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05.15.19

# Three PCHS seniors choose G&G Steel on 'Signing Day'

Brady Petree  
Franklin Free Press

Whenever a star athlete receives scholarship offers to further their academic and athletic careers, they usually hold a signing day ceremony in which the athlete signs a letter of intent to play for a certain school.

**"These guys have put a lot of time and effort into this, and they've been able to manage everything really well,"** said Scott Wiginton, the Career Tech director in Franklin County. **"Companies like G&G Steel are expanding and need young candidates for their projects. These are those young candidates."**

This process has almost exclusively been limited to athletes, but last week at Phil Campbell High School that wasn't the case.

Three PCHS students, all seniors, signed on with G&G  
See 'SIGNING,' Page 3



PHOTO BY BRADY PETREE

Phil Campbell seniors (from left) Cade Baker, Ben Pierce and Jacob McCarley have all taken part in the Pathfinder Program through the Franklin County Career Tech Center.

# WES celebrates lunchroom workers as 'unsung heroes'



Brady Petree  
Franklin Free Press

The unsung heroes of the day-to-day operations at any education system are the ones who provide students with the nutritional elements that help them go about their day.

These unsung heroes are the lunchroom workers, and the ones at Russellville's West Elementary School were in for a treat of their own last week.

Students in kindergarten through sixth grade surprised the lunchroom workers with posters, cards and words of gratitude as they celebrated School Lunch Hero Day. The day is a celebratory one, as

West Elementary School lunchroom workers (from left) are Rebekah Quaintance, Judy Putman, Stephanie Taylor, Cindy McGee and Sandra Newton. Not pictured are Tamala Waldrep and manager Patricia Cooper.

See 'HEROES,' Page 7

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**Hazel Irene Bentley**, Russellville, age 94  
Died Saturday, May 11, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Pleasant Site Cemetery in Red Bay.

**Mary Kathryn Sartain Conway**, Russellville, age 90  
Died Tuesday, May 7, 2019. Memorial service held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Belgreen Baptist Cemetery.

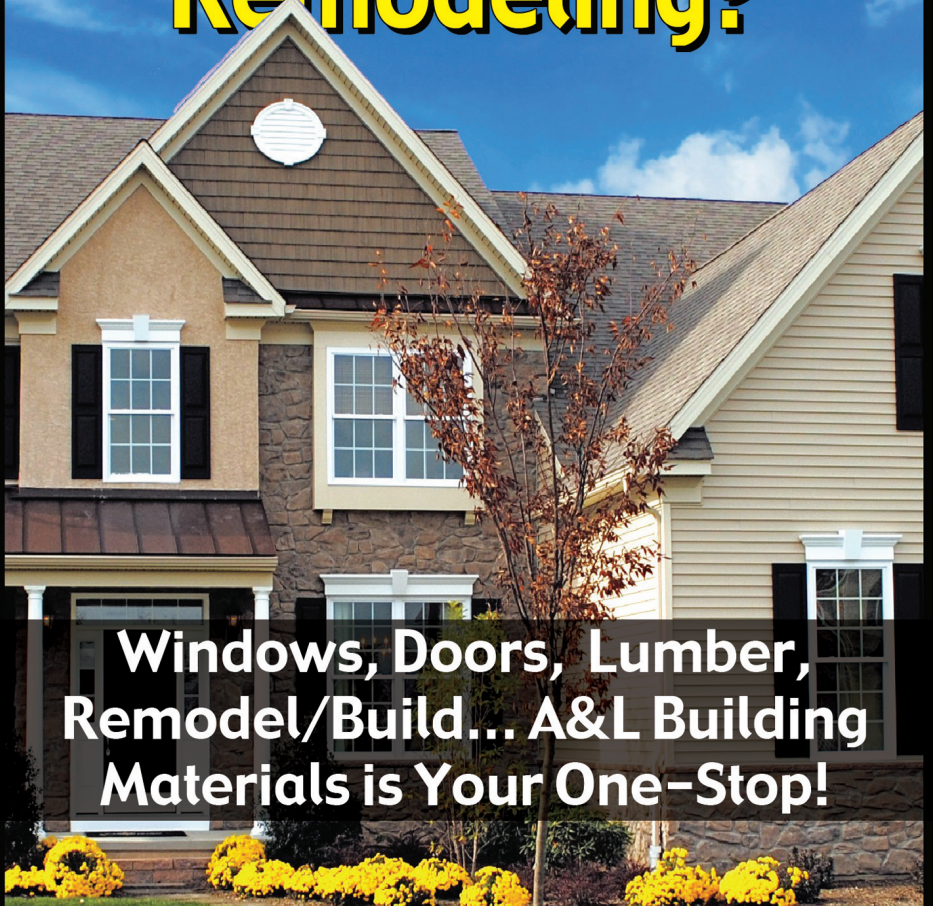
**Wanda Sue Suddith Fretwell**, Russellville, age 64  
Died Sunday, May 12, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Jonesboro Cemetery.

**Frankie Lee Riddle**, Tuscumbia, age 71  
Died Thursday, May 9, 2019. Funeral held at New Bethel Baptist Church. Interment in Shoals Memorial Gardens. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family.



We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com). For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at [franklinfreepress.net](http://franklinfreepress.net)!

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# Seven local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Each of the seven Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of April 29-May 3 had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

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

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

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanli-

ness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

Six of the seven 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 Backwoods Bargains, 30012 Hwy. 24, Russellville.

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

•Waffle House #2186, 14005 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 89. (No drying device at rear handsink, prep unit holding chopped and sliced ham, chopped lettuce, eggs sitting out at 72 degrees).

•Captain D's #3737, 15434 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91. (Spray bottles of toxic items labeled incorrectly).

•El Quetzal Buena Vista Bakery/Restaurant, 118

E. Franklin St., Russellville, 92. (Melted plastic bowl).

•Kelly's Kitchen, 17901 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 92. (Sausage out of temperature).

•Slickrock Camp Store, 170 Slickrock Camp Road, Russellville, 93. (Various toxic items stored over single service articles).

•Mexico Bakery, 111 Franklin St. SW, Russellville, 98.

Of the seven inspections done in Colbert County from April 29-May 3, all but one received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 98 went to Brown's Heavenly Fish and Soul Food, 1306 E. 6th St., Tuscumbia.

Stephano's Southland, 1309 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield, had a below satisfactory score of 84. Violations included not properly cooling down chicken wings prior to placing in cold holding unit, failure to wash hands between glove usage.

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

## 'SIGNING' from page 1

Steel in Russellville last Wednesday to commit to working for the company once they finish up their time in high school. Cade Baker, Ben Pierce and Jacob McCarley all sat at the same table and signed their letters of intent to work for the local company.

The students have been participating in the Pathfinder Program while also taking dual enrollment classes for welding at Northwest-Shoals Community College.

Scott Wiginton is the Career Tech director in Franklin County and said that the career tech program has partnered up with G&G Steel for the past few years to bring more youth into the workforce while also providing the students with an education at no extra cost.

According to Wiginton, the students would leave school as soon as their core classes were completed, then head to G&G Steel to take on an apprenticeship while also getting paid for their time and work.

Wiginton says that he hopes to see more students take part in opportunities like the Pathfinder Program and that Baker, Pierce and McCarley have done a tremendous job in making a better future for themselves.

"These guys have put a lot of time and effort into this, and they've been able to manage everything

really well," Wiginton said. "Companies like G&G Steel are expanding and need young candidates for their projects. These are those young candidates."

Bret Gist, head of G&G Steel, said the students did a great job while they were working part-time during their apprenticeship and that their supervisor was very impressed with the work they had done.

"They would work half a day in the industry to see how things would go, and they excelled in each job that they were assigned," Gist said. "Their supervisor liked them and always said good things about them. They have a hard work ethic, they have done well and they're a great group of kids."

The three students' welding instructor, Justin Steele, says that the students possess every quality that should go into a good welder.

"Having a part-time job while going to school and managing everything else takes a lot," Steele said. "These guys are great at managing a large workload, they have great hand-eye coordination and they weld extremely well."

"Work ethic and personality go a long way in things like this, and these three students have great work ethic as well as outstanding personalities."

Baker, Pierce and McCarley are all close friends and have participated in the Franklin County Career Tech Program for years. Pierce said that while not all three of them have been welding for the same number of years, in the end they knew that this is what they wanted to do.

"We've all been friends for a while, and welding has really been our big thing," Pierce said. "So when Mr. Steele approached us about the program, we knew that's what we wanted to do."

McCarley moved to Phil Campbell High School when he was in the ninth grade and said that while he wasn't sure welding was the right thing for him at the start, he quickly realized that it was meant to be.

"I wasn't really sure that welding was something I wanted to do down the road," McCarley said. "But the more I kept doing it, the better I got at it and the more I liked it. It just had that sort of domino effect to where it set things in motion."

Baker said on behalf of the three students just how thankful they are for this opportunity to go through this program.

"The program meant a lot to us, and without it...I mean...we wouldn't be standing here signing on with G&G Steel, more than likely," Baker said. "So the program has been great, and it has really helped all three of us."

# Career Tech training pays off for Vina student

Submitted to the FFP

Nash Humphres, a Vina High School junior, attended the Alabama Skills USA State Championships in Birmingham in mid-April and brought home the first medal in the Cabinetmaking contest for Franklin County in the tenure of current instructor Todd Johnson.

The three-day event consists of a contest orientation the night before the actual competition, where students take a written SkillsUSA Knowledge test and have five minutes to look over the blueprints of the project they will build the next day.

For the contest, students are each given a work area and enough raw materials to construct the cabinet/furniture piece using the blueprints provided, hand and power tools from their respective schools, and power equipment such as table saws, band saws and pocket hole machines to construct the

piece in eight hours.

This year there were nine high school students competing, and Humphres took third place in the contest.

