run double in the bottom of the sixth inning, helping Russellville wrap up its fifth straight area title with a 5-3 win.

Through Sunday, Lindsey was leading the team with 12 extra-base hits (10 doubles and two homers) while ranking second in average (.425), hits (37), RBIs (18), runs scored (22), walks (19) and stolen bases (10). He was tied with

Buckhalter for the team lead in multi-hit games with 11.

Senior catcher Hunter Briles has also had a productive season at the plate, batting .329 through Sunday with a home run, five doubles, 14 RBIs, eight multi-hit games and a .436 on-base percentage. Sophomore shortstop Cole Barnett had scored a team-best 23 runs through Sunday while also ranking second with nine doubles and fourth with 25 hits.

Gordon White, another sophomore, was third on the team with 17 RBIs entering the week, and senior Caden Parker had posted a .465 OBP fueled by a team-high 28 walks. Junior outfielder Will Rogers has provided a spark at the bottom of the order, batting .261 through Sunday with a home run, two triples, 21 runs scored, nine stolen bases and a .426 OBP.

Senior Nate Green led the team through Sunday with five sacrifice bunts on the year, and Rogers and White (four sac bunts apiece) are also major assets in the short game.

Russellville is led on the mound by the veteran Parker, who went 8-3 as a junior last season and got the ball for Game 1 of the state finals against Faith Academy. This season, the senior right-hander had gone 5-1 through Sunday with a 2.96 ERA while leading the team in strikeouts (43), innings pitched (52.1) and complete games (three).

White, who started the area-clinching win over West Point last week and took a shutout into the sixth inning before running into trouble, has pitched well of late. He was 4-3 through Sunday with a 2.39 ERA in 41.1 innings across 12 appearances, including six starts.

Sophomore Rowe Gallagher (36 strikeouts in 35 innings) has a plus slider that may rank as the best put-away pitch on the staff, and Buckhalter (1.91 ERA and just 12 hits allowed in 22.1 innings) will also play a prominent role in Russellville's postseason pitching plans.

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# RHS boys in prime position for playoff berth

## Lady Golden Tigers also in the hunt to crash postseason party again

Slade Gilmer  
For the FFP

RUSSELLVILLE - After losing several key members off of two area title teams, Russellville head coach Trey Stanford knew this season would be a season of transition as the team veterans would be called upon to provide leadership for a group of talented but very young players.

The weather, however, has not cooperated for the Golden Tigers.

"We have had a crazy season this year with the weather," said Stanford, whose team has had several games washed out and more postponed. "Team continuity is such a big part of the game, and I think the cancellations and postponements may have hurt us a little."

Indeed, the weather has forced Russellville into playing only nine games so far, with a 5-3-1 record, and a week full of Class 4A-5A, Area 14 games that started with Monday's match against Hamilton.

"We have a tough week ahead of us," said Stanford, whose team will be forced to play four area games this week due to weather delays and the playoffs looming just around the corner.

The good news for the Golden Tigers is they are in prime position for a play-off spot. Their shot at a third straight area title took a hit with a 2-1 loss at home to West Morgan (a newly-minted 4A-5A program who finished second in Class 1A-3A a year ago) last Thursday, April 11, but Russellville has beaten the other three teams in the area (Hamilton, Haleyville, and Danville) by a combined score of 23-1 in the other three area games they have played this season.

"We have to play better Tuesday night at West Morgan," Stanford said after last Thursday's loss to the Rebels. "We had opportunities, but we just didn't capitalize. West Morgan is a very solid team, and it will be tough, but it's a winnable game. We also have to be careful in the other three games, however, because you can get beat on any given night."

Seniors Pedro Sop, Esvin Mateo and Roberto Perez have provided leader-

ship for the Golden Tigers, while sophomores Pablo Tristan, Christian Cano, Daniel Martinez and freshmen Vicente Machic, Bernardo Ponce and Juan Cano have provided a spark in their first full season on the varsity level.

Russellville has been without the services of senior defender Kenner Perez, a two-year starter who was injured in a preseason car accident and has been forced to miss the season.

In addition to the loss to West Morgan, the Golden Tigers have two losses to Class 7A's ninth-ranked Florence Falcons. Russellville also has wins over Lawrence County and Madison Academy, as well as a draw with Class 4A-5A's 12th-ranked St. John Paul.

The RHS girls have also shown improvement. Two years after only scoring three goals the entire season and only winning two games, the Lady Golden Tigers are again poised to clinch a playoff berth. Last year, the Russellville girls' clinched with a 2-0 win over West Limestone on the last day of the regular season. This season, they have two losses to a very good West Morgan team, but have a 2-0 win over Hamilton, a 1-0 win over Haleyville and, most impressively, a 10-0 win over Danville that was called at halftime due to soccer's mercy rule.

At the heart of Russellville's team is the keeper Stanford calls the best in the Southeast, Briana Ramirez.

