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# City school system takes control of Parks and Rec

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Operation and management of the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department will now be handled by Russellville City Schools, after an agreement was approved at a joint meeting of the Russellville City Council and Russellville City Board of Education Monday evening.

The motion to approve the agreement between the two entities was approved unanimously by both the school board and city council (other than councilman William Nale, who was absent from the meeting). There was no public comment at either meeting.

The agreement applies for a period of five years beginning August 6, 2019, and provides that the city will appropriate an annual amount of \$775,000 to Russellville City Schools, to be paid out on a monthly basis.

**“The Parks and Recreation Department is a vital part of our city, and because of that, we want to see it flourish and be a great resource for our citizens,”** said Russellville mayor David Grissom. **“We have done our research to see how we could improve our Parks and Rec Department and make it more efficient and effective. With what the school system can offer us, we fully believe allowing the school system to manage the day-to-day operations will be the best way to have our Parks and Rec operating at its fullest potential.”**

The special-called joint meeting came at a time when Russellville City Schools officials are searching for additional funding sources to begin a three-phase capital improvement project, which would begin with construction of a new career technical center.

Several board members and RCS superintendent of See ‘CONTROL,’ Page 8

# Hamilton praises board, CFO for growth of emergency fund

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Greg Hamilton couldn't help but smile as he told the Franklin County Board of Education that the system's emergency fund balance has grown to \$3.8 million.

Hamilton made the announcement at the board's July 16 meeting as the normally stoic superintendent credited his board and chief financial officer for their efforts in reaching, and surpassing, the fund.

**“We have a great Chief School Finance Officer in Carla Knight, and I give our board credit for trusting in me and making sure our financial situation is taken care of,”** Hamilton said after announcing that the system's emergency fund balance has grown to \$3.8 million. **“They deserve a lot of the credit for this.”**

Alabama law requires all public school systems to maintain an emergency fund balance equal to one month's operating expenses. In the case of Franklin County Schools, that amount is \$2.2 million.

Many systems in Alabama are not able to bankroll that much cash. In those instances, the systems are required to present a plan pursuant to the School Fiscal Accountability Law to establish and maintain a general fund balance of one month.

As of March 31, 2018, Franklin County Schools' emergency fund balance was \$403,061.35, under one-fourth of the required amount.

**“We have a great Chief School Finance Officer in Carla Knight, and I give our board credit for trusting in me and making sure our financial situation is taken care of,”**

See ‘FUND,’ Page 8

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**Melva Jean Bishop**,  
Russellville, age 84  
Died Monday, July 15, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

**Martha Jo Gilbert**,  
Tupelo, MS (formerly of Russellville), age 82  
Died Thursday, July 18, 2019. Funeral held at Akins Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Colbert Memorial Gardens.

**Robin R. Drake**, Russellville, age 60  
Died Saturday, July 20, 2019. Memorial service held at North Highlands Church of Christ in Russellville. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

**LaShaun Morgan Pilgrim**,  
Russellville, age 50  
Died Sunday, July 21, 2019. Funeral arrangements had not been announced at press time. Pinkard Funeral Home was assisting the family.

**Hollis Gaston**, Russellville, age 86  
Died Sunday, July 21, 2019. Funeral will be held at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, July 24, 2019 at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment will be in Tharptown Cemetery.

**Randal Louis Simmons**,  
Russellville, age 69  
Died Thursday, July 18, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Belgreen Cemetery.



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# Board hires Thorn as new principal at TES

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A plethora of personnel moves highlighted the July 16 meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education, including the hiring of an administrator from the Russellville City Schools system.

The board approved the hiring of Karen Thorn as principal at Tharptown Elementary School. Thorn leaves her position as Russellville Middle School principal to take over at TES.

"We're excited to have Dr. Thorn back in the Franklin County School system," said Greg Hamilton, Franklin County Schools superintendent. "We had a great pool of applicants, but I think her experience and success in educating kids will be beneficial for the days ahead at Tharptown Elementary."

Brianne Roberts was hired as assistant principal at Belgreen High School and Bart Moss as assistant principal at Tharptown High School. Moss was transferred from his Social Science teaching position to become assistant principal.

Other personnel moves approved by the board, all unanimously, included:

- Retirement of Karla Thompson, teacher's aide at Phil Campbell Elementary.
- Resignation of Scott Wiginton, Career/Technical Education Program Director, Franklin County Career Tech Center; Kristina Allen, Special Education Aide at PCHS; Melissa Henson (Taylor), sixth-grade teacher, Tharptown; Erin Masterson, second-grade teacher, Tharptown; Barry Reach, science teacher, Belgreen High School; Jason Harris, Special Education Aide, Vina; and John Smith, head softball coach at Belgreen. Smith was recently hired as varsity soft-

ball coach at Florence High School.

•Leave of Absence for Cassie Reed, elementary teacher at Tharptown, for maternity leave for the month of August, 2019.

•Employment of Danielle Patterson, cosmetology instructor at Franklin County Career Tech Center; Marty Cooper, head boys basketball coach with teaching duties at Belgreen High School; Shane Clay, health science teacher at Phil Campbell; Colby Cox, history teacher at Belgreen High School; Keslie Scott, elementary teacher at Tharptown; Ciara Whitten, elementary teacher at Tharptown; Mark Gajewski, music teacher/band director at Red Bay School; and Mary Motes, science teacher at Belgreen High School.

•Transfer of Valerie Copeland, from bus driver at Tharptown School to bus driver at Phil Campbell School with Franklin County Career Tech Center route; Susie Tverberg, from kindergaren teacher at Tharptown to head varsity softball coach and volleyball coach with teaching duties at Belgreen High School; Leigh Burks, from assistant principal at Red Bay School to Elementary Principal at Red Bay School; Carlee Robbins, from elementary teacher at Tharptown to elementary teacher at Belgreen; and Jonathan King, from East Franklin Junior High Principal to Career Tech Director at Franklin County Career Tech Center.

•Resignation in Supplement of Adam Pharr as boys and girls tennis coach at Red Bay High School.

•Employment in Supplement of Kelby Daniel as head softball coach at Phil Campbell High School.

•Jennifer Cooper as a volunteer assistant basketball coach at Belgreen High School.

•New teacher substitutes including Debra Aldridge, Felicia Ayers, Barbara Bishop, Mary

Dyer, Karen Gilbert (certified), Laken Gilliland, Brandy Hollimon, William Kevin McMicken (certified), Virginia Moriah Morton, Cheyenne Moses, Tanya Raper, Peggy Seay, Jordan Danielle Sharp, Megan Skidmore, Kasey Sparks (certified), Kimberly Trapp, Jamie Wells and Brandi Williams.