"Nash really surprised me. This is his second year in the Cabinetmaking class and his first year to go to competition," Johnson said. "It was really a last-minute decision on my part, and I didn't even talk to him about going until three weeks before the contest. Nash worked hard and was the first competitor to have a finished product, well before the end of the time limit—not to mention he even took it completely apart and reassembled it due to a hardware error."

"Nash demonstrated in that eight-hour contest what I spend each day trying to get students to be able to do...to problem-solve and think for themselves. He encountered a few setbacks, but he recognized what was wrong and corrected them with what he had to work with. Instructors are not allowed to interact with students during the competition."



Nash Humphres

# Honey Do: Deck cleaning

Your outside deck can be a real center of activity as the warm weather approaches. After checking the structure for stability and safety, a little care may need to be given to the protection and look of your deck. This may include heavy cleaning, or pressure washing, with chemicals. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

Before you start staining or sealing, check your local weather report to be sure you'll have at least 48 hours of dry weather. The best outdoor temperature for cleaning and treating your deck is between 50 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Before you start, remove everything from the deck, including furniture and potted plants. Loosely cover any delicate or fragile ground plants adjacent to the deck with tarps or drop cloths. Don't use plastic sheeting on shrubs and plants. It can create a deadly "greenhouse effect" and harm your plants.

Remove drop cloths from your foliage as soon as your project is complete so they don't suffocate. Sweep off loose debris with a broom and clean between the cracks using a slender stick or tool. Repair damaged boards and hammer in popped-up nails, as we mentioned

last week.

Use a garden hose or a pressure washer to spray the surface of the deck, forcing away dirt, dust, oil and grease. This will also help remove the top layer of previous waterproofing. Begin at one end of the deck and continue until you have rinsed the entire surface and removed as much dirt as possible.

If you use a pressure washer, keep the pressure set to less than 1,000 pounds per square inch and leave a few feet between the spray nozzle and the deck to avoid damaging the wood. Set it to spray a fan of water so it pushes dirt and debris away faster. Spray between the deck boards to eliminate any remaining debris.

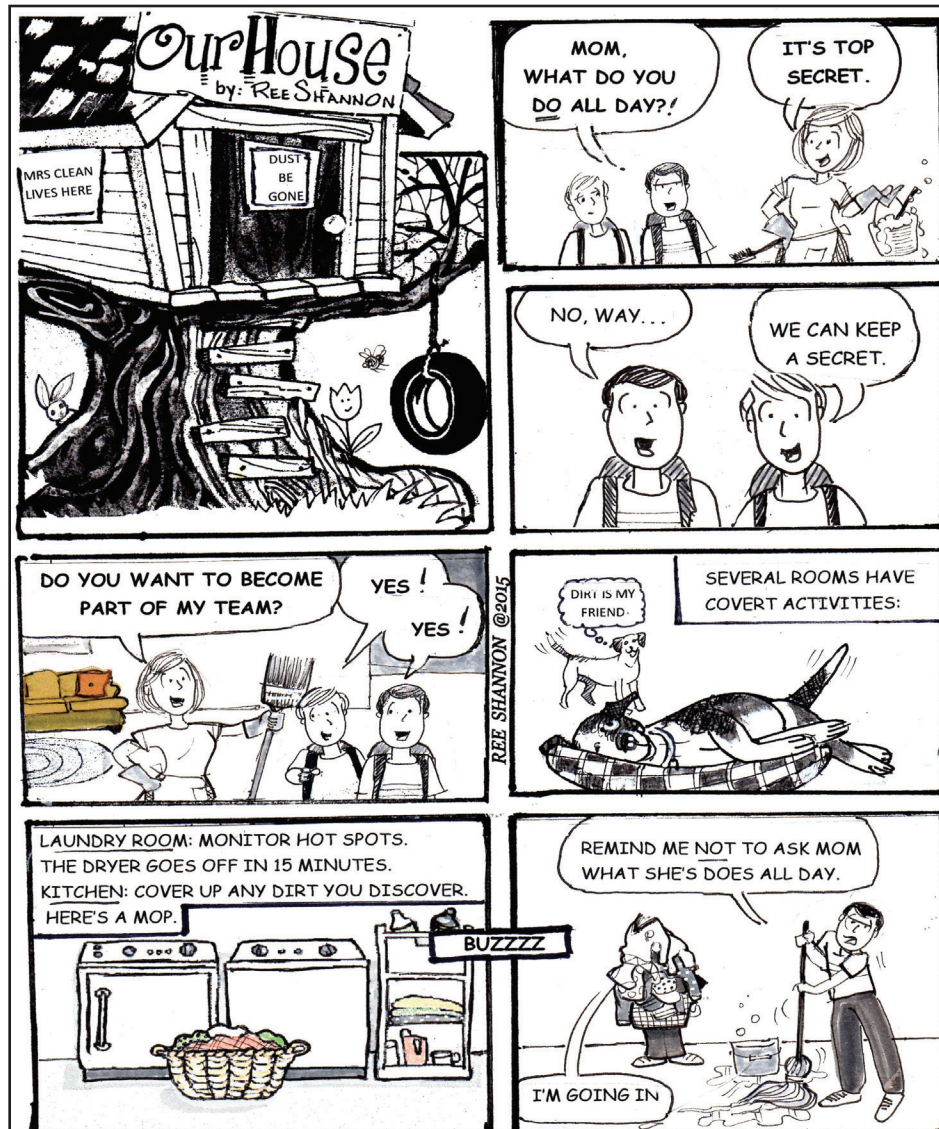
Use a pole sander or orbital sander with medium-grit sandpaper to smooth down any splintered areas and to remove remnants of the previous layer of sealant. Starting with as clean a surface as possible will help the new coat of sealant set in and provide a better level of protection.

Cleaning your deck at least once a



Doug Green

See 'DECK,' Page 11



## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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## Is a small business right for you?

My mom started her business when I was only six months old. She was a single mother with only \$64 to her name, but with a determination to survive. To make ends meet, she went back to the one thing she knew she was really good at: Baking and decorating cakes.

We're celebrating National Small Business Week this month, which always takes me back to my roots. It reminds me of my childhood that is filled with sweet memories from the cake shop my mom started more than 35 years ago. I grew up watching her struggle and work hard as she built a business and a life doing what she loved. But the best part is that it lit a fire in me to help equip other women to do the same.

Because of my mom, I started some side businesses of my own. And later I became a certified business coach and created the Business Boutique. I wanted to build a place for women to overcome fear and learn everything they needed to know about starting and growing a business.

For many of us, the journey begins (and sometimes ends) with one question: Do I have what it takes to start a small business?

As much as I love small-business owners, the answer isn't always yes. It takes a certain kind of person with the willingness to put themselves out there and the determination to persevere. You've got to be okay with unknown risks, a lot of responsibility and really hard work at times. So, to help women figure out if this might be worth their while, I usually ask them three questions:

### 1. Do you want to help people?

If you don't really like people or helping them, then starting a business is probably not right for you. But if you get excited about serving others in some way—improving their lives, meeting their

needs, solving their problems or listening to their complaints (because, let's be honest, there will be some!)—then this might be right for you. And if you already have in mind how you want to help people, that's even better!

### 2. Do you want to make money?

There's a difference between a hobby and a business: A business makes you money, while a hobby costs you money. Many people pursue their hobby as a business and then end up broke, because they just don't care about making money or they "feel bad" for charging someone for what they do.

**There's a difference between a hobby and a business: A business makes you money; a hobby costs you money. Many people pursue their hobby as a business and then end up broke, because they just don't care about making money or they "feel bad" for charging someone for what they do.**

Now, if you do want to make profit but you have some weird, squirmy feelings about money, that's normal. I coach women every day to help them face their fears around pricing their product, charging customers and paying themselves. Just because you have a love-hate relationship with money doesn't mean you can't make it! You just need a little help. But you need to have a drive to make money if you're ever going to make any (translation: Stay in business!).

### 3. Do you want to work hard?

I'm not going to sugarcoat this: Business is hard work at times. It just is. But if you want it



Christy Wright

See 'BUSINESS,' Page 7



# DAVE SAYS

Financial Straight-Talk

[www.davesays.org](http://www.davesays.org)

by Dave Ramsey

### You always need an emergency fund

Dear Dave,

I'll be retiring in the next couple of years. When I leave my job, we will have a yearly income of \$65,000 through my pension. I don't think we need an emergency fund with such a dependable, steady income stream like that, but my wife disagrees. She says she would feel safer if we had money set aside just for the unexpected. What do you think we should do?

Gary

Dear Gary,

A good pension can feel pretty solid, but nothing's perfect. Nothing lasts forever. There's always the possibility of lost income or large, unexpected expenses. What if one of you has a major medical event? Life can bite you at any time, and sometimes it will take a big financial chunk out of you. You *need* an emergency fund!

I recommend an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses. Put it in a good money market account with check writing privileges and a decent interest rate. That way, your money will work for you a little bit. With a solid pension like you're talking about, you could probably lean toward the three-month side, if you wanted. Honestly though, I'd save up six months of expenses—just in case.

Trust me, a fully funded emergency fund will make you both feel better. Plus, it can turn a disaster

into nothing more than an inconvenience!

Dave

### Above and beyond

Dear Dave,

The school system I work for puts 12 percent of my pay into a public teacher retirement fund, and they match this amount. I've seen where you tell people to put 15 percent of their income toward retirement. If that's the case, should I put three percent into another retirement fund? I have no debt and very little in terms of expenses. Or, what would you think about the idea of opening another retirement account at a full 15 percent of what I make?

Patti

Dear Patti,

I wouldn't go as far as to pour an additional 15 percent into a different retirement plan, but I *would* consider putting maybe eight to 10 percent into a Roth IRA. I want you to have some money that's separate from the school system account, just in case things go south with their retirement fund.

