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 113 Washington Ave. NW
 Russellville, AL 35663

Members of local gospel group bring home awards

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Russellville-based gospel group Purpose traveled recently to Purvis, MS to perform at the 2019 Mississippi Quartet Convention (MSQC). And two of the three members came home with awards recognizing their talent and dedication as Christian artists.

Tim Williams co-received the 2019 MSQC Male Vocalist of the Year, and Byron Gann was honored with the Barry Oxenrider Artist of Excellence for 2019.

“It’s very humbling to know your peers think that highly of you,” Williams said. “We never got in this thing to receive awards, but it’s awful nice to be recognized by your peers for the talent and gifts God’s given.”

The Oxenrider family started the MSQC in 2000 as a one-day event with the mission to “win the lost and encourage the discouraged, with the atmosphere of praise and fellowship.”

The event soon grew into an annual three-day event, and this year’s convention

See ‘GOSPEL,’ Page 9



Tim Williams, Paula McDougale and Byron Gann of Purpose.

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Tuberville on U.S. Senate bid: ‘I’ve been a winner all my life’



John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

As Auburn trampled the North Carolina Tar Heels in the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament Sweet 16 earlier this year, former Auburn football coach Tommy Tuberville had one eye on the game as he and Sean Spicer discussed Tuberville’s political future.

Spicer, the former White House communications director for President Donald Trump, met with Tuberville to offer advice and encourage him to make a run for United States Senate in 2020.

“He really put me over the top. I’d been looking at it for six or seven months,” Tuberville said. “As he and I sat together watching Auburn and North Carolina, we had a good talk, and I made my decision to do this.”

Spicer is serving as a consultant to Tuberville’s campaign as he moves forward seeking the Republican nomination for the Senate seat held by Alabama Democrat Doug Jones.

See ‘TUBERVILLE,’ Page 9

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Carlton Wayne Black, Russellville, age 63
Died Friday, June 14, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Belgreen Cemetery.

Emma Jean Campbell, Russellville, age 84
Died Sunday, June 9, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Rita Joyce King, Spruce Pine, age 86
Died Monday, June 10, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Johnny B. Latham, Russellville, age 88
Died Monday, June 10, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Beulah Cemetery in Russellville.

Anita Kay Spiller, Phil Campbell, age 56
Died Monday, June 10, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Antioch Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

Betty Riner Streetman, Tuscumbia (formerly of Russellville), age 79
Died Saturday, June 15, 2019. Graveside service held at Spruce Pine Cemetery. Pinkard Funera Home of Russellville assisted the family.

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Board promotes Ergle to principal at Belgreen

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education approved the promotion of Derek Ergle from assistant principal at Belgreen High School to principal at Belgreen at the board's June 11 meeting.

Tharptown Elementary School principal Kelby Daniel was transferred to PCHS assistant principal. The Tharptown and Belgreen assistant positions will be posted immediately, and a replacement will be hired later this month, according to Franklin County superintendent Greg Hamilton.

Ergle's promotion to principal continues a trend of filling administrative positions with employees within Franklin County Schools.

"We have some outstanding personnel in the Franklin County School System," Hamilton said. "Promoting excellence from within is something we want to do as often as possible."

The board also approved Red Bay School being

split into an elementary school (K-6) and a high school beginning with the 2019-20 school year. Hamilton said one of the two assistant principals at Red Bay School would be promoted to elementary principal and the other would serve as the assistant principal at the high school.

"We have some outstanding personnel in the Franklin County School System," Hamilton said. "Promoting excellence from within is something we want to do as often as possible."

Based on the split into two schools, the system receives an additional half unit of administrative salary, representing \$40,000.

Other personnel moves approved by the board included:

- Employment: Kristin Nunley, agri-science education teacher at Vina; Trina Franklin, math teacher at Tharptown High School; and Jamie Lawler, math teacher at Red Bay High School.

- Leave of Absence: Kaitlin Harris, first-grade teacher at Tharptown, personal leave for entire

2019-20 school year.

- Resignation in Supplement: Jordan Benford, head softball coach at Phil Campbell High School.

- Volunteer: Brooke Williams, volunteer assistant volleyball coach at Belgreen High School.

- TRACKS Afterschool Program: Amber Pharr, site lead teacher and certified teachers aide; Sandra Evans and Judith Waldecker as nurses; Jordan Sharp, Chloe Brown, William Burcham, Autumn Hester, Elisabeth Lerch and Brita Davis as teachers aides; and William Burcham and Brita Davis as bus drivers.

In other action, the board:

- Awarded the bid for diesel to Tatum Oil Company as lowest responsible bidder at \$2.087 per gallon.

- Awarded the bid for LP gas to Bear Creek Propane as lowest responsible bidder at bid price of \$1.089 per gallon.

The next regular meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education is set for July 16 at 4:30 p.m., with work session at 4:15 p.m.

Local establishment receives satisfactory rating

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

One of the two Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of June 3-7 had a score that falls 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.

One of the two 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 90, received by Bojangles. Quinn's Grocery in Tharptown scored a below satisfactory 82.

See 'RATING,' page 5

Oliver takes big step forward in musical career

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

At age 49, Wade Oliver is still a young man. But in the music industry, it's a different story.

And that's what makes Oliver's success all the more impressive.

Oliver, a lifelong Lawrence County resident from Mount Hope, recently moved to Auburn, Kentucky, about 50 miles north of Nashville, to take the next step in his songwriting/recording career.

And his two recent nominations in the prestigious Josie Music Awards for independent artists shows he's on the right path.

Oliver was nominated in the category of Outlaw Country for 2019 Vocalist of the Year and 2019 Artist of the Year. This year's award show will be held at the Celebrity Theater in Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, TN.

Oliver has written more than 70 songs, including "Everybody Needs Somebody," his first to enjoy commercial success in 2015. The song ascended to No. 21 on the IndieWorld Top 40 Country Songs.

As with most of Oliver's music, "Everybody Needs Somebody" was inspired by Oliver's personal experiences. The song recalls Oliver's decision to marry at a young age.

"I got married too young, as many other people have, and at the end of the day I realized everybody really needs somebody they can connect with," Oliver said. "That's the heart of this song."



Mount Hope native Wade Oliver was recently nominated for two Josie Music Awards.

Oliver put his songwriting on hold to get married and start a family. Oliver's songwriting resumed after his divorce seven years ago.

"When I divorced at the time, that gave me the freedom to work on my music and start writing and performing," Oliver said. "I've gotten remarried since then. My wife, Vanessa, and I work together promoting my music. I've always realized it's an uphill battle as far as my age, but in the independent music scene, I still have a good chance of accomplishing something."

A brick mason by trade, Oliver followed his father and grandfather into the demanding business. He attended Mount Hope School until 1985, when he went to work full-time.

His music tells the stories of his life, both the ups and downs, and elicits the feeling that he knows your life story and can relate to every day experiences most of us feel.

Oliver doesn't concern himself with what category his music is placed into. He's more interested in the final product, and whether fans are listening to and enjoying his songs.

"As far as the term Outlaw, it was originally coined with Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash and artists who were doing their own thing, not what the record label told them to do," Oliver said. "Maybe in that vein, I am Outlaw Country. But I really call it country music, and it's about doing my own thing, doing my own songs."

"As long as people are listening, I don't care what category it falls in."

Oliver's music, including his six-song EP *Southern Ground*, is available through iTunes and Spotify. You can learn more about Oliver and his music on his Facebook page for Wade Oliver Music, or his website, www.wadeoliverofficial.weebly.com.

While Oliver misses life in northwest Alabama, he says he always knew in his heart he'd leave Lawrence County one day.

"Somewhere in the back of my mind since I was a kid, I figured I'd leave that area. I just waited for the right time," Oliver said. "I miss my family and my kids, but as far as the move, it was the right thing to do, and my wife and I really enjoy it up here."

Honey Do: Summer time!

It's official. The first day of summer is this Friday, June 21.

To you, it may mean cheap sunglasses, muggy, hot days or sunburn. Or it may mean swimming, travel or hitting the pool. We have already experienced record-setting high and low temperatures, drought and flooding, just this year.

Any way you look at it, summer is here, and that means Alabamians should keep a few common-sense things in mind.

We live in a beautiful area with so much to see and do in the summer months, whether it's in your own back yard or a short drive away. You can be in the mountains or at the lake in no time.

1) It's gonna be HOT!! If you're going to be outside, take frequent breaks and cool down. Overheating can lead to heat exhaustion and

strokes. Stay hydrated.

2) Your home cooling appliances will be working overtime. Keep those filters changed.

3) Be safe. At play or at work. Always have a buddy with you when swimming. Follow all boating laws, and have all safety equipment on hand. When working outside, wear eye and hearing protection and gloves.