The board also received an update from Hamilton regarding the status of several construction projects pending at county schools. Hamilton said the final inspection for the renovated Tharptown cafeteria into four classrooms was set for July 19.

"We expect to receive a letter of occupancy after that inspection," Hamilton said. "On the previous inspection, the fire alarm was not complete, and we were missing an exit sign. This will add four additional classrooms.

"First Team Construction remains on the hook [financially] for the trailers in the meantime."

Hamilton said the second phase, which includes six new classrooms, is expected to be completed by Christmas.

The Vina High School Band Hall/Science Lab is also expected to be ready for student use when the new school year begins in August, Hamilton said.

"I think we'll make it, and that will be a 180-day contract completed in 80 days. That's a good thing," Hamilton said.

Hamilton said the five new shingle roofs being installed at Red Bay School should all be completed by the start of school.

The next regular meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education is set for July 30, 2019 at 4:30 p.m., with work session at 4:15 p.m. Hamilton expects to have a recommendation for East Franklin principal at that time.

# Eight local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Each of the eight Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of July 8-12 had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

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

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

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

Each of the eight Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfacto-

ry compliance range.

The highest score was 99, shared by several businesses including Russellville Senior Center, 205 Montgomery St. SW, Russellville.

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

- La Cabana, 10047 Hwy. 75, Russellville. 90. (Bleach tablets stored over and with food and single service items, no proof of foodservice employee reporting agreement).
- Dollar General #20293, 5206 Hwy. 48, Tharptown, 91. (Toxic/medicine items stored with food items, no available food probe thermometer).
- New Freedom Daycare, 508 St. Clair St., Russellville, 94. (Chemicals stored above food).
- Red Bay Tiger Mart, Inc., 211 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 95.
- Fourth Street Grill and Steakhouse, 607 4th St., Red Bay, 99.
- Mason Jar on Main, 102 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 99.

Of the 19 inspections done in Colbert County from July 8-12, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 100 went to Littleville Senior Center, 1400 Jackson Hwy, Littleville.

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

# Council approves abatement of nuisance property

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council voted to declare a local property a nuisance at the council's July 15 meeting.

The council approved the abatement of a nuisance at 706 Hawkins Circle. According to city compliance officer Brian Shackelford, the property

contains litter and tall weeds, and the owners have failed and/or neglected to clean it after receiving notice.

The property will now be cleaned by city officials at the owner's expense. If the owner does not reimburse the city for the costs, a lien will be placed against the property.

In other action at the short meeting, the council:  
•Accepted a bid from Mike Madden, the highest

responsible bidder, for \$5,150 for the purchase of five Hummer vehicles from the City of Russellville.

•Approved the hiring of John Alex Foster as a Firefighter I with the Russellville Fire Department.

•Approved the promotion of Corey Bray to utility technician in the Russellville Street Department.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council is set for Monday, August 5, with work session at 6 p.m. and meeting to follow.

# Honey Do: Cut the cord

Not very many years ago, I remember the first cordless screwdrivers came onto the market. They sold for around twenty bucks, and they made great Christmas and Father's Day gifts. (I'll bet some of you still have one hidden away in a drawer somewhere.) But, compared to the battery-powered tools of today, well....you've come a long way, baby.

Professional carpenters and handymen have realized the convenience of and speed of "cutting the cord" with battery-operated tools, and now landscapers and lawn maintenance companies are converting quickly as the tools and batteries have evolved into machines that have great benefits over gas-powered equipment. Here are a few reasons.

**Professional carpenters and handymen have realized the convenience of and speed of "cutting the cord" with battery-operated tools, and now landscapers and lawn maintenance companies are converting quickly as the tools and batteries have evolved into machines that have great benefits over gas-powered equipment.**

•They run quieter. There will be little need for hearing protection or risk of hearing loss with quieter electric motors. Professionals or homeowners who live or work in close neighborhoods can run chainsaws or weed trimmers almost anytime without violating noise ordinances.

•Less down time. Carburetor and fuel issues will be a thing of the past. Users won't have to worry about hard-starting equipment, and this equipment can be stored easily without the worry of old fuel in the engine.

•Ease of starting. No starter rope. Just press a button and go.

•Environmentally friendly. No fuel emissions or spilled fuel. No need for fuel cans. Oh, and no expensive morning stops at the gas station (unless you want coffee and a biscuit).

Since "lithium-Ion" batteries have evolved, battery-powered tools of all kinds are now available, dependable and relevant for professionals and homeowners. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



**Doug Green**



# The 'proximity principle' and how it can help you realize your dream

My best friend was telling me about his oldest daughter the other day. She began to show interest in film during high school, and now she's in college at a critically acclaimed film school. She chose a school, not just for the name, but one well known for helping students get internships.

After she finished her freshman year, she was so excited to have received one of the school's coveted internships that allowed her to work at a movie studio over the summer. Although it required her to live with other students she didn't know and not go home for months, she was thrilled with the opportunity. She knew if she worked hard and made a good impression, she would have a better chance of landing a job in the industry after graduation.

Think about it. She's going to be in a movie studio doing work as an intern and getting paid. The sacrifices she's willing to make now will open so many doors in the future. It's inspiring! She's so far ahead of most people her age because of the proximity she's in. The relationships she's developing within that industry are huge. Plus, she's gaining so much knowledge and experience. But even more importantly, she's around people who are doing that kind of work at a high level, and she's in the middle of it.

Going after your dream, or "living the dream," is more about reality than the dream. I prefer the phrase "realize the dream." It means you understand you must take small steps and create a plan in order to make your dream a reality. Most people don't quit once they have a plan in place, because it provides a detailed road map to your

destination.

There are times when life may stop you—for a while. We all experience things like family situations and health issues. But even these don't have to be permanent road blocks. Think of them as a time to recalibrate and make plans to restart your journey. Times like these aren't always fun, but so many people have tons of momentum and emotional investment, only to be stopped by life happenings.

I can tell you from experience that restarts can be amazing for growth and personal development.

Pursuing your dream is going to require sacrifice, whether it is financially, relationally or emotionally. But believe me, when done the right way it's so worth it!