It sounds like you've got a pretty good pension plan, but you never know what might happen. I'm not predicting bad things, but at the same time there's no way I'd lean on the school system fund as my one and only source of retirement income. You should never put all your financial eggs in one basket!

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 16 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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 Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Boston butts for Memorial Day. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup will be Saturday, May 25 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.


 The book *One Taste Too Many* by Debra H. Goldstein of Birmingham will be discussed at the May 15 10 a.m. meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 105 West Sixth Street, Tusculumbia. For more info, email [nancy537481@yahoo.com](mailto:nancy537481@yahoo.com).


 Dempsey Cemetery Decoration Day is May 19, 2019. Please have flowers removed from grave sites by Saturday, May 4 to prepare for Decoration Day. For more information, please call Hal Bray at 256-710-1120.


 There will be a revival at 2nd Missionary Baptist Church in Russellville on Monday, May 20 through Wednesday, May 22 with services at 7 p.m. each night. The theme is "Come Taste the Bread of Life, John 6:22-40." Evangelist is Rev. Green Davidson III, St. James M.B. Church in Leighton. 2nd Missionary Baptist Church pastor Rev. Johnny Smith and congregation invite everyone to attend.


 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!


 You are invited to a big gospel singing on Saturday, May 25 at Sloss Lake in Russellville. Singing starts at 12 p.m. There will be local talent from 12-12:30 p.m., Williams Family from 12:30-1:30 p.m., Jeff Sanford from 1:30-2:30 p.m., Marvin Morrow Vernell from 3-4 p.m. and the Freemans from 4-5 p.m. Everyone is welcome, and please bring lawn chairs!


 Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Spruce Pine Community Center in Spruce Pine. Next meeting will be June 4. All members and friends are urged to attend.

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

 The Russellville Bicentennial Committee will present a series of Saturday history events called "The Way We Were: Historical Demonstrations, Exhibits and Portrayals." Saturday events will be on June 8, July 13 and August 10. There will be different demonstrations, exhibits and portrayals each month. All events will be at the Russellville Canteen at 217 Washington Avenue. For more information, call Doris Hutcheson at 256-332-4085 or Chris Ozbirn at 256-332-8827.

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville on Saturday, June 8 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. Call 256-335-4356. The KGB will be the featured act at a show sponsored by the Franklin County Arts Council at the Roxy on the second Saturday of each month. Proceeds will benefit the renovation and restoration of the Roxy Theatre.

 American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, June 11 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.

 Attention all young ladies of Colbert, Franklin and Lauderdale counties entering 10th, 11th and 12th grades in the Fall of 2019!!! The Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program will be held Saturday, August 3, 2019 at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama. Young ladies entering the 12th grade will have the opportunity to compete for cash scholarships as well as many other scholarships to colleges and universities. Also, each county winner will have the opportunity to represent her county at the state program in Montgomery in January of 2020. Information and registration meetings will be held Wednesday, May 8, Wednesday, May 15 and Wednesday, June 5 from 4-5 p.m. at First Metro Bank, Muscle Shoals. Young ladies entering the 10th and 11th grades have the opportunity to be "DYW Little Sisters." For more information, contact Susan Hargett at 256-710-9239 or Katernia Cole-Coffey at 256-332-8880, or check information on our Facebook page at Distinguished Young Women of Northwest Alabama, or email [dshargett@aol.com](mailto:dshargett@aol.com). Other information and sign up is available at [www.DistinguishedYW.org](http://www.DistinguishedYW.org). Please contact us no later than Sunday, June 23.

## 'HEROES,' from page 1

students celebrated all of the time, hard work and dedication the workers put in to providing the students with breakfast and lunch services day in and day out for almost 10 months out of the year.

The staff at West Elementary School is made up of seven dedicated women whose top priority is to make sure that no student is left hungry. These women are Tamala Waldrep, Rebekah Quaintance, Judie Putman, Stephanie Taylor, Sandra Newton, Cindy McGee (assistant manager) and Patricia Cooper (manager).

**"Our main goal is to make sure that our each of our students gets a nice warm meal each and every day, and for some of those students, that may be the only meal they receive all day," Cooper said. "So to know that these students appreciate what we do and that they know that we truly care for each of them means the world to me and the rest of the staff as well."**

Cooper has served as the lunchroom manager at West Elementary for 12 years and has a combined 25 years in the school system. According to Cooper, the students presented handmade cards and posters to the lunchroom workers and showered them with gratitude as the day progressed. Cooper said the staff was overwhelmingly happy with the outpouring of thanks and gratitude.

"The students came in with all of these poster boards and cards and told us all the stuff that they liked that we fixed for them," Cooper said. "They just told us that they appreciated what we did for them."

Cooper is also retiring at the end of this school year and said that the actions by the students were heartwarming to say the least.

**"Our main goal is to make sure that our each of our students gets a nice warm meal each and every day, and for some of those students, that may be the only meal they receive all day," Cooper said. "So to know that these students appreciate what we do and that they know that we truly care for each of them means the world to me and the rest of the staff as well."**

## 'BUSINESS,' from page 4

bad enough and are willing to put in the blood, sweat and tears, then you can make it. You don't need a business degree, a pile of money or all the bells and whistles to build a successful business. But you do need a whole lot of grit.

The most successful business owners aren't people who had a smooth path to the top. They were just willing to get knocked down over and over again, get back up, dust themselves off and keep going.

I hope you take time to reflect over these three questions. They're great indicators of whether starting a business might be a good fit for you. I sure hope it is, because I love small businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create jobs, pour back into their communities and lead the charge in new tech and product innovation.

And as we celebrate National Small Business Week, I can't help but dream about seeing even more women pursue their passion and build a life making money doing what they love. So, let me ask you: Will you be one of them? If you need help getting started, I have tons of free resources to help you at [christywright.com](http://christywright.com).

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

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# Citizens address council after dog attack

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

For more than 15 years, Tucker was a beloved part of the Nichols family.

That all changed on April 19, 2019, when Tucker, a six-pound Maltese, was attacked and mauled by a dog in the Nichols' backyard on Marion Street in Russellville.

Although Tucker was taken for treatment, the attack was too severe to enable the veterinarian to save him. Tucker, who was a gift to Helen Nichols' daughter 15 years ago, died from injuries sustained in the attack.

And all of this played out in front of Nichols, who watched Tucker get attacked in his own backyard by a dog she described to the Russellville City Council as a "vicious menace" to the neighborhood.

"I tried to stop him, but it got to the point I thought the dog would kill me," Nichols said. "He mauled our dog to death. Something needs to be done. I would hate to come back down here after someone's child was killed or hurt by this animal."

At the May 6 city council meeting, Nichols and another Russellville resident, Roberta Richardson, shared with the council their fear and frustration with what they believe to be a vicious animal that has become a nuisance in their neighborhood. They also urged the council to enact and/or enforce a leash law inside city limits.

Nichols lives on Marion Street, which runs between Lawrence and Cross. Richardson's residence is on Lawrence, as is the dog's residence, according to Nichols.

The Free Press is not publishing the name of the dog's owner, as no charges had been filed as of the printing of this article, but Russellville Police chief Chris Hargett said the dog's owners met with him and have denied their dog was responsible for the attack and maintain he was inside their home



COURTESY PHOTO

Tucker, a 15-year-old six-pound Maltese belonging to the family of Helen Nichols, was attacked and killed by a dog in the Nichols' backyard on Marion Street in April.

at the time. City of Russellville Ordinance #2010-103 defines a vicious animal as any animal which attacks a human being or another domestic animal without provocation. (Ord. #2010-103 Sec. One(E)(2). Nichols told the council the dog has been a men-

ace at her home, coming onto her porch and tearing up cushions and growling at her and her neighbors.

Upon conviction of prosecution under the city's animal ordinance, a defendant faces a fine up to \$500 and imprisonment in the city jail for a period not to exceed 60 days. Additionally, the court can order the dog's owner responsible for expenses associated with the seizure and boarding of the animal.

The court can also order a vicious or dangerous dog destroyed when in the judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction the dog represents a continuing threat of serious harm to human beings or domestic animals. (Ord. #2010-103 Sec. Two(H).

At the council meeting, councilman Gary Cummings asked Hargett what his department could do to assist in the situation. Responsibility for picking up stray and/or vicious animals falls with the Russellville Street Department, although the city's compliance officer, Brian Shackelford, is part of the RPD.

"The only other thing we can do is if she gets a citation and goes to court," Hargett said.

Nichols said a neighbor called police the day of the attack and an officer told her she needed to come in and meet with the compliance officer, which she did the following day at the police department. Because the attack was not witnessed by the compliance officer, in order to prosecute the case, Nichols was required to sign a complaint with the city court magistrate.

She said her primary concern is working to get city officials to enact a leash law that is actually enforced.

Once a case is pending in city court, the dog can be picked up and held pending the outcome of the case, Hargett said.

"I can go to court 100 times, but it won't bring my dog back," Nichols said. "That dog killed my dog. We know it's a bad dog. He does what he wants and doesn't leave until he's ready to go. I thought the dog would kill me the night he killed my dog."

Once a complaint is filed, the case will be heard in Russellville Municipal Court where Roger Bedford, Jr., serves as municipal judge. If convicted in municipal court, a defendant may appeal to Franklin County Circuit Court.

Nichols asked why the city doesn't enforce a leash law since the State of Alabama has a law requiring dogs to be confined to the limits of their own premises. A violation of that code section, Code of Alabama Sec. 3-1-5, is punishable by a fine of \$2 to \$50.

The code section must be adopted by the county commission of a particular county before it may be enforced inside that county. Russellville city attorney Danny McDowell said the city council has never adopted a leash law and would have to do so before any leash law could be enforced.

For now, Nichols' frustration continues.