4) Have fun. We live in a beautiful area with so much to see and do in the summer months, whether it's in your own back yard or a short drive away. You can be in the mountains or at the lake in no time.

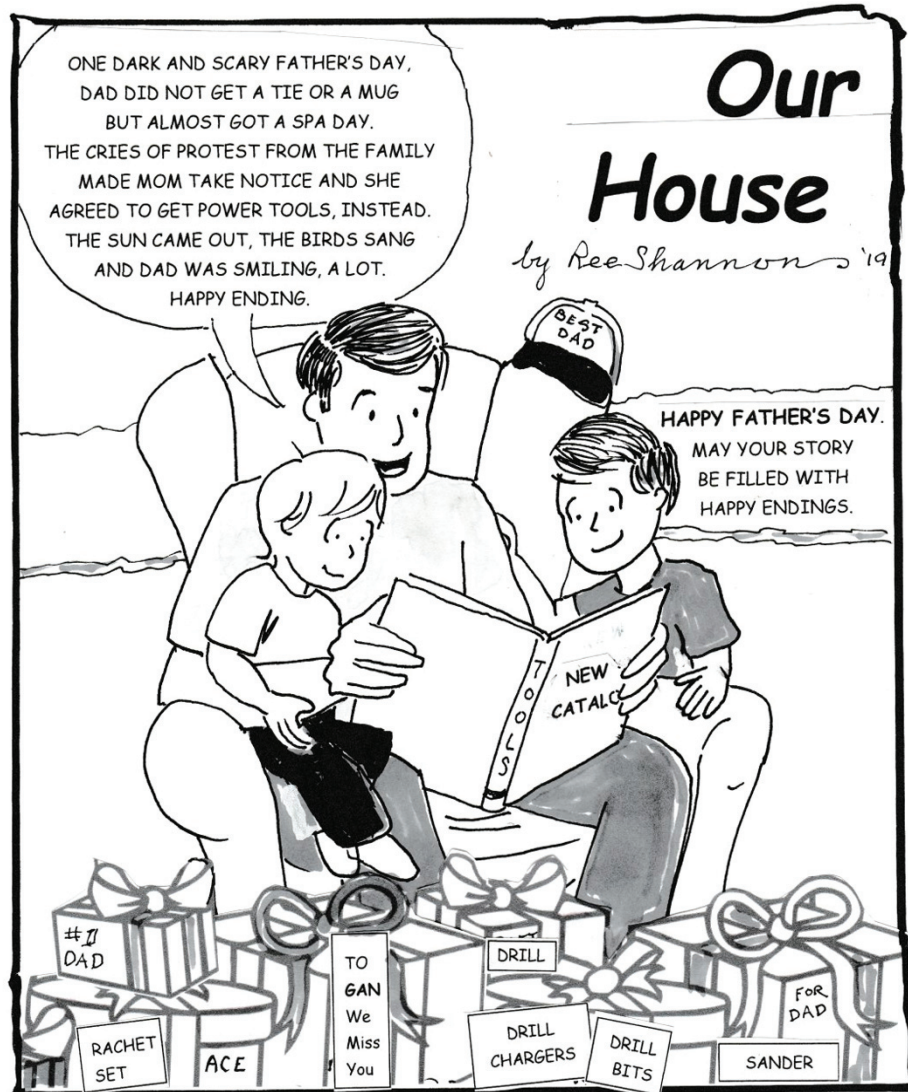
Summer slips by much too quickly, so take a moment to enjoy and remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

Letters to the Editor

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



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

Letters to the editor

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

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Education budget a winner, but teachers, retirees deserve more

The education budget passed by lawmakers in the final days of the legislative session is the largest in terms of dollars that the state has ever spent. (Though, when factoring in inflation, we still are not spending as much as we did before the 2008 recession).

For the most part, the budget is a good one. Pre-K, school buses and transportation, K-12 classrooms and school libraries are all getting a boost in 2020. But educators and, particularly, retirees are still being left behind.

Yes, the budget includes a four-percent raise for teachers, allowing starting teachers to make more than \$40,000 a year for the first time ever.

But two years ago, the national average pay for a teacher was \$59,850. In fact, Alabama is only just now reaching what the national average of pay for teachers was 20 years ago!

When you compare a teacher to a nurse, accountant, engineer or any other profession that has similar levels of education and licensing requirements, it's clear that our educators are being paid well below what they are worth. And our retirees haven't seen a cost-of-living increase in over ten years!

That is one of the reasons why Alabama is suffering a teacher shortage, especially in the fields of math and science. Other neighboring states simply pay better and offer better benefits, including better retirement pay and benefits. As a result, more and more educators are getting their degrees and training here and then leaving to go teach in Georgia, Tennessee, Florida or Mississippi.

There's no reason whatsoever why we can't pay our educators and retirees better. Our retirees haven't received a single pay increase since 2008! And many of the raises given to our active educators have been taken away on the back end by increasing their health insurance costs and reducing their retirement benefits.

Make no mistake: Younger teachers are watching how our state treats retired educators. They know that if they stay in Alabama they will eventually be neglected and forgotten about; that one day they will retire and not be able to afford to make ends meet because the cost of living will keep going up but our lawmakers in Montgomery will never give them a pay raise.

Make no mistake: Younger teachers are watching how our state treats retired educators....We can afford to pay our educators and retirees better. In fact, we can't afford *not* to!

Without a pay increase for retirees, there's very little motivation for a current teacher to stay here long enough to retire. They're better off going to another state or getting vested in the retirement system and then leaving to go do something else that pays better.

So is it any wonder why we have a teacher shortage in this state? We can afford to pay our educators and retirees better. In fact, we can't afford *not* to!



Craig Ford



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A course in day trading?

Dear Dave,
I was recently offered an opportunity to participate in a hands-on stock trading class. The problem is we don't have the \$6,500 registration fee just lying around. My husband and I are on Baby Step 4 of your plan, so what would you think about us borrowing that amount from our emergency fund? We would still have three months of expenses set aside after paying for the class.

Camille

Dear Camille,
I don't know the exact course you're talking about, but I do know something about the concept of buying and selling stocks--or day trading, if you want to call it that. I can tell you all the research shows 78 to 84 percent of day traders lose money. And one hundred percent think they won't be the ones losing out. That includes people who take courses like the one you mentioned. I have found no data points which show, on a consistent level across a broad population, that people who take a course like that become wealthy as a result. Buying and selling single stocks is an ultra-high-risk proposition. That's why I don't buy any single stocks. Now, I know some people who buy and sell single stocks as a very small percentage of their financial world. It's almost like a hobby for them. A couple might actually make a little money from time to time, but it's not the main focus of their investment strategy. To hear them, it's like listening to fishing stories. They're always talking about the one that got away.
I wouldn't waste my money on the

course, Camille—especially my emergency fund money. Your emergency fund is for, say it with me, *emergencies only!*

Dave

You don't fake poor

Dear Dave,
I've got a couple of friends who were advised by their financial planners not to open college savings accounts for their kids. Their planners told them this would count against their children's ability to receive financial aid and assistance when it's time for college.

Apparently, these planners told them to put the money into their own retirement accounts. It's my understanding, however, that both the child's and the parent's financial situations are looked into when determining financial aid. Can you please shed some light on this?

Jeanette

Dear Jeanette,
So, if a financial planner told you not to get a job because then you can apply for welfare, are you going to listen to that person? What kind of moron gives financial advice like this? You don't tell people not to save money for something, just so they can pretend they're poor!
Save whatever money you can, and send your kid to school. Why is that such a difficult concept to grasp? People need to stop looking for tricks and shortcuts, because there aren't any that will be beneficial in the long run. I'm not going to pose as broke—fraudulently—to get financial aid for my kid. That's ridiculous!
I hope I wasn't unclear.

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 and on Twitter at [@DaveRamsey](https://twitter.com/DaveRamsey).*

'RATING,' from page 3

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

•Quinn's Grocery, 9980 Hwy. 48, Russellville, 82. (Unauthorized personnel in kitchen, small child in kitchen. Ric holding bbq, chili, slaw at 46-53 degrees, catfish in second ric 74 degrees. Pizza being held in hot case at 108-130 degrees).

•Bojangles Chicken and Biscuit, 13810 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 90. (Food probe thermometer 12 degrees inaccurate).

Of the eight inspections done in Colbert County from June 3-7, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory.

The high score of 99 went to Lawler's BBQ, 808 Avalon Ave., Muscle Shoals.

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

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


 Registration for Russellville Golden Tigers tackle/flag football and cheer will be held this Thursday, June 20 from 5-7 p.m. at the Russellville City Pool. Required documents include \$40 registration fee and birth certificate. Discount available for siblings. Ages 4-5 on flag football, 6-12 on tackle football and 4-12 on cheerleaders. For more info, call Loretta Hatton, Russellville Youth Football and Cheer president, at 256-412-6817.