*About Ken Coleman*

Ken Coleman is host of *The Ken Coleman Show* and the top-rated *EntreLeadership Podcast*, and author of *One Question: Life-Changing Answers from Today's Leading Voices*. An acclaimed interviewer and broadcaster, Coleman equips, encourages and entertains listeners through thought-provoking interviews, helping them grow their businesses, pursue their passions, and move toward a fulfilled purpose. You can follow him on Twitter at @KenColeman, on Instagram at @KenColemanShow, and online at [kencolemanshow.com](http://kencolemanshow.com) or [facebook.com/KenColemanShow](http://facebook.com/KenColemanShow).



**Ken Coleman**

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**Getting motivated**

Dear Dave,  
My wife is so charged up after reading your books, and now she is determined to get us out of debt. I know this is good idea, but I just don't have the passion for it that she does. There are also some things I really don't want to give up. Any suggestions for getting motivated?

Ken

Dear Ken,  
Goals and dreams always have a better chance of coming true if you have a written game plan. Sit down with your wife at the start of each month and help her do a written budget. Give every dollar a name on paper before you spend it. Contrary to popular belief, doing a budget is not torture. It's also not just a math exercise. It's an opportunity for you both to have input on what you want to accomplish in life and how to make it happen. After two people are married, they become "as one." And that's how decisions should be made in a marriage—facing all the problems, dreams and fears together.

Once you sit down and do a budget, I think you'll see where you can cut back and make things happen that you thought were impossible before. You may have to give up a few things for a *little while*, but when you see how quickly you can get ahead by making your money behave, I've got a feeling you'll get excited about the possibilities!

Dave

**Kids and money**

Dear Dave,  
We've followed your advice and put our kids on commissions instead of allowances. The problem is our eight-year-old. He never buys anything, and he seems to be very frugal by nature. Do you have any advice for teaching him it is okay to spend money sometimes?

Stephen

Dear Stephen,  
You're absolutely right for wanting to teach him wise spending habits. Each of us has the personality of being either a saver or a spender. As parents, we should help our kids grow in areas where they have weaknesses *and* find ways to enhance their strengths.

Give him praise for being such a good saver, but gently encourage him to spend a little, too. Spending is one of the rewards of work and disciplined saving. You might urge him to pick out something he really wants and help him make a plan to save enough money to buy that item. Once he has enough money for the purchase, turn it into a celebration of reaching that goal.

There are three things you can do with money—spend it, save it and give it to others. Focusing too much, or too little, on any of these is not financially *or* spiritually healthy.

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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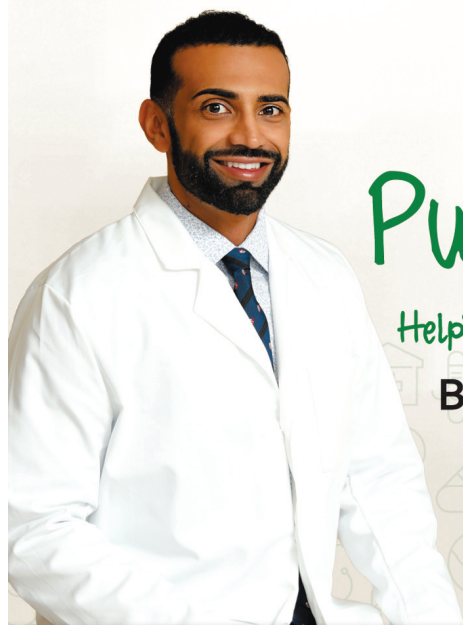
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# What's Happening


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


 Russellville Middle School will hold registration for the 2019-20 school year according to the following schedule: Eighth grade - Wednesday, July 24 from 8-11 a.m.; Seventh grade - Wednesday, July 24 from 1-4 p.m.; Sixth grade - Thursday, July 25 from 8-11 a.m. Students must come during their designated time frame only.


 The Franklin County Arts Council is sponsoring the 19th annual "Evening at the Roxy" during the week of the W.C. Handy Music Festival. Entertainment will be presented by local talent featured as "The Great Pretenders" this Thursday, July 25 at 7 p.m. The prelude to the show will feature the group "Still Here," which consists of Larry Freeman, Byrant Bonds, William Nelson, Eric Goodloe, William Buchanan, Ryan Freeman, George West and Rev. William Freeman. The main show starts at 7 p.m. The following are just some of the entertainers scheduled to perform—Meletha Walker, Hudson Copeland, Gary Cummings, Sydney Medley, Avery Guinn, Jayne Wells, Angela Townsel, Jeff Allen, Danyelle Hillman, Alissa Young, Angela Cummings, Konner Bendall, John Pilati, Jacob Green, Mattie Grace Oliver, P.J. Winston, Will Brown, Buford Parker, Dana Hill, Debra Williamson, Leah Nix, Cassidy Willis and others. Katerina Cole-Coffey will serve as emcee. All proceeds go to the Historic Roxy Theatre. Tickets cost \$5 and will be sold at the door. Children under six get in free.


 DivorceCare, a special help seminar and support group for people experiencing divorce and separation, will be held on Sunday evenings at First Baptist Church Colbert Heights beginning Sunday, July 28 at 5 p.m. DivorceCare features nationally recognized experts on divorce and recovery topics. Seminar sessions include "Facing My Anger," "Facing My Loneliness," "New Relationships," "KidCare" and "Forgiveness." Meetings will be held at 6000 Woodmont Drive, Tuscumbia, AL. For more information, call First Colbert Heights at 256-383-8016.


 Joyce Smith and John Smith, the mother and son who inspired the major motion picture *Breakthrough*, will be at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville to share their amazing story this Sunday, July 28 at 10:30 a.m. Invite family and friends! The church is located at 16241 Hwy. 43, Russellville, AL 35653. Also, Calvary Baptist Church will host Vacation Bible School July 28-August 1 from 6-8:30 p.m. each night. The theme for this year's VBS is "The Incredible Race," and Family Night will be held Thursday, August 1 at 6 p.m.


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

 The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833, will meet Thursday, August 1 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue in Russellville. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more information, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!

 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 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, 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).

 This year's Phil Campbell High School Alumni Day will be held Sunday, August 4 in the PCHS lunchroom. Doors will open at noon (immediately after church services), and program will follow shortly after lunch. Each plate lunch is \$10. Each alumnus is asked to bring a dessert to accompany the meal. All PCHS alumni from years past and present, including the Class of 2019, are invited and urged to attend. All PCHS faculty, administration, support personnel, coaches and sponsors (both present and from years past) are also invited. Donations will be accepted the day of the luncheon to cover the costs of this and future reunions. Due to the generous donations of alumni, we have been able to award two (2) \$1,000 scholarships to a PCHS senior boy and girl for the past two years. This cash scholarship is for a senior boy or girl who plans on attending Northwest-Shoals Community College. Your support and donations are welcome in an effort to continue this new endeavor. Feel free to bring your yearbooks and old photos from the past for others to view. For more information, please contact Lynn Landers, PCHS Alumni, at 256-810-4572. We look forward to seeing you there!