"This dog comes and goes as he pleases. I hope it doesn't take an attack on a child or elderly person for some action to be taken," Nichols said.

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# Robertson sponsoring new pistol permit bill

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

If a bill sponsored by Rep. Proncey Robertson (R-Mount Hope) becomes law, Alabama residents will have a new option available when it comes to exercising their Second Amendment right.

House Bill 595 would create a new pistol permit called a lifetime carry permit, which would be a standardized process, coordinated by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA), to allow eligible residents to obtain a lifetime permit to carry a pistol in their vehicle or concealed on their person.

Robertson's legislation was scheduled to go to the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee May 15. Robertson sits on that committee. If the bill clears committee, the next step would be a vote in the House.

There is a companion bill, Senate Bill 292, sponsored by Sen. Randy Price (R-Opelika), that has been assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Robertson said the companion bills, which are the same, allow the legislation to move through the Legislative process more rapidly.

"If his bill gets through the Senate next week, I could pick it up in the House as it would immediately come to us," Robertson said. "Then when it clears the House, it would go straight to the governor."

Robertson, a retired law enforcement officer, said the bill would allow residents to obtain a lifetime carry permit with the same authority as the current one-year or five-year permits purchased through the local sheriff's office.

"You can still buy a permit for one year or five years," Robertson said. "This bill doesn't change

that, but it allows you to go to the sheriff's office and request a lifetime permit. You just have to buy it one time and do the background check one time and be done with it."

Once a background check is completed, the applicant would receive a letter from ALEA informing them they were either approved or denied within 30 days from application. The next step would be to take the approval letter to your local driver's license office, and they will either put the endorsement on the resident's driver's license or Alabama ID card, or the resident may choose to receive a separate lifetime permit card.

**House Bill 595 would create a lifetime carry permit, which would be a standardized process, coordinated by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA), to allow eligible residents to obtain a lifetime permit to carry a pistol in their vehicle or concealed on their person.**

The cost of the lifetime permit would be \$150, with \$90 going to ALEA for administrative costs in overseeing and handling the lifetime permit process and \$60 going to the sheriff's office in the permit holder's county of residence.

"As you would imagine, there will be some cost for ALEA to administer the program," Robertson said. "This will allow law enforcement to see the lifetime carry permit designation on a person's driver's license. We can't do that right now with local permits. There are 67 different pistol permit data bases, with one in every county.

"If you're stopped in Jefferson County, that officer has to call back to Franklin County to have them check the data base to see if you have a valid pistol permit. If you have the lifetime carry permit, it's attached to the driver's license, and the

officer sees that for himself for official purposes."

Robertson said that if a lifetime carry permit holder is subsequently convicted of a crime that makes him or her ineligible to have the permit, it will be removed from their driver's license and they will be sent notice and be logged into the system as firearms prohibited.

Robertson said there will be reviews at least once every four years to make sure lifetime carry permit holders haven't been convicted of a crime that makes them ineligible to carry a pistol.

The bill also provides that law enforcement may revoke a person's lifetime permit in the event "there is reasonable suspicion that the person may use a weapon unlawfully or in such manner that would endanger the person's self or others."

A person who loses his or her lifetime permit through this language would have the right to appeal the decision to the district court in their county of residence, Robertson said.

"That language is exactly what is in the pistol permit law right now. It's nothing new," Robertson said. "The sheriff already has that authority. If you're involved in an incident and law enforcement reasonably believes you are a danger to yourself or others, they have the authority to revoke your permit."

Robertson said the \$150 fee for a lifetime permit is less than that of a lifetime hunting and fishing license and lower than most of the eight other states' fees that offer lifetime permits.

"They range from \$125 all the way to \$1,000. Tennessee is \$300, so we're half of what it is for a lifetime permit there," Robertson said. "And Tennessee requires a daylong class where you bring your firearm and have to shoot to qualify with it. We're not adding any of those requirements."

# Council honors firefighters for life-saving actions

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

One Russellville family feels blessed that their beloved 'Nana' will soon be coming home after two Russellville firemen risked life and limb to rescue the 74-year-old woman from a fully engulfed house fire.

Those firemen, Lt. Johnathan Pace and Shane Mansell, responded to the call, which came in to 911 at 5:41 p.m. on April 22. The two were on the scene by 5:43 p.m. Pace decided not to pull the fire hose after learning that the woman was inside.

"He decided not to pull the fire hose because it would have taken a few more minutes to get it off the truck," said RFD chief Joe Mansell.

**"Lt. Pace put his life and firefighter Mansell's life on the line, and they were able to remove the lady safely," said RFD chief Joe Mansell. "That's the pledge firefighters take to serve the people of this community."**

At 5:46 p.m., only five minutes after emergency responders received the call, Mansell and Pace crawled through the smoke-filled home, found the woman and removed her from inside.

"A fire hose is a firefighter's lifeline," Mansell said. "It was pitch black inside. They found the woman, and she was flown to UAB, where she is doing well with her treatment thanks to the decisions Lt. Pace made at the scene. He put his life and firefighter Mansell's life on the line, and they were able to remove the lady safely.

"That's the pledge firefighters take to serve the people of this community."

Pace and Mansell were given medals and pins and were recognized at the May 6 meeting of the Russellville City Council.

The woman's family members attended the meeting and expressed their appreciation for what the firemen did to save 'Nana.' Members of her family presented the two firemen with their pins.

Mansell also expressed his appreciation to captains Randy Seal (who was in charge of the shift) and Neil Willis along with Russellville police officer Derek Henderson, who assisted at the scene along with the Keller Ambulance Service crew.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville firemen Shane Mansell and Lt. Johnathan Pace risked life and limb to rescue a 74-year-old woman from a fully engulfed house fire on April 22. The Russellville City Council presented Mansell and Pace with medals and pins at its meeting last Monday night.



# Classifieds

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**BUSINESS • LOST & FOUND • GARAGE SALES • PETS • APPLIANCES • HELP WANTED • SERVICES • APPLIANCES • CLOTHING • FURNITURE**

### YARD SALES

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Thursday, May 16. 8 a.m.-4 p.m. 1.5 miles past McDonald's on Underwood Road. Turn left on Holland Drive. 2nd house on left.

Two-Family Yard Sale. Thursday/Friday, May 16/17. 8 a.m.-until. 1207 College Ave. NW, Russellville. Something for Everyone! Y'all come!

Big Yard Sale.

Thurs./Fri./Sat. May 16,17,18. 7 a.m.-until. 911 Adams St., Russellville. Lots of jeans, brand new comforters, women's clothing, Tupperware, new ceiling fan, much more!

Yard Sale. Thursday/Friday May 16/17. 7 a.m.-5 p.m. 6780 Hwy. 22, Spruce Pine (Frog Pond side). Watch for signs. Household items, clothing, much more!

Estate Sale. Friday, May 17. 9 a.m.-until. 311 Olive Street, Russellville. Dishes, cookware, microwave, cabinet, china cabinet, end tables, clothing, desk, computer desk, full size bedroom suites, 2 sets full size mattresses, mattresses, home interiors, Christmas villages, recliners, TV stands, antique Victrola record player, antique Singer sewing machine, old cameras, typewriter and more! Rain or shine. Inside.

Yard Sale. Fri., Sat., May 17, 18. 7 a.m.-until. 396 Scenic Drive, Hester Heights Subdivision. Look for signs. Lots to offer.

Yard Sale this Friday, May 17 from 8 am-noon at Terrace Manor Nursing & Rehab. (390 Underwood Road). Proceeds will benefit Alzheimer's research.

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Saturday, May 18. Hwy. 424. From R'ville: Take 24 West to past

Belgreen, At Mile Marker 14, turn left onto Hwy. 424. (Near Dempsey Cemetery). From Red Bay: Take 24 East to Mile Marker 12, Turn right on Hwy. 24. Electric ice cream freezer, Dirt Devil hand held vac, Igloo cooler, Corelle dishes, jewelry, books, kids' clothing. 2 Houses. Multiple families at each house. Cancelled if rain. Everything priced cheap!

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Saturday, May 18. 7 a.m.-until. 55 Marshall Dr., off Underwood Road in Russellville. Furniture, clothing and much more!

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Saturday, May 18. 7 a.m.-until. 100 Engle Drive, Engle Drive Apartments in Russellville. Yard Sale inside in the Activity Room. Come see us!

### LOST AND FOUND

Lost Dogs. Lost from residence at 603 Franklin St. NE in Russellville. Male Sable German Shepherd.

About 11 months old. Leather dog collar with rabies vaccination tag. Also, male blond lab mix. Long hair. App. 10 years old. No collar. Beloved family pets. Please call 256-332-1143 with any information on these dogs. (1)

On Monday, April 29, I visited Walmart in Russellville and checked out using the self-serve checkout kiosk. The machine gave out \$60 in change for my purchase, but I forgot to pick up the change and left the \$60 in the machine. When I returned to the Walmart, the money was no longer there. I am asking the person or persons who took the money to PLEASE return it to the service desk at Walmart. There will be NO questions asked. I am not in a financial position to be without this money. Thank You for your help and God bless! (1)

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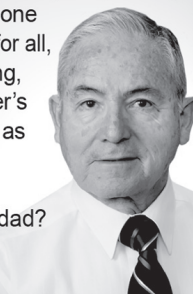
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Applications for this position will be accepted for until Friday 5/31/2019 at 3 PM.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Alabama Abandoned Motor Vehicle Act, Alabama Code Sections 32-13-1 through 32-13-8, the following motor vehicles will be sold for cash at 9:30 a.m. On June 1, 2019 at M&N Wrecker Service, 11833 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, Al., 35653. Seller reserves the right to reject any bid and the right to bid.

- 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee, 1J4GX48SX4C303759.
- 2013 GMC Sierra Truck, 3GTP2VE75DG234891.