 The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces its final production for the 2018-2019 season, "Finders Keepers," by Donald Payton and directed by Georgia Jeffreys. Performance dates are June 20-22 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, June 23 at 2 p.m. at the Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. Tickets, which are \$8.00 each, are on sale and can be reserved by calling 256-356-9829 or going by the Weatherford Centre weekdays from 2-4 p.m. For group sales, please contact Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286.


 Join us in studying God's faithfulness to Joseph in Vacation Bible School at Oakwood Missionary Baptist Church in Spruce Pine this Saturday, June 22 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. This year's theme is "Farm Fresh Faith." The church is located on Hwy. 13 on the right before the four-lane ends. VBS is for ages 2 all the way through teenagers. Everyone is welcome!


 North Russellville Baptist Church will have a one-day Vacation Bible School this Saturday, June 22 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. This year's theme will be "Wanted By God." All cowboys and cowgirls ages two years old through fifth grade are welcome, and lunch will be provided. The church is located at 1401 Waterloo Rd, Russellville. Hope to see you there!


 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!


 Mt. Moriah Baptist Church (6350 Coburn Mountain Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674) will have Vacation Bible School for children ages three years old through sixth grade on Friday, June 28 from 6-8:30 p.m. and Saturday, June 29 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. VBS theme is "In The Wild." Come join us to have fun adventures discovering encounters with Jesus!


 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 July 2. All members and friends are urged to attend.

 Dear Reedtown School Alumni and Friends: We hope you are having a blessed year so far. The time is fast approaching for our bi-annual Reedtown Round-Up fundraiser. This year's fundraiser will be held July 3-7. We are busy planning details for the event. This year's itinerary will be as follows: Wednesday, July 3 - Meet & Greet at the Back to Basics Life Skilled Center (old Reedtown School) from 4:30-6:30 p.m.; Thursday, July 4 - Free Family Day (celebrate with your family); Friday, July 5 - Talent Show at the Chucky Mullins Center from 7-9 p.m.; Saturday, July 6 - Reedtown Round-Up Banquet held at the Chucky Mullins Center from 6-9 p.m.; Sunday, July 7 - Reedtown Round-Up parade at 3 p.m. (If you are interested in putting a float or decorated vehicle in the parade, please contact the committee.) For more information on this year's event, please call Mr. Joe Graham at 256-668-2228, Mrs. Beverly Harvey at 256-332-5601 or Ms. Ella West at 256-332-7721.

 The Harris/Trapp Family Reunion will take place Saturday, July 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the East Franklin Community Center. Family and friends of Lena and Andy Harris are welcome! Bring a covered dish, desserts or drinks. For more information, call Diane Hulsey at 205-485-4616 or Cathy Harris at 205-486-4387.

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

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, July 13 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 historic Roxy Theater.

 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. Young ladies entering the 10th and 11th grades have the opportunity to be "DYW Little Sisters." For more information, please 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. Other information and sign up is available at www.DistinguishedYW.org.

Three applications your kids should fill out this summer

Yeah, everyone loves summer vacation. But this isn't the time for your kids to take a vacation from funding their college educations. They deserve to chill a little after a long school year, but summer is also a great time for them to take advantage of financial aid opportunities and get college paid for (in between trips to the pool).

Whether they're college-bound teens or already in college and home for their break, here are the three most important applications they should fill out this summer.



Anthony O'Neal

•Job Applications

Guess what your most powerful wealth-building tool is? It's not your investments, and it's *not* credit card reward points (please tell me you and your kids are staying away from those). It's your *income*.

That means that in order for your kids to make enough cash to get them through college debt-free, they need to have a job. It might be June, but it's not too late for them to find summer work as a server, lifeguard, theme park attendant—you name it. They might even want to build their entrepreneurship skills by creating a business, where they can mow lawns, babysit, walk dogs or house-sit with a flexible schedule.

Maybe they don't want seasonal work, because they want to keep their job during the school year. That's great, too! They should just keep in mind they might need to cut back on their hours to have a healthy work/school balance during the semester. If they're going to college out of state (which I don't recommend unless you can afford to do so without debt), encourage them to look for job opportunities in their college town and get started on applications while they're home for the summer.

•The FAFSA

If your kids are headed to college—or currently in college—and haven't filled out the FAFSA for the 2019–2020 school year, they need to get on that now. Go to FAFSA.gov to find the form. Colleges use the FAFSA to determine how much money to offer your kids through scholarships, grants and student loans. Just make sure your kids don't accept any student loan offers they might get. We're going to college *debt-free*, people!

Luckily, the FAFSA isn't as confusing as it sounds and takes less than 30 minutes to complete. Every student should fill it out, regardless of their family's financial situation. There's no income cutoff to be eligible for aid, and your kids won't know how much aid they could actually get unless they try.

•Scholarship Applications

The FAFSA form isn't the only way to get scholarships. There are *thousands* of scholarships available to students for all kinds of reasons (getting good grades, writing a killer essay or being a member of a minority group).

I'd encourage your kids to set specific goals for the number of scholarships they want to apply for per week. Then, make it happen! There's no limit to how many they can apply for, so they could potentially fund their whole college education through scholarships alone! Check out AnthonyONeal.com to see my top recommendations for reliable scholarship resources.

Since 2003, Anthony O'Neal has helped thousands of students make good decisions with their money, relationships and education to live a well-balanced life. He's the National Best-Selling Author of Graduate Survival Guide: 5 Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make in College, and he travels the country spreading his encouraging message to help teens and young adults transition into the real world. His latest book and video kit, Teen Entrepreneur Toolbox, released in April 2018. You can follow Anthony on Twitter and Instagram @AnthonyO'Neal or facebook.com/aoneal.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Franklin County Firefighters for the honor conveyed to my recently deceased wife, Louise Thorn.

Louise joined the Tharptown Volunteer Fire Department in 1992. During her 27 years of service, she participated in a variety of training opportunities, answered fire and emergency calls, and provided necessary support to the department and the Tharptown community.

The Russellville Fire Department flew the flag at half-mast and stood at attention as the funeral procession led by a Tharptown Fire Department vehicle passed by.

These acts of honor bestowed to a fellow firefighter were greatly appreciated by the service-oriented Thorn Family.

Sincerely,
Floyd Thorn

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Auctioneer's Note: Selling at auction the contents of 4M Antiques in Russellville. The owner is retiring and says everything must go!

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Red Bay man pleads guilty to abuse charge

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A 72-year-old Red Bay man pled guilty last Friday to sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12 and will receive a seven-year prison sentence.

James Lamar Horton pled guilty before Franklin County circuit judge Terry Dempsey to one count of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12, a Class B felony punishable by a prison term of two to 20 years. The plea came after an agreement was reached between Horton, his attorney Nathan Johnson and Franklin County district attorney Joey Rushing.

Horton was indicted last year on charges of criminal surveillance, two counts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12, indecent exposure and two counts of a school employee having sexual contact with students under 18. The remaining counts were dismissed as part of the plea agreement.

Horton will remain out on bond until his pre-sentencing report is complete. Rushing said that due to the crime involving victims under the age of 12, Horton won't be eligible for any probation, parole or good time on his sentence. He will likely serve approximately 85 percent of the seven years and will have to register as a sex offender upon his release, with special conditions due to the victims' ages.

Horton was part of the Foster Grandparent Program of Northwest Alabama, assigned to Red Bay School's kindergarten class. According to authorities, the incidents took place during times when the teacher left the room and Horton was left in the classroom.

"That presented some opportunity for Mr. Horton to expose himself and improperly touch several different students during that time," Rushing said.

Rushing said there was five victims in Horton's case. In spite of Horton's actions, Rushing said he still believes the Foster Grandparent Program is a beneficial asset for the county.

"Obviously, the Foster Grandparent Program has been around a long time in this county with no problems whatsoever," Rushing said. "One individual took the opportunity to abuse children, and that's not the norm in this program."

"Mr. Horton had nothing in his background check when he became part of the program. Every now and then someone slips through and can cause problems like he did. But there's protocol in place to keep these sorts of things from happening in the future, for sure."

Horton was arrested in January of 2018 after one of the victims told parents about the incident. The investigation was conducted by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency and the Red Bay Police Department.

Rushing said the case was set for trial this month until Johnson filed a motion under seal with the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals on a writ of mandamus. That motion was granted, and a stay of the trial was ordered.

Rushing said he did not know the nature of the motion that was filed due to it being filed under seal.

One week after receiving the trial stay, Johnson's client entered his guilty plea in circuit court.

The victims in the case would not have testified in open court due to their ages. Instead, video depositions were taken with opportunities for both the prosecution and defense to ask questions. Those depositions would have been presented at trial as evidence.