 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 August 6. All members and friends are urged to attend.

 American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, August 8 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner served at 6:30 p.m.

# What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

**T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Bryan Muse at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, August 10 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.

**T**he Believers will be in concert at The Church of God on Hwy. 5 South in Phil Campbell on Sunday, August 11 at 5 p.m. Fellowship supper after the singing. For more information, call 256-324-5288.

**F**irst Baptist Church Russellville will host its 152nd Homecoming on Sunday, August 11. Worship service will be at 10:30 a.m., with message from previous interim pastor Bro. Danny Knight, Guin. Music by Denise Davis Arnold, singer/songwriter from Nashville. Covered dish luncheon immediately following worship service in Fellowship Building. Our interim pastor is Dr. Gene Balding. Minister of music/senior adults is Bert Fowler. Children's ministry coordinator is Jennifer Willis, and interim student pastor is Bro. Kyler Childers. Church is located at 213 Jackson Ave. North in downtown Russellville.

**T**he Franklin County Arts & Humanities Council will hold auditions for "The Roxy's Christmas Spectacular" at the Roxy Theater on Sunday, August 11 starting at 1:30 p.m. for children (ages 6-12); 3:30 p.m. for females (ages 13 and up); and 5:30 p.m. for males (ages 13 and up). There will also be a makeup day for auditions on Monday, August 12 starting at 5:30 p.m. Doors open 30 minutes prior to audition time.

**R**ussellville Masonic Lodge #371, located at 416 Coffee Avenue, will be selling fish plates during the Franklin County Watermelon Festival on Friday, August 16 from 5-7 p.m. and Saturday, August 17 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Eat in air conditioned comfort or take out! Plates cost \$12 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970.

**R**ussellville Masonic Lodge #371 will be selling Boston butts during Watermelon Festival weekend. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, August 17 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.

**T**he book *Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud and the Last Trial of Harper Lee* will be discussed at the August 21 10 a.m. meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 101 West Sixth Street, Tuscumbia. For more info, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

# Purpose



## 8th Anniversary

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### 'FUND,' from page 1

Hamilton said. "They deserve a lot of the credit for this."

Last year, the board approved a three-pronged plan to build the emergency fund with concentration in three areas: Personnel, transportation and a more generalized third category of 'other.'

Franklin County Schools received a large settlement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) last year as a settlement from tornado damage dating back to April 27, 2011, and that obviously helped build the fund significantly.

But Hamilton explains there were other areas that were important contributors as well.

"We got our foundation numbers down, and that's money that comes out of our local funds," he said. "The foundation program was about 12 when I got into office, with some of that due to influx of students, which was something that couldn't be helped. But we're now under five units, and that creates a big savings.

"Each unit is approximately \$80,000-\$100,000." The board approved an additional \$1.2 million

into its current fiscal year budget earlier this summer after it received additional revenue from a combination of grant funding and Education Trust Fund monies related to damage incurred with the science lab/band hall at Vina High School.

Hamilton said having the fund in place is not only a legal requirement but also a stress reliever for school officials.

"You never know when you'll face some emergency," Hamilton said, "and not being able to take care of it financially is not a good feeling."

### 'CONTROL,' from page 1

education Heath Grimes attended a council meeting earlier this year and requested additional funding from the city on top of the \$1 million allocated to the school system each year by the city.

Out of that million dollars, though, the school system pays back to the city approximately \$660,000 annually on a bond issue debt that dates back to the construction of Russellville Elementary School in 2000. School officials say they are trying to work toward restoring funding levels from the city that were previously allocated to the system. Those amounts were more than the current annual amount.

**Grimes said the school system will now work on plans for the first phase of its capital improvement project. Construction of a new career tech center and renovation of the current facility is expected to cost between \$7 million and \$9 million, Grimes said.**

**"We hope to continue to expand our career technology program. We are at maximum capacity, so we just need more space," Grimes said. "We have no classroom space available at any Russellville City School."**

At Monday's meeting, held before a large crowd at Russellville City Hall, the council also agreed to refinance the school system's bond issue debt in an attempt to reduce the interest rate and to allow the school to borrow additional funds toward its capital improvement projects. Because Russellville City Schools is a municipal school system, bond issues must be approved by the

city council.

The reduction in interest, expected to exceed \$400,000, will allow Russellville City Schools to reduce the annual payment on the bond issue debt and, as a result, to borrow additional funds to construct a new career technical center.

Grimes said the school system will now work on plans for the first phase of its capital improvement project.

"Once the cost and plan are approved, we will look to start construction no earlier than January of next year, and it may be closer to fall of 2020," Grimes said.

Construction of a new career tech center and renovation of the current facility is expected to cost between \$7 million and \$9 million, Grimes said.

"We hope to continue to expand our career technology program. We are at maximum capacity, so we just need more space," Grimes said. "We have no classroom space available at any Russellville City School."

The council laid off all Parks and Recreation employees based on the department transitioning to the control of Russellville City Schools. Other than interim Parks and Recreation director Leamon Mosley, the employees' last day will be August 5, 2019. Grimes said all existing employees will be invited to apply for employment with Russellville City Schools. Grimes was to meet with all Parks and Recreation employees Tuesday morning to discuss their reemployment options.

See 'CONTROL,' page 9



# 'CONTROL,' from page 8

There are seven full-time and 38 part-time employees currently employed in the Parks and Recreation Department.

According to city and school officials, monies saved by Russellville City Schools' operation of the department could be added to the city's annual school financial allocation to help bring that figure closer to previous funding levels.

"The Parks and Recreation Department is a vital part of our city, and because of that, we want to see it flourish and be a great resource for our citizens," said Russellville mayor David Grissom. "We have done our research to see how we could improve our Parks and Rec Department and make it more efficient and effective.

"With what the school system can offer us, we fully believe allowing the school system to manage the day-to-day operations will be the best way to have our Parks and Rec operating at its fullest potential."

According to city attorney Danny McDowell, the agreement provides that the City of Russellville will pay the amount of its current Parks and Recreation Department budget, less utilities, land line telephone costs and insurance, to Russellville City Schools annually for five years. In turn, if the school system runs the department for less than that allotment, the school system retains those unspent funds. If the cost of operating the department exceeds the allotment, the school system will be financially responsible for the difference.