"It's a big statement to make, I know," says Stanford, "but she is so good. I've never seen anyone make some of the saves she does."

Coach Fred Ambrosio's group has also called upon senior midfielder Juana Juarez and eighth graders Ashley Garcia (striker) and Myriam Garcia (midfielder) for attack, while the defense is anchored by Ramirez and seniors Amanda Otzoy and Kaitleen Arzola. At 4-4-1 entering the week, Russellville is looking to have its first winning season.

A new addition for the program this season is the advent of junior varsity teams at both the boys and girls' level. While the weather has also kept those teams from perhaps getting the game experience that Stanford would have liked, he sees the move as a huge step forward for the program.

"The jayvee boys and girls teams are having great seasons," said Stanford. "They're made up mostly of eighth- and ninth-graders, and while we haven't gotten to play as much due to the rain, we can already see that our future is bright."

"The Jayvee programs are exactly what we needed to start for both of our programs to build toward state championships. I want to thank Mr. Jason Goodwin [Russellville High School principal], coach John Ritter [Russellville High School athletic director] and Mr. Heath Grimes [superintendent of Russellville City Schools] for allowing us to have these in place for this season."

After travelling to face Hamilton on Monday and West Morgan on Tuesday, Russellville will host the Danville Hawks on Thursday starting with the girls at 5 p.m., followed by the boys. Then on Friday night, April 19, the Golden Tigers will host the Haleyville Lions for Senior Night, with the girls game starting at 5 p.m., then the Senior Night festivities, and then the boys game to follow. The Russellville girls will conclude their regular season on Saturday night with a game at Florence.

Russellville's boys entered the week in position to clinch a playoff spot with at least two wins in the last four games. A two-goal or greater win over West Morgan, along with wins over Hamilton, Danville, and Haleyville, would clinch the Golden Tigers' third straight area title.

West Morgan's girls have clinched the 4A-5A, Area 14 title, but Russellville would clinch the runner-up spot with a win over Haleyville.



### Megan Warhurst Senior Pitcher, Russellville

Warhurst helped Russellville wrap up home-field advantage for the area tournament last Tuesday, tossing a no-hitter in a 3-1 win over Lawrence County. The West Florida signee set down 16 batters in a row during one stretch and finished with seven strikeouts and four walks in seven innings. She worked a couple of scoreless relief outings last Friday and finished the week with zero earned runs and one hit allowed in 11 innings. Through Sunday, Warhurst was 10-5 on the season with a 1.93 ERA and 107 strikeouts in 87.1 innings.



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## 'TIGERS,' from page 14

and get fly balls. We're great defensively behind them, especially with Kolby at shortstop. We're actually a lot better team overall when Kolby is not on the mound."

As for Collinsville, the Panthers (7-13 through Sunday) are a bit of an unknown quantity to Maggerise.

"As far as being able to see them, we have not," he said. "No common opponents, so it's a tough draw in that aspect. They do have one pitcher who's supposed to be pretty good, and they have two Jones boys who are brothers who are good as well."

"He's good to go," Maggerise said of Bragwell, who will carry a 4-0 record and a 0.45 ERA into the playoffs. "He's almost back to a hundred percent. We feel pretty confident with him on the mound. Multiple coaches tell us that he would be the ace for a lot of the larger schools in our area. When he's a hundred percent, he puts us in a great position to be successful."

Dalton Hughes has been Collinsville's ace all season, striking out 36 batters and walking 11 with a 3.53 ERA in 41.2 innings across nine starts and one relief appearance. Hughes has also had a big year at the plate, batting .434 (23-for-53) through Sunday with eight doubles and a .577 OBP. Jacob Jones (.356 average with 19 runs scored and a .500 OBP) and Kaleb Jones (.333 average with two home runs, 17 RBIs and a .548 OBP) have also been two of the Panthers' top hitters.

Friday's series opener is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. at Red Bay.

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## Golden Girls



**COURTESY PHOTO**

**AREA CHAMPS** - Russellville finished off a perfect 4-0 regular season in Class 5A, Area 15 play with a 3-1 win over Lawrence County last Tuesday. Senior pitcher Megan Warhurst threw a complete game no-hitter, and the Lady Golden Tigers took the lead for good on a two-run single by eighth-grader Jenna Whitfield in the bottom of the fourth inning. Russellville, which swept two games apiece from Lawrence County and Hamilton in area play, earned the right to host the area tournament at season's end. The area champion and runner-up will advance to Huntsville for the regional tournament. Team members shown above are: Front row - Autumn Logan; Second row (from left) - Madison Murray, A.J. Taylor, Alivia Clemmons, Makala O'Neal; Back row (from left) - Jenna Whitfield, Krista Sikes, Lauren Rogers, Megan Warhurst, Katie Skidmore, Tori Tiffin, Chalea Clemmons, Karlie Moore. The team is coached by Kathryn Montgomery.



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