# City council reopens application period for firefighter vacancies

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council reopened the application period for vacancies for the position of Firefighter I and extended it through May 24, 2019.

The action was taken at the council's May 6 meeting. The action was taken at the request of RFD chief Joe Mansell.

In other action, the council:

- Approved a resolution recognizing awareness of Tuberous Sclerosis Complex, a genetic disease with no cure.
- Approved a resolution recognizing May as Autism Awareness Month.
- Approved a \$1,700 contract with Maria Mojica to provide referee services for Russellville Parks and Recreation soccer league.
- Waived the rental fee at the A.W. Todd Centre for use by the Franklin County School System on May 6, St. Paul CME Church for use on May 11, Northwest RC&D Council for use on May 16 and Russellville High School Marching Hundred for use on May 14.
- Authorized mayor David Grissom to sign a deed transferring title of the property at 127 North Jackson Ave., to Greg Hovater.

## 'DECK,' from page 4

year helps it last longer and look better while maintaining the integrity of the wood. And when you're planning on sealing or refinishing your deck, you'll have to clean it first.

Deck cleaning products are available in a variety of types and strengths. Some offer a special chlorine bleach formula for eliminating mold, mildew and algae. However, chlorine bleach formulas may require more frequent cleanings. Consider using a non-chlorine bleach cleaner instead, such as Woodsman® Premium Wood Cleaner.

Be sure to wear eye protection and cover your skin to avoid injury from chemicals, such as bleach. Never run bleach-based chemicals through your pressure washer. Instead, spray them on and then use the pressure washer.

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# Lady 'Dogs earn trip to Montgomery

Staff reports

Camie Terrell went 4-for-4 with five RBIs for Belgreen last Friday night, and Emma Dempsey tossed her 20th complete game of the year as the Lady Bulldogs clinched a state tournament berth for the second straight season with a 10-2 rout of Marion County in the loser's bracket final of the West-Central Regional in Tuscaloosa.

Belgreen (28-13) finished as the regional runner-up and will face South Regional champion Brantley in round one of the state tournament at Lagoon Park in Montgomery on Friday at 9 a.m.

After falling 14-1 to Appalachian in the winner's bracket final on Friday afternoon, the Lady Bulldogs bounced back in a big way against Marion County. They jumped in front quickly in the top of the first, getting a leadoff single from Katie Dempsey, a double from Kaycee Wilson and an RBI single from Terrell to grab a 1-0 lead. Wilson later scored on a sac fly by Sydney Borden to make it 2-0.

After Emma Dempsey worked a one-two-three

See 'TRIP,' Page 16



FILE PHOTO

After going 4-for-4 with five RBIs in last Friday's clinching win over Marion County, Terrell (above) is now batting .564 on the season with four home runs, 20 doubles and 45 RBIs.

# The Natural



HATS OFF - Surrounded by family members and coaches at last week's ceremony, Buckhalter signed with Calhoun.

Devin Buckhalter has an impressive set of skills—*tools*, baseball people call them—on the diamond. Now that he's in a position to focus on his sport of choice, there's no telling what he might build.

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - Say this much for Devin Buckhalter: He knows how to make a first impression.

Long before he was Buckhalter's varsity baseball coach for the past two seasons at Russellville High School, Chris Heaps and his family were neighbors for a few years with Tony and Dana Buckhalter and their two children, Jasmine and Devin. Heaps, who was hired to take over the Golden Tiger program in the summer of 2012, remembers 12-year-old Devin coming over to play in the yard with his young twin sons, Brayden and Casen.

"Just a great kid who wanted to play," Heaps said of Buckhalter, now a senior at RHS. "He wanted to play basketball, front-yard football, whiffle ball. He came over and swam with us all the time. Devin is just a great person first, a great kid. My kids were younger, and he played well with boys that were

two or three years younger than him. That stood out to me."

That's not all that stood out to Heaps about the kid from next door, who would go on to score more than 1,200 points as a varsity basketball player, earn All-State honors as a receiver in football and start in right field for a Russellville baseball team that reached the state finals for a fourth straight year in 2017.

**"What's gonna happen with Devin Buckhalter when he's got two full years of nothing but baseball?" asked Hawkins, Calhoun's recruiting coordinator. "Is it SEC? Is it the [MLB] draft? What is it? Who knows? That's the exciting part."**

"Very, very athletic," Heaps recalled of Buckhalter the adolescent. "I was glad that he played baseball. When I moved here, it would have been just before he came into our middle school program. I knew right away—just watching them play whiffle ball and stuff, and I had seen him

See 'NATURAL,' Page 16

# Boutwell brings home sub-state title

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

After finishing up his sub-state round with a par on the 18th at Eagle's Nest in Guntersville last Monday, Russellville sophomore Eric Boutwell climbed into a golf cart next to Golden Tiger coach Patrick Odom and headed toward the scorer's table.

Odom asked Boutwell how his round went, and Boutwell responded in typically understated fashion.

"I told him I hit the ball pretty well, but I left a few shots out there," said Boutwell, who was particularly miffed about missing a two-foot par putt on the 17th. "He said, 'You can't really complain *too* much. You just shot five-under.'"

Boutwell's round of 67 last Monday was undoubtedly good—*really* good, good enough to win low medalist honors by three strokes and good enough to help the Golden Tigers clinch a berth in the state tournament for the seventh time in the last eight years. But it wasn't Boutwell's best, and that's the scary part.

"I definitely could have shot better," said Boutwell, who posted a season-best score of 66 in a tournament at Silver Lakes in Glencoe earlier this year and has twice shot 62 (first in the summer of 2017, then again in the summer of 2018) at Twin Pines, Russellville's home course. "One of my bogeys, I missed a two-foot putt for par. My bogeys were just stupid mistakes that I shouldn't have made. But I was happy with the round. It's still in the back of your mind, and you're upset about how you could have played three or four shots better and you didn't. But I wasn't gonna complain much with a 67."

In truth, Boutwell hasn't had much to gripe about on the course all season; he's been playing the best golf of his four-year Golden Tiger career and, quite possibly, his life.

"Yes, for as long as it's been, the length of the season, it's the best I've played," Boutwell acknowledged last Friday morning. "I've just been hitting the ball really well. Everything started clicking. I've been scoring well and hitting it well. It's all been clicking. I put in a lot of work during the off-season and before the season started. I figured out some small things in my swing that I needed to work on. I got that figured out, and I just got a lot more confidence than I previously had."

"When I'm standing over a shot, I feel like I can make it move the direction I want it to go. It's really all about confidence. I've got a lot of confidence."

Odom has had a front-row seat to Boutwell's brilliance this season. The coach estimated recently that his No. 1 player had probably played close to 80 percent of his rounds this year under par.

"When I came in, just talking to Coach [Ryan] Brewer, I knew Eric was a young, talented guy," said Odom, who is now in his second season as the golf coach at RHS. "But what you've seen this year is him consistently take his game to the next level. He's playing some elite golf, and it's fun to watch. I wish I could play the game the way he does. And he's still a young guy. It's been fun to watch him."

"Last year, the talent was there, and he had some great rounds, but it just wasn't as consistent. This year, it's been fun to see a kid with that kind of talent consistently perform at an elite level. I'm proud of him. He was second in the individual at state last year, and he'll be right in the mix again."

The driving force (pun intended) behind Boutwell's ascendance this season has been his accuracy off the tee.

"I'm hitting it a little further, but not a whole lot," he said. "I'm just hitting way more fairways. I'm playing smarter. That was a lot of my problem in previous years. I hit driver everywhere. That's good in some tournaments, but it'll get you into some trouble at other places if you're not hitting it well off the tee."

"It's hard to even explain to people who don't play golf how big of a difference it makes when you're in the fairway instead of having to punch it in between trees and around trees and stuff like that. Now, it's just a wedge shot right at the green with a really good look at the flag. It's a totally different game when you're playing from the fairway."

That consistency off the tee was one reason Boutwell felt good about his chances at Eagle's Nest last Monday.

"We had played one tournament there before, and we played a practice round on Sunday," he said. "It went pretty well. We didn't really play and keep score out there. I was just trying to learn where to hit it and where not to hit it. I was pretty confident, because I had been hitting it well, and I thought the course set up pretty good for me. I've been hitting it well all season. I thought I could put up a pretty good number."

Boutwell also spent a lot of time this past off-season fine-tuning his short game.

"My chipping around the greens has gotten a lot better since last year," he said. "I worked on that a lot over the summer and through the winter. That was my main focus."

**"I told him I hit the ball pretty well, but I left a few shots out there," Boutwell said of his post-round conversation with his head coach. "He said, 'You can't really complain *too* much. You just shot five-under.'"**

Armed with confidence and accuracy off the tee and precise touch around the greens, Boutwell proceeded to make himself right at home in the Eagle's Nest. He opened his sub-state round with a birdie on the first, but a couple of bogeys had him sitting at one-over when he stepped onto the seventh tee.

"It's a par four that runs right by the road," Boutwell said. "It's pretty straightforward."

So was Boutwell's tee shot. He caught fire with a three on No. 7, starting a string of five consecutive birdies that lasted all the way through the eleventh and left him at four-under for the day.

"It was definitely fun," Boutwell said of his birdie bonanza. "Number nine is a par five, and I two-putted for birdie. The rest of them, I just hit a few good iron shots and made some putts."

Boutwell tends to retreat within himself during a round, paying little attention to his own score and even less to that of others.

"When I get started playing, I'm kind of in my own world," he said on Friday. "I don't talk much or anything. I just focus on what I'm doing and what I'm gonna do with the next shot."

Boutwell got to six-under before giving one back on the missed putt at 17. He recovered quickly,



Eric Boutwell

striking a drive down the 18th fairway and then two-putting from 10 feet to close with a par. He finished his round with eight birdies, three bogeys and seven pars, finishing three strokes clear of his closest competitor and four strokes ahead of teammate Jaceton Murray, who tied for third with a round of one-under 71.