The City of Russellville will also remain responsible for 'major maintenance' on Parks and Recreation facilities. The contract provides that the city shall *keep and maintain the roof over the facilities, the structural portions of the facilities and the HVAC serving the facilities in good repair, provided that Board shall give city prior notice of the necessity of such repairs... Agreement Paragraph 10.*

McDowell said the programs and services offered by the Parks and Recreation Department will not change under the management of Russellville City Schools.

"Ownership of the properties remain with the City of Russellville," McDowell said. "The agreement provides that the schools will provide the services of the Parks and Recreation Department to the general public. Nothing changes in that regard except hopefully for the better."

Grimes said he believes having the resources available of school coaches and student-athletes will help the Parks and Recreation Department grow.

"We will use the budget the city has for this department to offer additional supplements to our existing staff and coaches for their time in helping with the execution and management of these different sports," Grimes said. "I fully believe our coaches can get these kids excited, increase participation, and make the Parks and Recreation Department even better."

The Parks and Recreation Department is in charge of day-to-day operation and maintenance of the Chucky Mullins Center, the Ralph Bishop Community Center, the Russellville Tennis Complex, the Russellville Swimming Pool Complex, the Russellville Canteen, maintenance and grounds keeping of the A.W. Todd Centre, two pavilions at Sloss Lake, a pavilion and restroom at City Lake Park and all softball, baseball and soccer fields.

Grimes said the school system will introduce a course in its Career Technical Education Department in turf, grass and field management. Students in that program will have the opportunity to help maintain Parks and Recreation fields.

"This is a field that is becoming very popular, and we will be able to offer hands-on opportunities in this field for training that will help our students wishing to pursue a career in turf, grass and field management the chance to hone employable skills before they even finish high school," Grimes said.

Grimes reiterated that the department will continue to offer its current services to the public, along with some improvements. Language in the agreement guarantees this. *The Board shall continue to provide the recreational and educational services currently provided by the City within or on the facilities. Agreement Paragraph 4.*

"The Parks and Rec Department provides an important service to our city's citizens," Grimes said. "All we are planning to do is restore this department and make it even better by providing more resources (in the form of coaches and program organizers), more maintenance and more programs for all of

the city's residents."

Grimes also stressed that even though RCS coaches and employees would be handling Parks and Recreation duties, that the facilities belong to the community and all citizens will continue to have access.

**Grimes said he believes having the resources available of school coaches and student-athletes will help the Parks and Recreation Department grow.**

**"We will use the budget the city has for this department to offer additional supplements to our existing staff and coaches for their time in helping with the execution and management of these different sports," Grimes said. "I fully believe our coaches can get these kids excited, increase participation, and make the Parks and Recreation Department even better."**

"Just because Russellville City Schools uses our people to work on the facilities, that doesn't mean the Parks and Recreation Department isn't for everyone in the community," Grimes said. "And just because someone gets in trouble in the school system doesn't mean they can't come onto Parks and Recreation property. These facilities are for all kids from all schools."

As for the annual July 4th Jam on Sloss Lake, the school system will prepare Sloss Lake for the event each year, pursuant to the agreement.

Mosley has served as interim Parks and Recreation Department director since 2018. The director's job was posted, and 24 applications were received, but city officials has not hired a permanent director since former director Chad Sears was terminated last April.

The resolution approved by the council provides that Mosley shall be retained for 45 days after August 6, 2019, in order to assist the city and school system in the transition of duties.

The resolution contained language praising the job done by Parks and Recreation employees.

*The City Council expresses its appreciation to the employees affected by the reduction in force, commends their service to the city, and encourages them to apply for continued employment in their position with the Board of Education, and encourages the Board to consider their application for employment by the Board. Resolution Page 3.*

# PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Alabama Abandoned Motor Vehicle Act, Alabama Code Sections 32-13-1 through 32-13-8, the following motor vehicle will be sold for cash at 9:30 a.m. on August 31, 2019 at Freddie Mills Body Shop, 315 Linden St., Russellville, AL 35654. Seller reserves the right to reject any bid and the right to bid.

2017 Mitsubishi Mirage,  
Tag 33BL721  
ML32A3HJ6HH000752



**Letters to the Editor**

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

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at [franklinfreepress.net](http://franklinfreepress.net)!



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Two-family yard sale this Saturday, July 27 from 7 am-2 pm at 23737 Hwy. 24, Russellville, next to the old Gasmart West Chevron. Clothes, couch, table & chairs, small furniture, tools,

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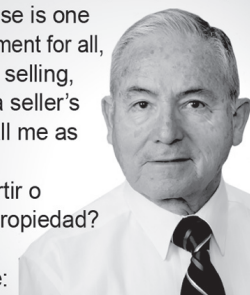
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# Local students earn Dean's list honors at Samford University

Submitted to the FFP

BIRMINGHAM, AL (07/18/2019) — Samford University recognizes 1,519 students named to the 2019 spring semester Dean's List.

To qualify for the dean's list, a student must have earned a minimum 3.5 grade point average out of a possible 4.0 while attempting at least 12 credit hours of coursework. Dean's List is the highest academic recognition given by the school at the end of each semester.

Among those students are Morgan Pierce of Spruce Pine and Katherine Hovater of Russellville.

**ABOUT SAMFORD UNIVERSITY**-Samford University is a premier nationally ranked Christian university. Founded in 1841, Samford is the 87th-oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. Samford enrolls 5,619 students from 44 states and 30 countries in its 10 academic units: Arts, arts and sciences, business, divinity, education, health professions, law, nursing, pharmacy and public health. Samford also fields 17 NCAA Division I teams that compete in the tradition-rich Southern Conference. samford.edu

Letters to the editor may be sent to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

# All in the family



Tony, Charlie, Robert & Al Chard

### COURTESY PHOTO

Charlie Chard, second from left, became a Master Mason of Russellville Masonic Lodge #371 at the lodge's July 18 meeting. Charlie becomes the fourth member of his family, and the third generation, to become a Master Mason, joining his father, grandpa and uncle. Pictured above, from left, are Tony (father), Charlie, Robert (grandfather) and Al Chard (uncle).

# Grand Opening



### COURTESY PHOTO

State Farm agent Rhett Bradford hosted a Grand Opening event Saturday, July 13, complete with food, music and games and activities for children. Bradford had a ribbon cutting for his office at 201 North Washington Avenue in Russellville during the event. Bradford took over the agency from long-time State Farm agent Lanny Norris earlier this year.