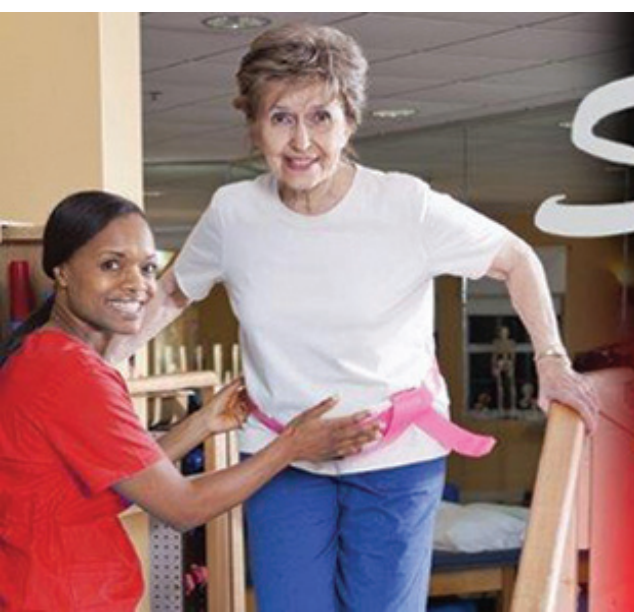
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'BUDGET,' from page 4

It certainly isn't a question of money. As I said before, this is the largest budget in terms of dollars that we've ever had. If we can afford to spend millions on public universities that also charge their student tuition, and millions more on private school scholarships and charter schools that are run by for-profit companies (which is why corruption has plagued charter schools throughout the nation), then why can't we afford to give our educators and retirees the raise they deserve?

We also keep diverting more and more money out of the education budget to pay for things in the general fund. A few weeks ago, legislators in Montgomery diverted over \$31 million from the education trust fund to the General Fund. This is on top of more than \$80 million in other taxes they diverted a couple years ago.

Alabama can not afford to keep losing good teachers to other states. And we can not afford to keep pushing young teachers out of the profession because they can make more money and have less headaches working in a different profession in the private sector.

The Bible says we put our money where our heart is. And I think it's time we put our heart where are current and retired educators are.

Craig Ford is the owner of Hodges-Ford Insurance and the Gadsden Messenger. He represented Gadsden and Etowah County in the Alabama House of Representatives for 18 years.

'GOSPEL,' from page 1

featured 30 artists from 10 states, including Purpose.

Paula McDougle, the third member of Purpose, received the 2017 Songwriter of the Year award at the 2017 MSQC.

This year's MSQC was held June 7-8 and was the 19th annual convention.

The Male Vocalist of the Year award is voted on by the artist's peers in the gospel music industry.

"It's very humbling to know your peers think that highly of you," Williams said. "We never got in this thing to receive awards, but it's awful nice to be recognized by your peers for the talent and gifts God's given."

The Artist of Excellence is more of a service award designed to honor someone who goes over and above to support and bless others.

"They said when they prayed about this year's recipient, the only name to come through their hearts and minds was Byron Gann," McDougle said.

Gann said he had no idea he would receive an award as the group set out to travel to Mississippi to perform at the convention.

"I wasn't expecting to receive anything, because there are so many great artists there. I was really surprised they chose me," Gann said. "I really don't have the words to express how I feel other than to say I'm very humbled to receive the award."

Purpose was founded in 2011 with the goal of sharing the gospel through songs and stories of what God has done in the lives of each member. Romans 8:28 serves as the inspiration for the group's name.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

Upcoming events for Purpose include shows in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina at the end of June, before a return home to take part in the annual Jam on Sloss Lake, hosted by the City of Russellville and the local utility boards.

Purpose will celebrate its eighth anniversary Saturday, August 3, with a special concert at the group's member church, Gateway Church of God in Russellville.

As far as how long Purpose will continue to perform together, Gann said that's a decision out of their hands.

"As long as the Lord allows to do it, we'll continue to share our message through music," Gann said. "We're about to celebrate eight years together, and we've been blessed to do that."

Purpose's show schedule now ranges from south Texas to Chicago, but Williams said he, Gann and McDougle have remained grounded.

"It's not our sound they're coming to hear. It's the anointing that makes the difference, and that's what we promote," Williams said. "We try to never promote Purpose. We try to promote Jesus. That's what it's about."

For more information on Purpose, follow their page on Facebook.

'TUBERVILLE,' from page 1

Tuberville was in Russellville last Thursday evening for a fundraiser at Doe's Eat Place. The event was sponsored by MS Industries II owner Steven Smith and his wife Misty.

Tuberville, who went 85-40 in ten seasons at Auburn (including an impressive 7-3 record against Alabama), contemplated a run for Alabama governor in 2017 before deciding against it.

And recent numbers show Tuberville's campaign is resonating with Alabama voters. The Moore Information Group released a poll June 11 that saw Tuberville leading among potential GOP Senate candidates with 23 percent. Roy Moore was second at 18 percent, followed by U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne at 16 percent and Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill at seven percent. Moore and Merrill have not announced their candidacies for the position yet.

Although he was pleased with the numbers, Tuberville said he will stay away from negative campaigning and focus on why he believes he's qualified to represent Alabamians in Washington.

"Forty years of coaching taught me a long time ago that a coach can't worry about the other team. You worry about yourself," Tuberville said. "The only thing you can control is your team, and that's what I'll do every day is sell myself and my campaign."

"If there was a true conservative running in this seat, I would not run. But I believe I can win this election. Otherwise, I wouldn't be running. I've been a winner all my life, and that's one of the criteria I considered."

Tuberville's coaching career began as a defensive assistant at Miami, followed by head coaching stints at Ole Miss, Auburn, Texas Tech and Cincinnati.

He amassed 159 wins at the four universities.

While he has no background in politics, Tuberville said he believes Alabama voters aren't looking to send career politicians to Washington. Further, his experiences as a collegiate head coach prepare him well for public office, Tuberville explained.

"Would you rather have someone who's a career politician," he said, "or someone who's coached 18-year-olds, been in charge of a budget of \$100 million with 150 employees, dealt with the drug problem throughout our country, dealt with mental health issues, understands our educational system and its pluses and minuses?"

"Would you rather have someone who has been all over the South and the entire country and visited homes in rich, middle-class and poor neighborhoods, or someone who's been behind a desk and read a book all his life? I've got experience in the greatest country on the face of the earth—the United States."

With his leap into politics, Tuberville may have chosen the one career where the public second-guesses decisions more they do coaching decisions on the sidelines.

"If anyone has ever been prepared for the scrutiny of public office, it's a football coach in this state," Tuberville said. "I know they'll come after me. I dealt with it in coaching for decades. I dealt with Paul Finebaum for 15 years."

"I'm in a position where I don't know the other people I'm running against. But I'll run on my morals and values, and if the people elect me, I'll be excited to go up there and represent this great state."

Tuberville pledged to support President Trump and his agenda, and he called the day Trump was elected "one of the most important in this country's history." That support of Trump is a big part of why Smith has jumped aboard the Tuberville campaign.

"I think he's a good man who will support President Trump, and he's pro-business," Smith said. "He'll vote with Trump, and that's the priority we need in Washington is support for our President."

When asked how he will garner support from the state's sizable Crimson Tide fan base who watched Tuberville-led Auburn teams win seven of 10 and six in a row over Alabama, Tuberville smiled and said it wasn't the first time he'd been asked the question.

"That's a game. This election is not a game. This is life," Tuberville said. "I believe even Alabama fans will say, 'This guy's a winner,' when it comes to my campaign. I know how to lead and bring people together. If elected, that's what I'll do in Washington, D.C., as I represent us."

"I think we'll find out a lot of Alabama football fans will be behind that. I believe in this state and country and want us to do the very best we can. And that means we need new leadership in the United States Senate from this state."

Tuberville said he hopes to raise \$500,000 by July, and when he hits that fund-raising goal he will match it with a personal contribution. Tuberville earned more than \$23 million as a football coach, and when he left Auburn, he received a \$5.1 million buyout, so funding shouldn't be a major issue for him.

For more information on the Tuberville campaign, visit his website at www.tommyforsenate.com.



Letters to the Editor

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

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at franklinfreepress.net!



Classifieds

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

YARD SALES

Yard Sale at 901 Hwy. 144 this Friday, June 21 from 8 am-until. 24 East to Hwy. 724, first road on right. 3rd house. Follow signs. Garage cleanup. Clothes, misc. and plus-size clothes.

Woodridge Neighborhood Yard Sale. Multi-Family. Friday/Saturday, June 21/22. 7 a.m. Woodridge Subdivision. Just north of Franklin Memory

Gardens then left off Waterloo Road.

Yard Sale this Friday & Saturday, June 21-22 from 7 am-until at 442 County Road 44, Russellville. Past the Southern Homes trailer plant. Co. Road 44 is off Hwy. 243 and Hwy. 24. Men's, women's and children's clothes, Little Tykes painting desk, toys, bicycle, dishes, table and china cabinet, odds & ends.