"I probably got to see six or seven holes of him," Odom said of Boutwell. "Really what I saw was his last three or four holes. He was just hitting the ball consistently further than a lot of guys, giving himself a lot of opportunities to score. He's matching the skill with good decision-making and just putting together good round after good round."

Russellville backed up the Top 3 finishes of Boutwell and Murray last Monday with a round of 77 from Calhoun signee Brayden Bendall and a season-best round of 80 from senior Lucas McNutt. The Golden Tigers finished at 295, three strokes behind first-place Guntersville but good enough to punch their ticket to Montgomery. The 36-hole state tournament was set for Monday and Tuesday at The Legislator Course, with Russellville, Guntersville, UMS-Wright [winner of the previous three Class 4A state titles] and Sylacauga competing for a Blue Map in Class 5A.

"I think if we can shoot around that same number [295] again, we'll definitely have a shot at winning," said Boutwell, who helped the Golden Tigers finish second at state both last year and in 2016. "Guntersville is like ten minutes from [Eagle's Nest]. They've seen it a good bit more than we have. I was happy knowing we came close to beating them in their backyard."

"Our goal at state is just to go out there and play the best we can, and maybe it's good enough. I try not to put too much pressure on myself or on us as a team. The goal is just to go out there and play the best you can."

Odom points out that Boutwell's impressive play last season was all the more remarkable given what the young man was going through away from the course. Eric's father, David Boutwell, who introduced his son to the game at a young age and spent countless hours working with him on his game, passed away late last spring from brain cancer.

"It was tough, just because he had always been there when I was playing," Eric said. "All of a sudden, he wasn't there anymore. It's still tough sometime, but when I'm out there playing I try not to think about it. I know he's seeing what I'm doing, and I want to do the best I can for him."

And, had he been present at Eagle's Nest on Monday, what would David have said about his son's round of 67?

"He would be proud," Eric said with a smile on Friday, "but he would find something to critique me about."

Boutwell's late father was certainly on his mind this past weekend as he headed down to Montgomery to prepare to play in the state tournament for the fourth time in his four seasons as a varsity golfer at RHS. One can only imagine David's reaction if his son were to lead the Golden Tigers to their second state championship. [Eric was a sixth-grader in 2015 when Russellville won its first-ever Blue Map in golf.]

"He would be tickled," Eric said. "He's always wanted me to be able to win a state championship. I'd love to do it now. He'd be proud of it."

"We've finished second twice now. I was happy with those at the time, but first is always where you want to be."

# Lady Golden Tigers miss out on state berth

## Loss to Hamilton ends Russellville's regional run

Staff reports

Russellville's bid to reach the state tournament ended in stunning fashion on Monday afternoon with a 7-3 loss to Hamilton at the Class 5A North Regional in Florence.

The Lady Golden Tigers (22-18-1) had been 3-0 against Hamilton this season, winning those three games by a combined score of 40-5. [That included a 13-0 rout in the Area 15 tournament final two weeks ago.]

The Lady Aggies took advantage of two Russellville errors on Monday to score six unearned runs in the top of the third and never looked back, advancing to face Sardis in the loser's bracket final. [Sardis won that game 13-0 and will join regional champion Ardmore in Montgomery later this week.]

Junior pitcher Krista Sikes started out strong for the Lady Golden Tigers against Hamilton, pitching around a leadoff single in the top of the first and then striking out the side in the second. She opened the third with a fourth consecutive strike-out and had retired seven straight batters before allowing a double to Jaclyn Bishop.

Ansley Kerr reached on an error, and Bishop scored the game's first run when Anna Frost reached on a fielder's choice. Two more runs came across when Lexi Dobbins reached on an error, and an RBI double by Katelyn Peoples made it 4-0. With two outs, Alexis Childers capped off the big inning with a two-run homer to make it 6-0.

Russellville got two of those runs back in the bottom of the third. Karlie Moore singled, took second on a passed ball, moved to third on a sac bunt by A.J. Taylor and then scored on a bunt hit by Madison Murray. Murray then stole second and third before coming home on a groundout by Jenna Whitfield to cut the lead to 6-2.

The Lady Golden Tigers threatened again in the bottom of the fourth but stranded two runners. They cut the lead to 6-3 in the bottom of the sixth when Autumn Logan walked, moved around on a single by Chalea Clemmons and scored on a sac fly by Makala O'Neal.

Hamilton scored another unearned run in the top of the seventh to make it 7-3. Taylor led off the bottom half with a hit, but Russellville stranded two more runners and saw its season come to a close.

Sikes took the loss despite not allowing an earned run in seven innings. She struck out 10 and walked none, giving up seven hits. Frost got the win for Hamilton, allowing three earned runs on six hits in a complete game. She struck out one and walked two.

Chalea Clemmons went 2-for-2 with a double, and Murray was 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run. Karlie Moore was 1-for-3 with a run, and Taylor and Alivia Clemmons also had one hit apiece.

In previous action:

### Russellville 4 Scottsboro 2

The Lady Golden Tigers put up four early runs and left the rest to senior pitcher Megan Warhurst, who held Scottsboro to three hits in a elimination game that started on Saturday and ended on Monday due to a weather delay.

Russellville grabbed an early lead in the bottom of the first when Jenna Whitfield drew a one-out walk, moved to second on a wild pitch and scored on an RBI single by Autumn Logan. The Lady Golden Tigers added another run in the second,

loading the bases on three walks and then stretching the lead to 2-0 on an RBI single by Alivia Clemmons.

Warhurst (18-7) struck out two batters in a one-two-three top of the third, and Russellville tacked on two more runs in the bottom half. Warhurst reached on an error, Chalea Clemmons doubled and Makala O'Neal delivered a two-run single to make it 4-0.

Warhurst worked out of a bases-loaded jam in the top of the fourth, but Scottsboro took advantage of three errors to score two unearned runs in the top of the fifth. They would get no more, however, as Russellville held on for the win.

Warhurst did not allow an earned run in seven innings, striking out five and walking one. She also went 2-for-3 at the plate. O'Neal was 1-for-2 with two RBIs, and Chalea Clemmons was 1-for-3. Logan and Alivia Clemmons each went 1-for-3 with an RBI.

### Ardmore 10 Russellville 3

Alivia Clemmons and Karlie Moore both homered for Russellville last Friday, but the Lady Golden Tigers committed three errors that helped pave the way for Ardmore to score seven unearned runs and advance to the regional final.

Ardmore broke up a scoreless game with four runs in the top of the second and added another in the third. Clemmons smacked her fourth home run of the season, a two-run shot, in the bottom of the fourth, but Ardmore responded with a run in the fifth, two in the sixth and two in the seventh to put the game out of reach.

Moore blasted her team-leading seventh home run of the season, a solo shot, in the bottom of the seventh.

Megan Warhurst took the loss, allowing three earned runs (ten total) on five hits in 6.1 innings. She struck out three and walked five. Clemmons was 2-for-3, and Moore, Warhurst, Autumn Logan, Makala O'Neal and A.J. Taylor each had one hit.

See 'MISS,' page 17



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Karlie Moore (above) blasted her seventh home run of the season last Friday against Ardmore, but Russellville came up short in a 10-3 loss. Head coach Kathryn Montgomery (below, seated on left) saw her team bounce back to beat Scottsboro 4-2 in a weather-delayed game before falling to Hamilton 7-3. The Lady Golden Tigers finished the season with 22 wins and an area championship.



# 'TRIP,' from page 13



FILE PHOTO

**CIRCLE OF TRUST** - Emma Dempsey has been reliable all season for Belgreen, tossing 20 complete games and posting an 18-10 record with 196 strikeouts and just 40 walks in 151.1 innings pitched.

## Class 1A State Tournament at Lagoon Park in Montgomery

First-round games (all games scheduled for Friday, May 17 at 9 a.m.)

Kinston (South Region runner-up) vs. Appalachian (West-Central champion)

Spring Garden (North runner-up) vs. Holy Spirit (East-Central champion)

TBD\* (East-Central runner-up) vs. Mars Hill (North champion)

Belgreen (West-Central runner-up) vs. Brantley (South champion)

### Belgreen Lady Bulldogs

Record: 28-13

Runs scored: 311 (7.6 per game)

Runs allowed: 130 (3.2 per game)

Head coach: John Smith

Projected Lineup:

Junior CF Katie Dempsey - .464 BA (52-for-112), 8 TR, 12 DB, 30 RBI, 44 runs

Senior C Kaycee Wilson - .460 BA (46-for-100), 12 DB, 30 RBI, .500 OBP

Senior 1B Camie Terrell - .564 BA (57-for-101), 4 HR, 20 DB, 45 RBI, 35 runs

Soph. P Emma Dempsey - .544 BA (62-for-114), 4 TR, 11 DB, 37 RBI, 24 runs

Junior SS Sydney Borden - .398 BA (39-for-98), 3 TR, 8 DB, 33 RBI, .511 OBP

Soph. 3B Kelsey Wilson - .400 BA (36-for-90), 10 DB, 26 RBI, .526 OBP

Junior LF Bailey Wood - .382 BA (34-for-89), 8 DB, 20 RBI, .422 OBP

Junior 2B Jaelyn Johnson - .300 BA (15-for-50), 2 DB, 18 runs, .464 OBP

Junior RF Gracie Dempsey - .388 BA (38-for-98), 14 RBI, 29 runs, .441 OBP

Top pitchers

Soph. Emma Dempsey: 18-10, 3.57 ERA, 151.1 IP, 196 K, 40 BB, 20 CG

Junior Sydney Borden: 10-3, 4.20 ERA, 55 IP, 62 K, 25 BB, 6 CG

\*--Action in the East-Central Regional had not concluded at press time.

bottom of the first, Belgreen added another run in the top of the second. Kelsey Wilson was hit by a pitch, moved up on a sac bunt by Bailey Wood, stole third and scored on a passed ball to make it 3-0.