**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.  
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## Looking back at SEC Media Days

SEC Media Days wrapped up in Hoover last week, and the writers and broadcasters who cover the conference casts their votes on how each division would shake out. Here's a look at their predictions—plus a few of our own. We'll start this week with the SEC East.



Mike Self  
Sports Editor

**Georgia**  
**SEC Media Pick: First in East**  
**The Skinny:** The division in general—and Florida in particular—is getting better, but Georgia still rules the roost. After going 3-3 versus the East in Kirby Smart's first season (2016), the Bulldogs are 12-0 in divisional play the past two years with an average margin of victory of 25 points. The gap may be shrinking, but it's still a sizeable one.

Georgia received 233 of a possible 260 votes from the media to win a third straight East title. The Bulldogs boast 11 pre-season All-SEC selections (easily the most in the division), including seven on offense. There are legitimate questions about who's going to catch the football, but no team in the country has a stronger combination of quarterback (battle-tested Jake Fromm), running back (1,000-yard rusher D'Andre Swift) and O-line (four pre-season All-SEC picks, led by left tackle Andrew Thomas).

Georgia has four tough conference games in November, starting with the all-important showdown with Florida in Jacksonville. It's a brutal stretch, but nothing that should keep the Bulldogs from reaching Atlanta for a third straight season.

**FFP Pick: First in East**  
**Florida**  
**SEC Media Pick: Second in East**  
**The Skinny:** With four straight wins to close out Dan Mullen's first season in 2018, the Gators have as much momentum right now as any program in the league—not to mention more talent and depth at the skill positions than they've had since the Tim Tebow days.

There are key questions, though. Can quarterback Feleipe Franks take another step forward after a breakthrough first season in Mullen's offense? Has Florida recruited well enough to replace four O-linemen who combined for 141 career starts? Can the Gators rediscover the magic of The Swamp, where they lost home games last season to Kentucky and Missouri?

Answer these questions in the affirmative, and Florida should be in a position to challenge Georgia for the divisional crown when the two teams meet on November 2.

**FFP Pick: Second in East**  
**Missouri**  
**SEC Media Pick: Third in East**  
**The Skinny:** Clemson transfer Kelly Bryant should soften the blow of losing Drew Lock, and there are pre-season All-SEC picks at running

See 'SEC,' Page 18

# Belgreen bound



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

After ten seasons at Tharptown, Tverberg (far left) is headed to Belgreen to replace Smith (far right), who is now the head coach at Florence.

## Tharptown's Tverberg hired to coach softball, volleyball for Lady Bulldogs

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Almost immediately after informing her softball players at Tharptown that she was leaving to take over the program at county rival Belgreen, Susie Tverberg received well wishes—but also a friendly word of warning—from Brooke Daily and Shaylee Wieting, both of whom are rising seniors at THS.

"They were happy for me, but they also said, 'Just wait 'til we play you. We're gonna beat you.' I was actually glad to hear them say that," said Tverberg, who guided the Lady Wildcats to seven regional appearances and one trip to the state tournament in her ten seasons (2005-13 and 2019) as head coach. "I thought one of the things we lacked at the start of last year was that kind of

competitive spirit, that attitude of 'I want to beat everybody we play.' They were almost complacent with just doing okay. I tried to instill in them that it's not fun to lose, that you want to beat everybody you play.

"So they told me, 'We're happy for you, and we understand, but we want to beat you.' And I love that. That's exactly what I wanted was for them to develop that desire to win—even if it's against me. Of course, I'm so competitive, I told them, 'I want to beat y'all, too.' It was light-hearted, though. There were a lot of emotions, and a lot of tears were shed. It was just a decision I felt like I had to make."

It wasn't, however, a decision she was *looking* to make when the summer began. But, after John Smith left his post as Belgreen's head coach to

See 'BELGREEN,' Page 16

# New Belgreen boys coach brings passion for hoops, impressive resume from college level

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

It only took one semester as a baseball player and student at the University of Rio Grande in southern Ohio for Marty Cooper to decide that college was not for him.

It only took one conversation with his former high school guidance counselor to change his mind. "I grew up in Ohio, in a small community where most people didn't go to college," said Cooper, who was hired last week as the new boys basketball coach at Belgreen High School. "No one in my family ever went to college. My parents got out of high school, got married and got jobs. I was a better baseball player than I was a basketball player. I started as a high school basketball player, but I wasn't good enough to play in college.

"I had a chance to be a pitcher at an NAIA school [Rio Grande]. I never did like school. I didn't really like baseball, either. I just happened to be good at it. I went one semester, and then I said, 'I don't like baseball or school. I'll just quit and get a job.'"

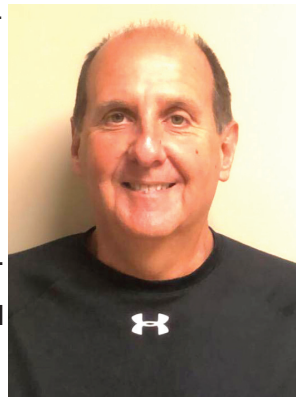
And so he did. Cooper left school and went to work in a factory, coaching a youth league basketball team in his spare time. One of his players happened to be the son of Tom Perry, Cooper's former guidance counselor at Jackson High School.

Though no longer a student, Cooper was still in need of guidance. One day, Perry pulled him aside and offered him some.

"He told me, 'Cooper, you gotta go back to college and get your degree. You're good at this,'" Cooper recalled. "I said, 'I don't like school.' And he said, 'Nobody likes school. Just go get the piece of paper so you can coach.'"

And so he did. Cooper went back to college, attending night classes and eventually earning a degree. He landed his first coaching job (other than the youth league gig) at Talawanda High School in Oxford, Ohio, where he coached the freshman team (to a 19-1 record, incidentally) and also served as a varsity assistant.

Cooper next served as a graduate assistant from 1986-88 at Miami University of Ohio, where the young man who just a few years earlier had quit college after one semester because he didn't like school earned his Masters degree. After serving



Marty Cooper

as an assistant coach at Division II Armstrong State (now Armstrong Atlantic) in Savannah, Georgia from 1988-90, Cooper returned to Miami of Ohio as an assistant coach in 1990-91.

From there he went to East Central Community College in Decatur, Mississippi, where he coached from 1991-98 and won three league championships and a state championship in 1993—the school's only men's state title in basketball since 1953. Cooper left East Central to take over the program at Itawamba Community College in Fulton, Mississippi, where from 1998-2012 he led the Indians to four league titles and three trips (in 2002, 2007 and 2008) to the National Tournament in Hutchinson, Kansas. [His 2007-08 ICC team won league, state and region championships on its way to finishing 30-4 and No. 5 in the country.]