Multi-family yard sale this Saturday, June 22 from 7 am-noon at 406 NE Hall Avenue.

Estate Sale this Saturday, June 22 from 8:30 am-until at 311 Olive Street, Russellville. Rain or shine! Inside & outside. Dishes, cookware, microwave & microwave table, end tables, clothes, desk pictures, picture frames, figurines, daybed w/mattress and bedding, village houses, 2 recliners, antique Victrola record player, old cameras, sewing machine, book shelves, push weedeater, home interiors, patio tables, coffee table.

Huge 3-family yard sale this Saturday, June 22 from 7:30 am-until at 750 Mulberry Avenue in Russellville. Follow signs. Street behind North Highland Church of Christ. Last house on right by TV tower. So many items! Pop said, "Clean out the garage." Antique chairs, upholstered chairs, depres-

sion glass, punch bowl, furniture, "twin girl" baby beds, 2 high chairs, bicycles, massage table w/attachments, free standing shelves, clothes, toys. It all has to go!

Huge yard sale this Saturday, June 22 at 403 Hall Avenue NE, Russellville. More than 500 different items for sale. Too much to list!

Yard sale this Saturday, June 22 from 7 am-until at 100 Spring Street, Russellville. Near the high school. Furniture, clothes, odds & ends.

HOUSES/ APARTMENTS/ PROPERTY FOR RENT/SALE

7 Room Brick Ranch in Hester Heights For Sale. 3 BR, 2 Full Baths. Remodeled kitchen. Two-car attached and 2.5-car detached garage. Storm house. Large level lot. Reduced to \$139,000 OBO. Please call 256-263-8589. (5)

3 BR, 2 BA house for rent. Deposit required. Lawn service included. Call 256-436-4622. (1)

AUTO

FSBO: Vacation-ready 2004 Winnebago. 31C Ford E-450. 29,833 miles. Clean, non-smoker, non-pet. \$45,000 OBO. Serious buyers call 256-412-9344. (4)

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LOST AND FOUND

LOST CAT. I lost a cat at Dr. Britton's clinic, Franklin Animal Hospital, on Hwy 24 West. Lost two weeks ago. Blue eyes, light gray in color with dark lines on legs. Please call 256-398-8235 if seen. Thank you! (2)

GIVEAWAY

Free to Good Home: 11-week old Black Male Cat. Wormed. Please call 256-668-3345.

Three Male Kittens free to good home. Black in color. 8 weeks old. Call 256-668-3345. (5)

FURNITURE

Bunk Bed for sale. New, never assembled. Black/Gray twin metal bunk bed with mattresses and pillows. \$525. Call 256-332-7874. (1)

MISC. FOR SALE

Blueberries for sale. You pick or I pick. \$2 per

quart with every fifth quart free if you pick them. \$15/gallon if I pick them. 1501 Cty. Road 57, Hackleburg. Please call 205-570-4170. (1)

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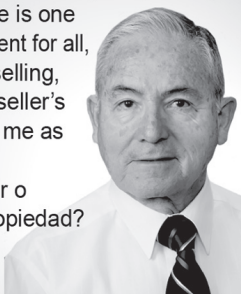
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PUBLIC NOTICE

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 29, 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.

1. 2013 GMC Sierra, tag 20CN933 3GTP2VE75DG234891
2. 2004 Jeep Cherokee, red, tag 67AM774 1546X4854C303759
3. 1996 Mercury Cougar black, tag 9412AT3 1MELM62W9TH634840
4. 2015 Mitsubishi Outlander white, tag 33BF632 4A4AP3AU2FE034545

Commission approves loan to buy new garbage trucks

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved a 2.99-percent interest loan to fund the purchase of two new garbage trucks for the Franklin County Solid Waste Department.

The lowest responsible quote came from Valley State Bank and will apply to the \$438,000 cost of the two trucks. Commissioners voted to accept the quote at their June 17 meeting.

In other action at the meeting, the commission:

- Approved FMLA and catastrophic sick leave for Revenue Commission Office employee Charlotte Green through June 21, 2019.
- Approved the hiring of Isaac Tanner Hall as a temporary employee for the Franklin County Solid Waste Department.
- Accepted the high bid of \$7,000 for purchase of seven surplus law enforcement vehicles. The bid came from M&N Towing of Russellville.
- Set a July 15, 2019 public hearing to consider the vacating of Edgar Branch Road. The hearing will be at 8 a.m. The request for the vacating came from Terry Raper and it applies to a 1,833 foot stretch of road. Raper said the road has seen extensive lit-

tering, including animal carcasses and alcohol and drug-related disturbances.

- Accepted the resignation of Tim McKinney from the Franklin County Highway Department.
- Approved the advertising for eight permanent positions with the Franklin County Highway Department.
- Took no action on a request from a citizen for \$2,000 in damages resulting from vehicle damage from a pot-hole on Shady Grove Road.
- Approved moving forward with the sale of two trucks from Franklin County Animal Control. Sealed bids will be accepted on a 1995 Chevrolet and a 2005 Ford F-150 truck.
- Approved the purchase of a 2016 Chevrolet truck for Franklin County Animal Control from Russellville Utilities.
- Approved an agreement between Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore's office and the Alabama Secretary of State's office for online business filings.
- Authorized Franklin County EMA director Mary Hallman Glass to work out terms of a contract with AlertSense for a county wide app that will alert citizens of weather emergencies, road hazards and other emergency warnings.

Russellville native one of 50 women in U.S. to attend elite workshop

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville native Jennifer Norris Hunt has seen her business, Dixie Design Collective, grow each year since she started it in 2015. And Hunt's recent participation in an elite national program should help her take her company to the next level.

Hunt, who lives in Birmingham with her husband Buddy and two sons, is the daughter of Lanny and Donna Norris of Russellville. She was one of 50 women from across the United States selected to participate in the Tory Burch Foundation Fellows Program earlier this month in New York City.

Hunt participated in the four-day workshop and received a \$5,000 business education grant and a one-year fellowship, including access to the foundation's peer-to-peer network. She was selected from among thousands of applications.

Dixie Design Collective sells semi-custom stationery and wedding paper, hand-designed by 35 artists and graphic designers with a taste for luxurious, artfully driven paper without the lengthy design time or high price point.

Hunt's experience of having difficulty finding Christmas cards served as the inspiration for her to found Dixie Design.

"As most stories go, I couldn't find what I was looking for," Hunt said. "I wanted a holiday card that looked like I had hired an artist to create the artwork and skillfully designed my card layout, but I also wanted the capability of customizing my card and reviewing a proof on the spot and then receiving the cards quickly."

"I also wanted the paper to be luxurious and the price point to be affordable. I decided to start a company that offered everything I wanted. What began with holiday cards has evolved into everyday invitations, stationery, wedding suites, wrapping paper and wholesale items."

According to its website, the Tory Burch Foundation is about helping to empower women to help themselves.

"By providing resources and tools, we can level the playing field for women entrepreneurs, and helping them to grow their businesses benefits their families, their communities and, in turn, all of us," Burch said.

The Tory Burch collection was launched in 2004 and includes ready-to-wear, shoes, handbags, accessories, watches and home and beauty.



Jennifer Norris Hunt has seen her business, Dixie Design Collectives, continue to grow since 2015.

Dixie Design Collective is a departure from Hunt's previous careers as a Certified Public Accountant and an art gallery owner, although her experience in an art gallery helped her develop an eye for spotting talent and a skill for curating, according to the company's website.

The company is named after Hunt's childhood dog, a Boston terrier named Dixie.

Artists are selected who are committed to producing quality products through their talents in calligraphy, painting, illustrating and other hand-lettering techniques.

Hunt's top three goals for Dixie Design Collective are to continue company growth, diversify the product line and become the worldwide go-to online paper product company. She hopes to introduce more product lines for Dixie Design, including the possibility of Dixie Design home products.

She said the workshop not only exposed her to some strategies for business growth but also presented a wonderful networking opportunity.

"It was pretty crazy. I told them about some new products we want to launch, and when I put it out in front of the group, I had contacts in each area within two hours," Hunt said. "Anything you can imagine as a business owner, they put it in front of us. I wasn't sure what I was getting into, but I'm sure glad I had the opportunity to be part of it."

For more information on the company or to see the wide selection of products available for custom design, visit www.dixie-design.com.