Marion County got runners to second and third with just one out in the bottom of the second, but Dempsey struck out the next two batters to escape the jam. Katie Dempsey walked in the top of the third, and Terrell was credited with an inside-the-park home run (her fourth homer of the season) on a base hit to left, stretching the lead to 5-0.

Marion County stranded two more runners in the bottom of the third, and Belgreen added to the lead yet again with a little small ball in the top of the fourth. Kelsey Wilson led off with a single, moved to second on a sac bunt by Wood, moved to third on another sac bunt by Jaelyn Johnson and then scored on an infield hit by Gracie Dempsey to make it 6-0.

Emma Dempsey struck out the first two batters in the bottom of the fourth before yielding her first run of the game on a double and a single. The Lady Bulldogs answered right back with two runs in the top of the fifth. Katie Dempsey walked and scored on Kaycee Wilson's second double of the game. Terrell followed with a single, and Wilson scored on an RBI single by Borden to make it 8-1.

Marion County scored another run in the bottom of the fifth, sandwiching a pair of doubles around a single, but Dempsey again struck out two batters with runners at second and third to end the threat and keep it an 8-2 game.

Belgreen finished off the scoring in the top of the sixth. Gracie Dempsey singled, Katie Dempsey walked and Terrell drove them both home with a two-run double to center.

Emma Dempsey (18-10) pitched all seven innings, allowing two earned runs on nine hits. She struck out seven and walked just one, throwing 73 of her 95 pitches for strikes.

Terrell had a home run, a double and two singles, finishing the game with eight total bases. Gracie Dempsey was 3-for-4 with an RBI and a run, and Kaycee Wilson was 2-for-4 with an RBI and two runs. Katie Dempsey went 1-for-2 with three walks and four runs scored.

Borden was 1-for-3 with two RBIs, and Kelsey Wilson went 1-for-3 with two runs scored. Wood and Emma Dempsey each added one hit.

In previous action at the West Central Regional:

### Belgreen 4 Falkville 3

Bailey Wood capped off a two-out rally with an RBI single in the seventh inning last Friday morning, lifting Belgreen past Falkville and into the winner's bracket final.

Belgreen also got an RBI double from Camie Terrell and a two-run single from Sydney Borden in the win over Falkville. The game was tied 3-3 in the seventh when Emma Dempsey and Borden delivered back-to-back two-out singles. Kelsey Wilson was hit by a pitch to load the bases, and then Wood drove in courtesy runner Noelle Willingham with an infield hit to put the Lady Bulldogs on top.

Emma Dempsey went the distance in the circle to earn the win, allowing three earned runs on nine hits in seven innings. She struck out nine and walked two.

Borden was 2-for-2 with two RBIs and two walks, and Kaycee Wilson went 2-for-3. Wood finished 3-for-3 with an RBI, and Terrell was 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run. Emma Dempsey, Katie Dempsey and Kelsey Wilson each had one hit.

### Belgreen 7 Coosa Christian 0

Earlier on Friday, Belgreen got a dominant effort from Emma Dempsey in the circle to shut out Coosa Christian in the tournament opener for both teams.

Dempsey struck out 12 batters and walked none in seven innings, throwing 83 of her 103 pitches for strikes. She held Coosa to just five hits.

After Dempsey struck out the side in the top of the second, she opened the bottom half with a base hit. Courtesy runner Willingham eventually scored on an RBI single by Borden to make it 1-0.

The Lady Bulldogs added three more runs in the bottom of the third on an RBI single by Terrell, a sac fly by Emma Dempsey and an RBI double by Kelsey Wilson. Gracie Dempsey bunted for a hit to lead off the bottom of the fourth and scored on an RBI double by Kaycee Wilson. Courtesy runner Kaley Chandler scored on a wild pitch to make it 6-0.

Emma Dempsey took care of the rest, retiring nine batters in a row at one point before allowing a two-out single in the top of the sixth. Coosa loaded the bases with nobody out in the top of the seventh, but Dempsey recovered to strike out the next three batters and preserve the shutout.

Dempsey also had a good game at the plate, going 2-for-3 with an RBI. Gracie Dempsey was 3-for-3 with two runs scored, and Katie Dempsey was 1-for-3 with a run. Kaycee Wilson went 1-for-4 with an RBI, and Terrell was 1-for-3 with an RBI and a run. Borden went 1-for-2 with an RBI and a run, and Kelsey Wilson was 1-for-3 with an RBI. Jaelyn Johnson walked and scored a run.



# Lady 'Cats win twice, fall short of state bid

Staff reports

Collinsville hit three home runs in the fifth inning and got a complete game shutout from Emily Thrower on Monday, eliminating Tharptown from the Class 2A North Regional Tournament with an 11-0 win in Florence.

Kallie Kilgro, Emma Terrell and Lily Wills all went deep for the Lady Panthers, who advanced to face Ider in the finals of the loser's bracket. [Collinsville won that game 4-3 and will join regional champion Hatton in Montgomery this week for the state tournament.]

Collinsville led Tharptown (26-16) just 4-0 before the home run binge in the bottom of the fifth. It started with a three-run shot by Wills, continued with a two-run bomb by Kilgro and then culminated with a game-ending two-run blast by Terrell.

Thrower held the Lady Wildcats to four hits in five innings. She did not record a strikeout but issued only one walk. Olivia Ertle (17-9), who had been dominant in a pair of one-run wins over Winston County and Section earlier in the tournament, took the loss for Tharptown.

Olivia Darracott led the Lady Wildcats at the plate, going 2-for-2. Brooke Daily and Taylor Cameron added one hit apiece.

In previous action at the North Regional:

## Tharptown 3 Winston County 2

Olivia Ertle finished with 12 strikeouts in seven innings and held off a late rally by Winston County to get the win in Monday's elimination game.

The Lady Wildcats scored all three of their runs in the bottom of the third and led 3-0 until the top of the seventh, when Winston County scored twice. With the tying run at third and two outs, Ertle recorded her 12th and final strikeout of the game to seal the deal. The junior pitcher was razor-sharp all game, throwing 76 of her 93 pitches for strikes and walking just one. She allowed two earned runs on seven hits.

Catie Dawson went 2-for-3 with an RBI and a run scored, and Shaylee Wieting was 2-for-3 with a run.

## Tharptown 2 Section 1

Olivia Ertle struck out eight and held Section to just two hits in a five-inning complete game last Friday, helping the Lady Wildcats remain alive after a first-round loss.

Tharptown scored twice in the bottom of the first and left the rest to Ertle, who allowed only an unearned run in the top of the second and nothing else. She walked just one and threw 47 of her 70 pitches for strikes.

Ertle, Taylor Cameron and Olivia Darracott each had one hit for the Lady Wildcats. Shaylee Wieting walked and scored a run.

## Hatton 7 Tharptown 1

The Lady Hornets scored twice in the bottom of the first and cruised to an opening-round win last Friday on their way to claiming the regional title.

Brooke Daily led Tharptown at the plate, going 2-for-3. Shaylee Wieting was 1-for-3 with a run, and Taylor Cameron and Madison Vandiver also went 1-for-3.

## 'MISS', from page 15

Sydney Hall got the win for Ardmore, allowing two earned runs on seven hits in a complete game. She struck out six and did not issue a walk.

## Russellville 2 Brewer 1

Megan Warhurst held Brewer to just four hits in her 15th complete game of the season, and Autumn Logan delivered a two-run single in the bottom of the third last Friday afternoon as Russellville opened the tournament with a tight win.

Brewer got a run off Warhurst in the top of the second, but the senior lefty recorded a big strikeout to leave the bases loaded. Russellville then took the lead for good in the bottom of the third.

A.J. Taylor singled with one out, and the Lady Patriots then committed errors on back-to-back bunts by Madison Murray and Jenna Whitfield. Alivia Clemmons grounded into a force play at the plate for out number two, but Logan came through with a two-run single to center to put the Lady Golden Tigers on top.

Warhurst settled into a groove shortly thereafter, retiring the final ten batters she faced after issuing a two-out walk in the fourth. She struck out the side in the top of the seventh and finished with eight K's and two walks in seven innings.

Taylor and Chalea Clemmons each went 2-for-3, and Logan was 1-for-3 with two RBIs.

Russellville out-hit Brewer 5-4 on the day.



## Eric Boutwell Sophomore, Russellville

Boutwell shot five-under 67 last Monday at Eagle's Nest in Guntersville, winning low medalist honors as an individual and helping the Golden Tigers clinch their seventh state tournament berth in the last eight years.

Boutwell's round (which included eight birdies, seven pars and three bogeys) was just one stroke off his season-best score of 66, which he posted at Silver Lakes in Glencoe. Sitting at one over par through six holes at Eagle's Nest last week, Boutwell birdied the next five and won the sub-state title by three strokes.



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at our camp that year, I knew he was an athlete. I didn't know...you never know how committed a kid is gonna be to something. That's the thing he's shown over the years.

"He saw that he was pretty good, and he saw a pretty good group of guys come in right before him, and he saw it pay off for them. I think he knows...and I've said it, and some coaches who've seen him have said it, 'Hey, you've got big-time baseball ahead of you, if you'll keep grinding and keep working on the little things that players have to do to go from this level to that level and then from that level to the next level and so on.'"

Heaps, who played at Hartselle High School and then Gadsden State Community College before spending three years in the minor league system of the New York Yankees in the mid-1990s, has a saying: *'There is no elevator to the big leagues. There's only a staircase, and you have to take it one step at a time.'* Buckhalter may never reach the professional ranks [so few players do], but he has the potential to take the first few steps in leaps and bounds. At least, that seemed to be the consensus last Wednesday afternoon in the RHS field house, where Buckhalter signed an offer to continue his baseball career at Calhoun Community College in Decatur.