A highly decorated 28-year coaching career—with his wife, Jennifer, a former basketball player at Miami of Ohio, beside him on the bench as his assistant for all 21 of his seasons as a JUCO head coach—is quite a journey from coaching fifth-graders in youth league in southern Ohio, and it all started because Cooper took the advice of his former guidance counselor and went back to school to earn his degree.

"It changed my life," Cooper said. "I went from working in a factory and being miserable everyday to getting into coaching, which I loved. It was like not even having a job for 28 years.

"I can kind of relate to a lot of the kids Jennifer and I have coached. Most of the kids you deal with in the community college system are from families who didn't go to college. We're really competitive, and we want to win every game, but the real joy comes in seeing a person who doesn't like school and helping them understand the importance of it. Seeing them go to college, get a degree, get a job and make a better life for themselves—that's the real joy in coaching, just trying to help people and relay my story to them and show them what college can do for them."

So how did a coach with Cooper's resume at the college level in Mississippi wind up taking a job at a small 1A school in Franklin County? His journey to Belgreen actually began with the end of his coaching career at Itawamba, which came back in 2012 when he and Jennifer decided to step away from the game and devote more time and energy to their daughter, McKenzie, who was 12 at the time. [She is now 19 and a sophomore at ICC.]

"At the community college level, you're recruiting, of course, in addition to playing games, so except for Wednesday nights and Sundays you're on the road all the time," Cooper said. "We were dragging her everywhere, and when she was seven or eight years old she loved it. But when you get junior-high age, you don't want to hang out with mom and dad as much. My wife and I both taught, and around the time McKenzie was 11 or 12 we decided to give the basketball up and spend time with her. We've done that for the past several years.

"We missed the competition, coaching the kids, practice, all that stuff, but it was really great for our family. The last seven years have been a blessing, not having to miss anything that McKenzie has been doing."

Jennifer was a full-time instructor at ICC in the Science Department, and Marty started a College



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# 'PASSION,' from page 14

Life Class at the school in 2012—a required course for all first-semester freshmen. He became Director of Recruiting for ICC in 2016 and retired from that position in May of this year.

During their time away from coaching, the Coopers stayed connected to the game of basketball by putting on Christian-based camps at local schools.

"I knew a lot of the coaches at a lot of the area schools," Marty said, "and we would go in during the summer or maybe over Christmas break and put on a fundamentals camp. We would also talk a little bit about Scripture and how you should be living and things like that, along with the fundamentals of the game."

Among the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of kids who attended the Cooper's camps was Brian Pearson, who played at Amory High School in Amory, MS, and is now the head coach there. When Tommy Chism stepped down as the head coach at Sulligent High School in Marion County prior to last season to go into administration, Pearson urged Chism to reach out to Cooper about the basketball job.

Cooper missed coaching and was anxious to get back into it, but the timing wasn't quite right.

"Tommy had quit coaching and gone into being the principal, and he called me about the job at Sulligent, but I wasn't ready," Cooper said. "I wanted to get one more year in the Mississippi system before I retired."

So Cooper stayed put at ICC for another year. When the Belgreen job opened up, Chism called Franklin County Schools superintendent Greg Hamilton and gave him the same advice he had received from Pearson a year prior—talk to Cooper.

"It's a small world, you know? It's amazing how God works," Cooper said of the opportunities he explored early this summer after stepping down from his post at ICC. "I talked to some colleges and some high schools and academies in Mississippi. Some of them didn't want me, and some of them I didn't want. I was not in a hurry to get a job. Mr. Hamilton called and came over to check us out. We had talked to six or seven different schools, but when we came to Belgreen, I knew in my heart that this was where I wanted to be. This was what we wanted to do."

Basketball has a special place in the heart for both Cooper and his wife, and they sensed an immediate kinship with folks in hoops-crazy Belgreen.

"We're just getting started, but Mr. [Derek] Ergle, the principal, and Mr. Hamilton, the superintendent, have been awesome," Cooper said. "They really sold Belgreen to me. I just think it's a little gem here in the middle of nowhere. The people here have a great passion for basketball. It's the kind of community my wife and I are looking for—really good people, hard-working people who have a passion for the school and certainly have a passion about basketball. As a basketball coach, you couldn't ask for more."

"We're really excited about the opportunity at Belgreen. Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Ergle are so impressive! They both really sold us on the school, the community and the passion for basketball. Everyone we have met has really been supportive and has nothing but positive things to say about the potential with the current players."

Cooper has only just begun familiarizing himself with those players, but the Bulldogs appear well positioned to continue a recent run of success that saw them go 65-27 and make two trips to the Northwest Regional in three seasons under former head coach Clint Isbell. Long-time program pillars and 1,000-point career scorers Mason Bragwell and Brant Bragwell graduated in May, but rising junior guard Scout Bragwell returns after a breakout sophomore season in which he averaged 13.0 points per game while knocking down 66 threes and shooting 51 percent from the floor, 81 percent from the foul line and a stellar 48 percent from beyond the arc.

Forward Isac Willingham, another rising junior, is also back after averaging 5.6 points per game on 51 percent shooting last season. He and Bragwell will be joined by sophomore guards Will and Collin Bonner, who transferred from Russellville and—according to what Cooper has been told by the Belgreen administration—will be eligible to play for the Bulldogs this season.

As a freshman at RHS last season, Will Bonner started for the Golden Tigers at point guard and helped them improve their win total from seven the previous year to 20. He averaged 11.3 points, 5.9 assists and 4.7 rebounds per game while also leading the team in steals. Collin Bonner also made an immediate impact in his first varsity season, averaging 3.7 points per game as Russellville's first guard off the bench.

It's a personnel group that should mesh well with the style of play Cooper prefers.

"In the Mississippi junior college system, we were basically known as a tenacious man-to-man defensive team, and we ran motion offense most of the time," Cooper said. "In my younger days, I was really stubborn, and we were 100 percent man and 100 percent motion. You get older, you get a little wiser, and you learn to adapt to your talent. There were times we needed to use zone or run set plays, and we made those adjustments."

"I need to find out what this team is gonna be good at. We'd love to play

man-to-man, and we'd love to play motion offense, but you have to play to the strengths of the team you have—especially in high school, because you can't go out and recruit what you want. You have to adjust to your talent and to the players you have and do what you can to make them successful. Once we see what we have, that's what we'll do here."