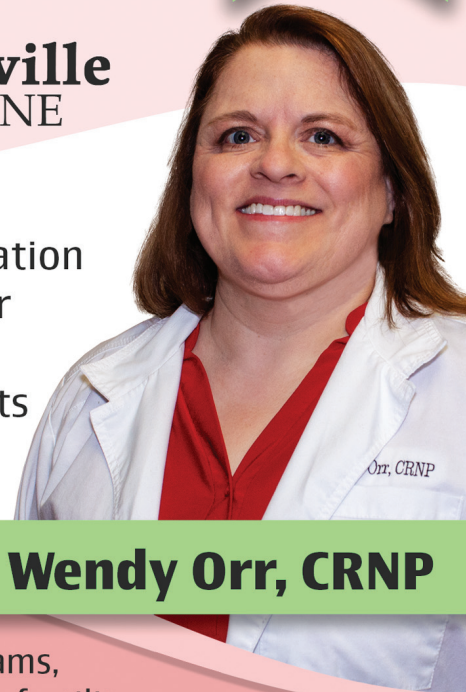


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Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

When Anna Woods learned in late April that her close friend and long-time tennis rival Halle McCrory had been chosen to play for the North squad at this summer's 23rd annual AHSAA All-Star Sports Week, she was happy.

When Woods found out recently that she would be joining McCrory and several of the state's other top rising seniors in Montgomery next month, she was downright ecstatic.

"I knew they were doing it, because one of my friends from Muscle Shoals [McCrory] got picked,"

See 'WOODS,' Page 18



COURTESY PHOTO

Woods finished as the sectional runner-up at No. 1 singles this past season and helped RHS reach the state tournament for a third straight year. She was chosen to play in the AHSAA North-South All-Star tennis match next month.

Three from Phil Campbell, one from Russellville earn All-State baseball honors

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

On the heels of a breakthrough season that included 33 wins and the program's first state semifinal berth since 2006, Phil Campbell had three players receive All-State honors in Class 3A from the Alabama Sports Writers Association last week.

Sophomore pitcher Ridge Raper was a first-team selection, while senior first baseman Nate Owens and junior catcher Rilan Garrison both earned second-team honors.

"All those guys worked very hard for this accomplishment," head coach Jonathan Raper said. "We had a good year as a team, and we had several kids that could have made All-State who didn't get it. But that's the way it is."

After pitching well as a freshman in 2018, Raper blossomed into a bona fide ace this past season, going 8-1 with a 2.47 ERA in 11 appearances (all starts). He struck out 77 batters and walked only 16 in 51.1 innings, allowing 42 hits. Raper's three complete games included a five-inning perfect game against Sheffield on March 15 in a 10-0 win.

Raper's best outing, however, may have come in Game 3 of a quarterfinal playoff series with Winfield, when he struck out 12 and walked none in six masterful innings to lead the Bobcats to an 11-1 win.

"He had a very good year," said Jonathan Raper, whose team got swept in the semifinals by Piedmont. "With our pitching, we had the luxury this year of throwing so many guys, we stayed fresh. That helped us most of the year, and then at the very end it hurt us. We were having to pitch on shorter rest because of the weather and the schedule and stuff, and our kids weren't used to it."

"But Ridge had a really good year on the mound. He turned into our number one. In the playoffs, having Nate there and pitching well, we were able to start him in Game 1 and hold Ridge back for Game 3 a couple of times, and it made a difference for us."

"He got better as the season went on. Of course, he's still got plenty of room to improve, especially with his breaking ball and his changeup. But he got better this season with his fastball and hitting his spots. The kids felt like when he took the mound, we had a very good chance at winning. And we were so good defensively this year, it was easy to pitch with those guys behind you."

Raper also enjoyed a career-best season at the plate in 2019, batting .367 and ranking among team leaders with 47 hits, 42 RBIs and 49 runs scored in 43 games. Raper pounded out 13 extra-

See 'BASEBALL,' Page 16



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Raper (above) was unbeaten on the mound until the state semifinals, while Owens (below) batted .392 and slugged 16 extra-base hits.



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Clay has high hopes for PC boys program

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

It didn't take long for new Phil Campbell boys basketball coach Shane Clay to start getting acquainted with Luke Garrison, a rising junior guard and the team's leading scorer from last season.

"The day after I was approved, I went to go look around and see the school," said the 40-year-old Clay, a graduate of Hayden High School who played two years of college baseball at Northwest-Shoals and spent the last 12 years as an assistant baseball and basketball coach at Hewitt-Trussville. "This was about 12:30, right around lunch time. Luke was in there shooting. We need more of those gym rats, guys who are willing to work and do what it takes to get better."

Garrison broke out as a sophomore last year in his first full season at the varsity level, finishing fifth in Franklin County in three-pointers made (57), seventh in scoring (12.7 points per game) and ninth in foul shooting (43-for-59, or 73 percent) on his way to earning Newcomer of the Year honors from the *Free Press*. He and classmate Brett Saint, a rising junior point guard who averaged 9.5 points per game and made 29 threes last season, should form the backbone of Clay's first team at PCHS.

"I'm excited," Clay said on Saturday. "I understand that it's gonna be a challenge, but we're looking forward to the challenge of doing something special here. I know from past experience that Phil Campbell is a very tight-knit community. We want to bring that excitement back into boys basketball. We've seen the accomplishments of girls basketball and how competitive they've been in recent times. Baseball, they've been competitive. Football is up and coming. We want boys basketball to create that same kind of excitement in the town, and we feel like we can do that."

"Those two guys really did well for us yesterday," Clay said on Saturday morning, one day after the Bobcats had taken part in a play date at Red Bay High School. "Luke had a really good game yesterday, and Brett is gonna be another one of our leaders. He'll be starting at point guard for us. We're gonna really, really rely on those two to guide the program and to help lead the other guys who haven't had that much experience at the varsity level."

Clay himself is also new to the varsity level—at least as a head coach. After graduating from West Alabama with a double major in athletic training/sports medicine and education and then earning his Masters at UAB, he spent the first 12 years of his coaching career at Hewitt-Trussville. He was a varsity assistant for both baseball and basketball while also serving as head coach for the eighth-grade boys basketball team and the freshman baseball team.

Clay, who says he never imagined when he first hired on at Hewitt-Trussville that he'd be there for 12 years, pursued a few head coaching opportunities along the way, but the timing never seemed to be quite right. A couple of years ago, he learned why. He would be needed right where he was, for matters far more important than basketball.

"I had been building my resume [at Hewitt-Trussville] and kind of soaking in

See 'CLAY,' page 15



COURTESY PHOTO

New Phil Campbell boys basketball coach Shane Clay is pictured above with his son, 14-year-old Canaan; his daughter, seven-year-old Judah; and his wife, Corrie Taylor Clay, a PCHS alum.



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'CLAY,' from page 14

everything I could from the head coach down there," Clay said. "About two years ago, I felt like I was ready to take that step further and pursue a varsity [head coaching] position, but it just really didn't work out. God really shut the door, and we stayed where we were.

"My dad died two years ago, and I got to take care of my dad and take care of my brother. [Clay's mother passed away in 2007.] God shut those doors for a reason."

Clay and his wife Corrie (a graduate of Phil Campbell High School who Shane met while playing baseball at Northwest-Shoals in 1996-97) had been hoping to relocate to north Alabama for some time, in large part so their two children (14-year-old son Canaan and seven-year-old daughter Judah) could be closer to their grandparents, Corrie's mom and dad. The opportunity to make that move finally fell into place a few weeks ago, when Clay received a phone call he wasn't necessarily expecting.

"They approached me about a month ago and asked me if I'd be interested in the Phil Campbell job," Clay said. "I had sent my resume to Mr. Hamilton [Franklin County Schools superintendent Greg Hamilton] a couple of years ago, but there wasn't really anything open at the time. We really didn't apply this year, but they still had my resume from two years ago. They said, 'Shane, would you be interested?' And I said, 'Absolutely.' I was anticipating a door being shut again, but everything kept coming together. They called me a couple of weeks ago and said, 'Shane, we're gonna approve you on May 28.'

"We really wanted to get back in north Alabama, around the Phil Campbell area. We just didn't know we would be right smack in the middle of it."

Clay takes over a Bobcat program that made a trip to Hanceville as recently as 2016 but had slipped to just 9-18 this past season. He wants to see boys basketball reach the same heights as the girls program (which has made the regional tournament in four of the last five years and went to the Final Four in 2018) and the baseball program (which has made the playoffs in seven straight seasons and advanced all the way to the state semifinals this May).

"I'm excited," Clay said on Saturday. "I understand that it's gonna be a challenge, but we're looking forward to the challenge of doing something special here. I know from past experience that Phil Campbell is a very tight-knit community. We want to bring that excitement back into boys basketball. We've seen the accomplishments of girls basketball and how competitive they've been in recent times. Baseball, they've been competitive. Football is up and coming. We want boys

basketball to create that same kind of excitement in the town, and we feel like we can do that.

"We have some players with high energy, and we can build off that. For the past week-and-a-half since I've taken the job, I really like how the players are coachable. They're like sponges, just soaking stuff in. They've been real attentive, and I'm excited to work with them."