"This will be the first year he's ever had baseball fully to himself, and that's the most exciting part," said Ben Hawkins, who serves as pitching coach and recruiting coordinator on Cody Gaskill's staff at Calhoun. "What's gonna happen with Devin Buckhalter when he's got two full years of nothing but baseball? Is it SEC? Is it the [MLB] draft? What is it? Who knows? That's the exciting part.

"I'm just glad we got that guy in our program. I'd much rather him be in our program than have to play against him."

Much like Heaps, Hawkins remembers the first time he saw Buckhalter in person. It was a brief exposure, but it was enough.

"I saw him one time," said Hawkins, who traveled to West Point High School on April 9 and saw Buckhalter lead off the game by smoking a line-drive double off the left-field fence on the fly. "I saw him at West Point, and it's a double, it's a bomb...I called Gaskill right that second and said, 'Hey, I know I'm the pitching coach, and I know you don't think that I know a lot about hitting (just kidding), but this kid can flat-out rake it.'"

"I've seen Bob Jones, I've seen [University of Alabama commit] Dylan Ray, I've seen all those guys that can hit. This kid right here is special. The bat speed is special. I said, 'Just go see him.'"

Gaskill did just that, making the trip to Russellville to see Buckhalter with his own eyes. He saw the same thing Hawkins did, the same thing Heaps did.

"First at bat, he picks up the phone and calls me," Hawkins said of his head coach, "and he says, 'That's unbelievable. You were right. You didn't miss on this one.'"

**"I think the biggest growth was his approach at the plate," Heaps said of Buckhalter. "His commitment to what he was doing really stood out—showing up on days he wasn't forced to, staying late or getting there early and working on some things before practice started. That's the kind of commitment you've gotta make if you wanna be a big-time baseball player."**

In signing Buckhalter, Calhoun is getting a player who collected 90 hits in two seasons of varsity baseball at Russellville, a player who raised his batting average from .331 as a junior to .391 as a senior while nearly doubling his output of extra-base hits (from seven in 2018 to 13 in 2019). The Warhawks are also getting an elite athlete who excelled in four different sports [Buckhalter also ran track each spring until this year, when he chose to focus all his time and energy on baseball], but that's not what had Hawkins raving at Wednesday's ceremony.

"The thing about Devin is—and I'll say it a hundred times—he's a great kid," Hawkins said, pointing out the same traits that Heaps first noticed in a 12-year-old Buckhalter all those years earlier. "The athleticism speaks for itself. The numbers he put up on the football field, the numbers he put up on the basketball court, the baseball field—we don't even have to talk about those. It's just the type of kid he is, the competitor he is. That comes from his mom and dad and what they did with him when he was younger, instilling that in him. You can't teach that.

"When you bring a guy in who's got that skill set and that kind of talent, it makes it easier on us as coaches. All we have to do is say, 'Devin, go play.'"

Buckhalter has been playing...and playing...and playing since he first arrived as a varsity football player and basketball player in his freshman year at RHS. Needless to say, breaks have been few and far between.

"January to December, it's been...hectic," Buckhalter said on Wednesday. "I've been going from one thing to another—especially during the summer. I would go from football workouts to basketball and then baseball, and then on the weekends I would go play baseball somewhere. Then August rolls around, and I wouldn't pick up a baseball until that December, because I was doing football and basketball.

"I was about five months behind everybody else by the time baseball season started, so the first couple of weekends, the first week or two, was very rough."

Despite jumping from one sport to the next without any extended time to prep or fine-tune his craft, Buckhalter still managed to make a major impact for the Golden Tigers in 2018, his first full season of varsity baseball. He collected 45 hits, batting .331 with 26 RBIs, 29 runs scored, 15 stolen bases and 14 multi-hit games for a team that finished 30-17.

"Baseball is something I was naturally good at," said Buckhalter, who took up the game as a three-year-old. "I worked very hard, and as I kept working, it got easier. I still haven't had a full year of it. I think that'll make a hundred-percent difference."

There's reason to believe that Buckhalter is right. The strides he made from his junior season to his senior season would seem to indicate that even more rapid and significant growth is on the horizon. Buckhalter batted .391 in 2019 and either led or tied for the team lead in home runs (two), doubles (10), RBIs (25), stolen bases (16) and multi-hit games (13). Most notably, he increased his walks (from just nine as a junior to 13—in 21 fewer plate appearances—as a senior) while cutting his strikeout total in half (from 40 in 2018 to just 20 in 2019). He made contact more often, and with more authority.

"The biggest growth was my approach at the plate," Buckhalter said. "Coach Heaps and especially Coach [Jess] Smith, they helped me a lot. Everyday, Coach Smith was out there at practice working with me, getting me better, helping me improve my hand speed. My hand speed jumped from about 90 to 98 in just three weeks of him working with me. And bat speed is the key to hitting a baseball. You can hit it a lot harder and a lot farther, and it just makes it a lot easier."

Heaps echoed Buckhalter's self-assessment, also praising his leadoff hitter's ability to wham the baseball back through the middle and to the opposite field.

"I think the biggest growth was his approach at the plate, his ability to drive the ball and hit for power," Heaps said. "Last year, he had 45 hits, and most of those were singles. This year he had a whole lot of doubles and a couple of home runs. He started to figure out his approach. He learned how to hit the breaking ball and just became a better overall hitter."

"His commitment to what he was doing really stood out—showing up on days he wasn't forced to, staying late or getting there early and working on some things before practice started. That's the kind of commitment you've gotta make if you wanna be a big-time baseball player."

Rest assured, that's exactly what Buckhalter wants. And, according to Heaps, he has the potential to attain it.

"What got me drafted was tools," Heaps said last Wednesday. "I wasn't a polished player. They draft tools. They don't draft polished players. They sign to the big contracts polished players, but they draft guys with tools who have an opportunity. They draft for ceiling, and Devin's ceiling is as high as he wants it to be, as long as he stays healthy."

"Overall athleticism, bat speed, speed on the bases—he has all of that. Instinctual-wise, that's the part he's missing a little bit, just because of him arriving late [at the start of the season] every year and not getting that extra work that we give some of our guys. But he'll get that."

The opportunity to continue learning the game and tapping into his prodigious tools under the tutelage of the Calhoun coaching staff is a prospect that Buckhalter finds very exciting. Getting to do all of that less than 50 miles from home is an added bonus.

"I'm very confident about going and playing for Coach Gaskill and Coach Hawkins," said Buckhalter, who also had an offer to play baseball at Beville State. "There's a big 2019 class coming, and I think we can make a big difference at Calhoun. It's close to home. It's a very home-like environment."

Heaps is a big believer that anyone intent on pursuing a baseball career beyond high school must learn to how to handle failure. It's an essential skill in a game where even the best hitters fail more often than not. Buckhalter, who posted a stellar .463 on-base percentage as a senior, seems well equipped to deal with the challenges of such a hard game; in fact, he relishes the chance.

"I like it because you're not always gonna win every time," Buckhalter said. "It's a challenge. It's a lot like life—there's gonna be hard times, and there's gonna be good times. You go through slumps, and you gotta have a way to get out of it."

Buckhalter, a highlight-reel defender in the outfield, said the defensive aspect of the game is his favorite. ["Throwing a guy out on the bases feels like scoring a touchdown," he said with a grin. "It's a great feeling."] But there's a reason people say that hitting a baseball is the hardest thing to do in all of sports.

"Pretty much, you're gonna get something different every single time," Buckhalter said. "In football, you're gonna almost get the same thing every



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**GROWTH SPURT** - Buckhalter's biggest improvement from his junior year to his senior year came at the plate, where he batted .391 this past season and either led or tied for the team lead in hits (45), home runs (two), doubles (10), RBIs (25) and multi-hit games (13). He also sliced his strikeout total in half (from 40 to 20) and posted a .463 OBP.

## 'NATURAL,' from page 18

single time. In baseball, it's completely different. You don't know what they're gonna throw you—fastball, curveball, you don't know.

"The more I played the game from last year to this year, the better I got, as far as experience. Last year, I got on varsity; this year, I was *the* guy on varsity, and that makes a big difference."

Now, Buckhalter begins his quest to become one of *the* guys at Calhoun. Hawkins told the assembled crowd of family members, coaches, friends and fellow students last Wednesday that Buckhalter will have the chance to earn a starting job in center field for the Warhawks as soon as he sets foot on campus. For his part, Buckhalter is grateful for the opportunity to realize his lifelong dream of becoming a college athlete.

"It's a blessing. God did it all. I didn't do anything," he said. "Well, I did, but He gave me the ability to do it. I thank Him for it. I've been dreaming about playing college sports since I was a little kid, and now to actually get to do it is pretty cool."

"It seems like just last year, I was in the tenth grade, playing in my first varsity football game against J.O. Johnson, catching passes in the fourth quarter, and now I'm about to play baseball at Calhoun. It's crazy. It went by very fast."

At Calhoun, Buckhalter will join two of his former Russellville teammates—2017 graduate Skylar Holland and 2018 graduate Jaret Ward. Holland was in attendance at last week's ceremony and spoke glowingly of his once and future teammate.

"I'm very excited. I told Coach Hawk and Coach Gaskill, if they get this guy, he's an athlete," said Holland, who walked on at Calhoun this spring and proceeded to earn himself a scholarship by batting .370 with 12 home runs. "I watched him at Austin make two diving catches in center. I told them, 'Ya'll need to hop on this guy.'"

"Like they said, he hasn't played baseball full-time yet. He's batting .400, and he hasn't even focused on baseball for a full year yet. This is a huge, huge pickup."

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