Clay did his homework prior to taking the Phil Campbell job, and he was encouraged by what he saw and what he learned.

"I researched them before I took the job, just watching them on film and getting some advice from people in the community," Clay said. "I know we've got a really good chance of being really good. We're gonna be small, but we're gonna be really fast. I think we can take advantage of that speed.

"The players are learning, and I'm learning. This summer is a feeling-out process. I'm feeling out the team, and they're feeling out me. There's gonna be some bumps in the road as we go along, but once we get accustomed to each other and the system we're running, we'll be fine. We'll get our summer program started the first of July, and by November we'll be a totally different team."

As far as goals and expectations, Clay is urging his players to stay focused on the task right in front of them.

"I told them yesterday, it's all about the process," he said. "Trust the process. Long-term, it's gonna work out. As far as short-term goals, we want to be competitive in every game. I want Phil Campbell to be a consistently good basketball program. It has been in the past, but lately it's been a little inconsistent. They've had some winning seasons, and they've had some losing seasons. We just need to be more consistent. When it comes to long-term goals, we want to make sure these guys understand the game of basketball. But sports is gonna end one day. Most importantly, we want to prepare these guys for life. We want them to be the best husbands and the best fathers they can possibly be."

Clay prefers a fast-paced, up-tempo style, which should be a good fit for the perimeter-oriented personnel he's inheriting.

"We run the dribble-drive offense, which is more of an attack mentality," he said. "We've been running that at Trussville the last nine years. We run straight man on defense, and we'll put a little pressure on you. We'll pressure the ball and trap you. We haven't had time to implement all of that yet.

"The guys are just getting in and learning the

basic principles of the system, the dribble-drive on offense and man-to-man on defense. They ran zone last year, so right now we're just kind of getting them to understand the basic concepts."

Clay believes firmly that a successful program must be built from the lower levels up.

"It has to start at the middle school level," he said. "Building a successful program, it all starts there. We had middle school tryouts and a play date with those guys, and I really liked what I saw with them. We had ninth-grade tryouts, and we kept thirteen rising freshman, so we'll have a ninth-grade team, too.

"Then we've got five sophomores, five juniors and five seniors. We have three guys who played B-team or varsity last year who have said they're not gonna play this year, but we're hoping they'll give us a chance. That's what we told them. 'Just give us a chance, and if you still don't like it, we'll respect your decision.'"

Clay, who played baseball, basketball and football at Hayden High, has no problem with sharing athletes; in fact, he encourages his players to participate in more than one sport.

"I encourage the guys to play multiple sports," he said. "A couple years ago, if you remember, either last year or the year before, 30 of the 32 guys taken in the first round of the NFL Draft played multiple sports in high school. It is what it is. At a smaller school like Phil Campbell, you have to play multiple sports."

Clay and the Bobcats were scheduled to take part in a play date at UNA on Tuesday, and they'll finish up their summer competition with a camp at Birmingham Southern on June 25-26. The summer conditioning and weight-training program begins in July, and then in the blink of any eye it will be time for preseason practice to tip off in mid-October.

As far as goals and expectations, Clay is urging his players to stay focused on the task right in front of them.

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"When it comes to long-term goals, we want to make sure these guys understand the game of basketball. But sports is gonna end one day. Most importantly, we want to prepare these guys for life. We want them to be the best husbands and the best fathers they can possibly be."

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'BASEBALL,' from page 13

base hits on the year, including nine doubles, three triples and one home run—a three-run shot to help spark a Game 1 victory over Winfield in the Class 3A state quarterfinals.

Raper was an RBI machine in the playoffs, driving in 14 runs in 10 games while batting .357 with five doubles. He drew 23 walks on the season and got hit by a pitch eight times, fueling an outstanding .484 OBP. He stole 10 bases in 10 tries and also collected 14 multi-hit games on the year.

"He came alive offensively for us at the end and had some big hits and big RBIs," Jonathan Raper said. "He was one of the main ones who stepped up to carry us with his bat. That home run against Winfield was huge for our kids and our team, getting that in the first inning of Game 1."

A powerfully built right-handed hitter, Owens put together a monster senior season and finished one RBI shy of joining Morgan Academy's Gunnar Henderson as the only players in the state (according to MaxPreps.com) with 50 hits, 50 runs and 50 RBIs. Owens tied for 11th in the state with 51 hits, tied for eighth with 52 runs scored and tied for fourth with 49 RBIs.

Despite cooling off some after a red-hot start, Owens still finished the year batting .392, a vast improvement over his .261 mark as a junior in 2018. He also led all of Franklin County this season with 17 multi-hit games and 10 sacrifice flies. Owens led Phil Campbell with 16 extra-base hits (four home runs and 12 doubles) and also drew 20 walks, reaching base at a .451 clip.

"Early in the season, it seemed like Nate couldn't make an out," Raper said. "It didn't matter what he did. He carried us at the beginning and really got us going. He cooled off some at the end, but he couldn't keep up the pace he was on. It was just unreal at one time. He pitched well for us, too. He had a good, solid year all-around. We expected it out of him, being a senior, because he'd been in the fire before."

A lefty on the mound, Owens tied for third in the state (according to MaxPreps.com) in wins, finishing 8-2 with a 2.85 ERA, 72 strikeouts and just 39 hits allowed in 53.2 innings. He won three playoff starts and finished the season with four complete games, including one shutout.

"Nate is another young man who works hard," Raper said. "He puts in a lot of work hitting and throwing, and it was good to see him have a good senior year. Hopefully he's gonna get a chance to play next year [in college]. There

See 'BASEBALL,' page 17

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Garrison led the Bobcats with a .409 batting average and reached base at a .578 clip, thanks in large part to 43 walks.



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'BASEBALL', from page 16

are a couple of schools still talking to him." After getting only 18 at bats as a sophomore reserve in 2018, Garrison took over the everyday catching role this season (with sophomore Austen Baker moving from behind the plate to third base) and became a force at the plate. Batting cleanup in a prolific Bobcat lineup, Garrison led the team with a .409 batting average and was an absolute on-base machine, drawing a whopping 43 walks and posting a .578 OBP.

He tied teammate Luke Barnwell for second in Franklin County with 15 multi-hit games, and he only struck out 11 times all season in 161 plate appearances. Garrison stroked nine doubles and also ranked among team leaders with 42 RBIs on the year.

"Rilan has come as far as any kid we've had the last two years," Raper said. "He really didn't play any the year before last, and then when Baker got shaken up at the beginning of this year, Rilan ended up catching 90 percent of the time. He did a great job for us this year, defensively and offensively. He had a very good year."

At this time last year, Raper never could have foreseen that Garrison would not only grab an everyday spot in the lineup but also become the team's leading hitter and a major run producer in the cleanup spot on his way to earning All-State honors.

"Last summer, he did not have a very good summer," Raper said. "Toward the end of it, he was on the outside looking in. It didn't look like he was gonna be able to crack the lineup again. Credit to him—he went and worked his rear end off from that point until the season. He lost some weight, he got bigger and stronger in the weight room; he went to work, and it made a difference."

"By the time we got to January and got going, we felt good about him. He was either gonna be our catcher, our first baseman or our third baseman. He was gonna start at one of those three places, just because he had worked so hard. We thought

he was gonna play a good bit, but we didn't know how good of a season he was gonna have. He did a very good job defensively and offensively this year. The All-State honor is well deserved."

Garrison wasn't the only catcher from Franklin County honored by the ASWA. Russellville senior Hunter Briles received honorable mention All-State in Class 5A for his excellent work both at the plate and behind it.

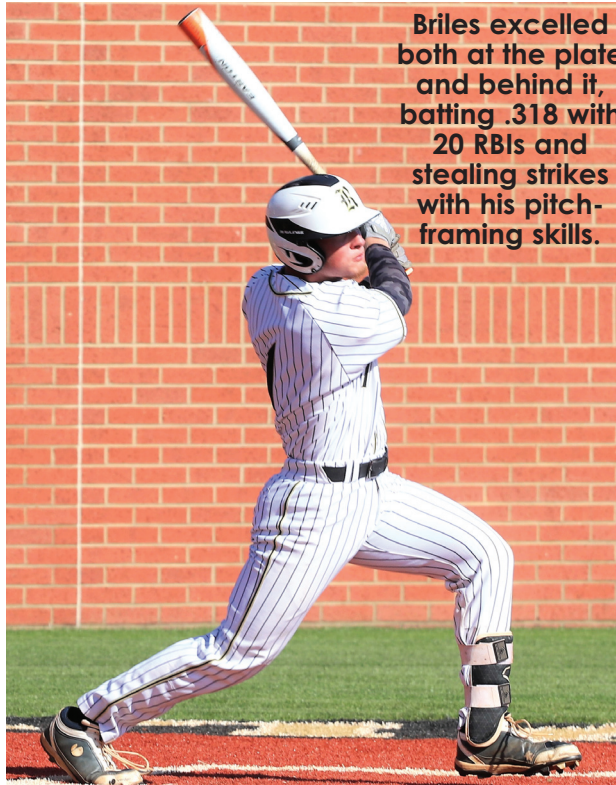
A defensive standout due to his pitch-framing and game-calling skills, Briles began to develop into a big-time hitter in the 2018 playoffs, when he batted .378 (14-for-37) for a Russellville team that reached the state finals. He picked up where he left off this past season, batting .318 with two home runs, six doubles and 20 RBIs.

Briles drew 11 walks and got hit by a pitch nine times, posting a solid .409 OBP. He finished third on the team in average, hits (34), and multi-hit games (10).

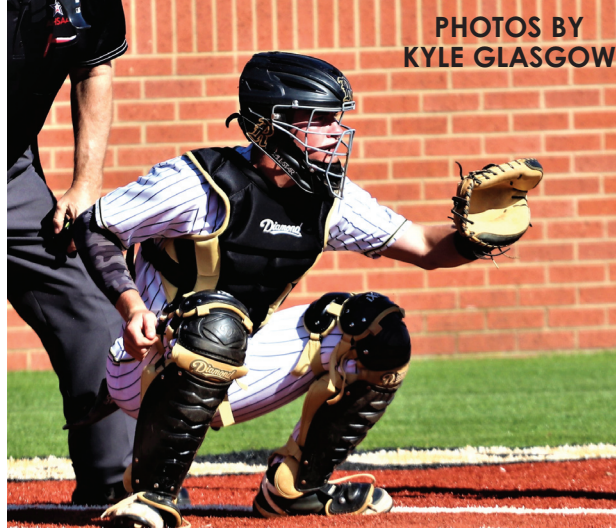
"Hunter is very deserving of All-State honors," said head coach Chris Heaps, who just finished his seventh season as Russellville's head coach and his 25th season in coaching overall. "He is one of the best defensive catchers I've had in all of my years. He is tough both mentally and physically. He was oftentimes the difference between a pitcher getting 50 percent strikes (which most of the time is losing in baseball) and a pitcher getting 60 to 65 percent strikes (which is winning baseball). Presentation is so important as a catcher, and Hunter had the ability to make a lot of pitches look better than they were. He got us a lot of strikes."

"He wasn't too shabby with the bat either. He packed some occasional pop in a very solid bat over the past two years. He could have easily had two more home runs in the playoffs had the wind not been blowing in against Southside [in this season's second-round series]."

"I'd love to see Hunter continue to pursue baseball at the college level."



Briles excelled both at the plate and behind it, batting .318 with 20 RBIs and stealing strikes with his pitch-framing skills.



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'WOODS', from page 13

said Woods, a three-year varsity veteran at Russellville High School who was the Lady Golden Tigers' No. 1 singles player this past season as a junior. "When I found out she made it, I thought, 'That'll be fun for her. She'll have a good time and learn a lot.' I didn't think much more about it, because I thought the team had already been picked. She found out a few weeks before I did."

Woods had already settled into her summer routine of practicing and playing in USTA tournaments when she received word from RHS coach Charlotte Dollar that she had also been invited to join the North roster for All-Star Week, which will take place July 15-19 in the state capital.

"When Coach Dollar told me I made it, too, I was pretty excited and pretty happy," Woods said. "I thought, 'That's gonna be cool, because I'll have a good friend to go down there with.'"

Woods and McCrory (a rising senior at Muscle Shoals) are part of a North All-Star tennis roster that also includes Jacquelyn Nieto of Albertville, Reagan Martin of Cullman, Alyssa Vandiver of Deshler, Caraline Cox of Hewitt-Trussville, Kennedy Ward of Hoover, Peyton Miller of Indian Springs, Charlotte Gillum and Liv Vandeveld of Mountain Brook, Ji Soo Kim of Randolph, Sydney Elliott of Spain Park and Brittney Xu of Vestavia Hills.

The squad will be coached by Jessica Freeman of Deshler, Shelly Sumner of Vestavia Hills and Sue Marshall (administrative) of Randolph.

This summer marks the first time that tennis and golf will be featured as part of the annual All-Star Sports Week showcase. Jamie Lee, director of the Alabama High School Athletic Directors & Coaches Association (AHSADCA) said he is excited to see the new sports that are now being included.

"This gives us the chance to see up close the outstanding tennis players and golfers we have competing at our schools across the state," Lee said.

Woods, who finished runner-up at No. 1 singles at the sectional tournament in April before falling to eventual Class 4A/5A champion Alana Boyce of

Randolph in the opening round of the state tournament, has certainly carved out her place among the state's elite.

"I feel honored to get to participate in it," Woods said of All-Star Week. "This is the first time they've done it for tennis, and I think it's cool. I feel honored, because these are the top players from the teams around here, and to get picked for that is exciting."

According to Dollar, the honor is well deserved. "Anna is a hard worker. She is always taking lessons and playing in tournaments," Dollar said. "She loves tennis and is constantly trying to improve. She is also an excellent teacher. I often get her to work with younger players and share her knowledge and experience with them."

"I'm looking forward to next year. She and the rest of that senior class are special. It's going to be a great year."

Woods broke into the varsity ranks as a freshman in 2017, winning the sectional title at No. 1 singles in a tie-breaker and helping the Lady Golden Tigers win the first-ever team sectional championship in program history.

Facing every opponent's top player is a tall task for anyone—especially a ninth-grader in her first year of varsity tennis. But Woods relished the challenge from the beginning, and she believes it's made her a better player.

"I played a lot of girls who were a lot older than me, or even just one year older than me but more experienced," said Woods, who played No. 3 singles as a sophomore in 2018 before ascending back to No. 1 this past season. "It was a tough spot, but I think it did help me get better. I got to play people better than me, and I learned a lot from it."

"Playing the one is hard. It's challenging. It pushes us to get better, because we all want to win, and we also want to support our team. You've gotta push yourself so you can win for your team."

Woods has done plenty of that over the previous three seasons, and she's grown and developed as a player along the way.

"My confidence has gotten better," she said. "I used to not be confident in myself. I'm a lot more confident now when it comes to telling myself, 'You got this. You can do this.' My overall skills have gotten better, too. I feel like my serve's gotten better and my ground strokes have gotten better."

"My teammates all play a big part in that, too, just helping me improve and pushing me to improve more."

Of Russellville's top six singles players from last season, only one—No. 2 Emma Claire Bragwell—graduated in May. Joining Woods as returning players are Ellyse Strickland (No. 3 singles), Peyton Parrish (No. 4 singles), Kaydee Holland (No. 5 singles), Natalie Busler (No. 6 singles) and Avery Miller. Hopes are understandably high for 2020.

"I would love for us to win section and go down to state and get farther, maybe even win it," said Woods, who has helped the Lady Golden Tigers reach the state tournament in each of her three varsity seasons thus far. "We have a lot of girls coming back, and one of the girls who took a break last year [Callie Palmer] is coming back out. I think it's gonna be a good year for us. I'm excited for it."

High school tennis season lasts only about three months in the spring, but Woods and many of her teammates credit their success to playing and practicing the sport on their own time throughout the entire year.

"I usually try to play all the time," Woods said. "This past year, I took a little time off in August just to get my studies going and get back in the school routine. Then I took a little time off in December during the holiday season. But other than that I try to consistently play all year round."

"It's super important. Some people play for fun, which is fine. Tennis is a lifetime sport. Some people put their racket down after the season and don't pick it back up until the next season. They get a little rusty, and it hurts them in January when we start playing again. When you play year-round, it just helps you improve your skills and your ability."

With that in mind, Woods has been spending a lot of time, per usual, on the courts this summer.

"Mostly just practicing hard and playing a lot of tournaments on my own, doing some camps and stuff to just try and keep improving," she said. "I'm playing a lot of USTA, trying to boost my ranking so I can get better and be a better player for next season. The next big thing will be playing for the North team and trying to represent the North well."

The All-Star Week sporting events are merely exhibitions, but make no mistake—the participants want to win. The outcome may not technically matter, but don't tell that to players like Woods.

"I think it is important. It says a lot about our area," she said. "There are a lot of good players around here, and we all take it seriously. We want to represent the North and also represent our schools very well."

As hard as it is for her to believe, Woods has only one more year to represent Russellville and the Lady Golden Tiger tennis program.

"It has gone by quick," she said. "It seems like just yesterday I was playing in middle school, just getting to know the game. I can't believe it's already my last year and I only get to play one more time and that's it."

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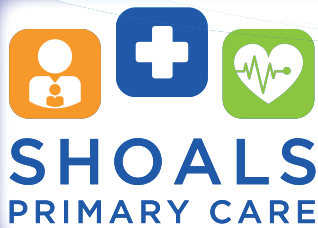
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