The last time Cooper coached at the high school level was 33 years ago, when he had the good fortune of building his freshman team at Talawanda (OH) High around a 6'7 post player named Mike Peirson—the son of Jerry Peirson, who was the head coach then at Miami of Ohio. They played 20 games that season and lost only one.

**"We want to build a program that the school and community can be proud of on and off the court,"** Cooper said. **"We want our players to be successful as people, as students and as players. I am a man of faith, and we feel blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of the Belgreen school and community."**

"We went on the road to play a pretty good team," Cooper said. "I don't remember what happened, but we lost to them. We had beaten them at home, but we lost to them on the road. So we weren't perfect."

Cooper credits much of his success in coaching and in life to the coach he played for at Jackson High (located about 80 miles south of Columbus near the West Virginia/Kentucky borders), a man named Al Burger.

"I was really blessed to have a great high school coach," Cooper said. "He's retired now and lives in Florida. He's 84 years old. He's been a really great mentor for me throughout my whole life. He has a great basketball mind. He had some opportunities to move up along the way. He was offered a job by John Wooden at UCLA. But he had two daughters about McKenzie's age, and he didn't want to move."

"He taught me so much. He mentored me from the time I was at Miami, and he would come see us at Savannah and in Mississippi. When I got into coaching at Miami, I was so far ahead knowledge-wise because of him."

Cooper (along with his wife, who was approved by the board last week as a volunteer assistant coach) will now put all that knowledge to use at Belgreen, where basketball is king and the possibilities are exciting—both on and off the court.

"Predicting wins and all that kind of stuff...it's kind of hard to do at this point," Cooper said last week. "Something we've always used wherever we went was, we're gonna try and make them better as people, as students and as basketball players. We really believe that if you have good people who are doing what they're supposed to do in school, the basketball will work out."

**"We want to build a program that the school and community can be proud of on and off the court. We want our players to be successful as people, as students and as players. I am a man of faith, and we feel blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of the Belgreen school and community. We can't wait to get started!"**

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## 'BELGREEN,' from page 13

take the same position at Florence High School, an opportunity presented itself that Tverberg—who recently earned her Masters in Early Childhood Education—ultimately couldn't pass up. And it had far more to do with her new classroom role—plus the opportunity to add volleyball to her coaching duties—than it did with changing softball programs.

"This wasn't something I pursued. It wasn't something I went out to chase. It just kind of happened," said Tverberg, whose duties at Belgreen will include teaching a dual enrollment class for Northwest-Shoals Community College, a Career Prep class for freshmen and sophomores, and four classes of Physical Education. "Like I told my girls, this was not something I went after. I wasn't looking to leave. It just kind of presented itself. Other things fell into place, like being an adjunct at Northwest-Shoals. All of these things had to happen before I would take that position, and they did. That's why I feel like it was God's will for me to be here. There was something stronger than me going on. It was bigger than me, I felt like.

"It was heartbreaking to leave. It was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make. The job that came along with the coaching part of it was the kicker. It was an opportunity I just couldn't pass on."

But that didn't make breaking the news to her Tharptown players—particularly rising seniors like Daily, Wieting and pitcher Olivia Ergle—any easier. Tverberg made the announcement that she was Belgreen bound at a team meeting on Thursday, July 11.

"Rumors were going around, and it meant something to me that I be the one to tell the girls first," Tverberg said. "I didn't want them to hear it anywhere else. They were heartbroken, and I was heartbroken. We had set some long-term goals about what we wanted to do and where we wanted to take the program, and it was hard to walk away from all that.

"You just don't know. The relationships with those players...I get emotional talking about it. You want to see these kids get better and have the opportunity to play at the college level if that's what they want to do. You build that trust with them, because they're trusting you to help them get to that level. To walk away from that, it's hard. It's very hard. I had to pray a lot about it. I really believe the decision I was making was bigger than me. It was bigger than softball. It was a career move that I couldn't walk away from."

Wieting, a speedy shortstop who earned second-team All-State honors in Class 2A from the ASWA as a junior, has already received scholarship offers from Coastal Alabama and Central Alabama. Ergle (who also earned second-team All-State honors as a junior last season) and Daily (a two-time All-County selection by the Free Press) are likewise receiving their share of interest from the college level.

Tverberg intends to see to it that her former players take full advantage of those opportunities. It's a responsibility she takes very seriously—and one she made abundantly clear to Belgreen principal Derek Ergle during the course of the interview process.

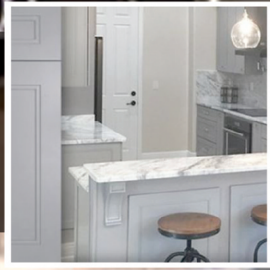
"I told Mr. Ergle that I promised these three seniors that if they wanted to play at the next level, I would do everything I could to help them," Tverberg said. "If they get invited to a tryout or to tour a school, I wanted to be able to take them—even if I was at Belgreen. And he was very understanding about that. He said, 'If you promised those girls that, then that would be right. That would be doing right by them. I know you don't want to go back on your word.'

"So I'll continue to send stats and send video clips and do whatever else I can to help those girls have that opportunity."

It's an opportunity that no fewer than eight of Tverberg's former players—

See 'BELGREEN,' page 17

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## 'BELGREEN', from page 16

Hollie Hines, Jessica Myrick, Heather Hatton, Braeden Sellers (Tverberg's daughter), Savannah Hamilton, Haley Malone, Shelby Palmer and Autumn Sutter—earned after playing at Tharptown. And it's also an opportunity that several of her new players at Belgreen could earn in the next year or two.

First, though, those players will be trying to lead the Lady Bulldogs to a third consecutive state tournament appearance—under a third different head coach. [Chris Scott led the Lady 'Dogs to Montgomery in 2018, and Smith took them back this past May.] Smith and assistant Tommy Bruton are now at Florence, but Tverberg said the other assistant coaches (Dustin Welch, Stewart Blackburn and Rodney Borden) have all expressed a desire to return. Former Red Bay standout Carlee Berry is also joining the staff.

**"This wasn't something I pursued. It wasn't something I went out to chase. It just kind of happened,"** said Tverberg, whose duties at Belgreen will include teaching a dual enrollment class for Northwest-Shoals Community College, a Career Prep class for freshmen and sophomores, and four classes of Physical Education. **"Like I told my girls, this was not something I went after. I wasn't looking to leave. It just kind of presented itself. Other things fell into place, like being an adjunct at Northwest-Shoals. All of these things had to happen before I would take that position, and they did. That's why I feel like it was God's will for me to be here. There was something stronger than me going on. It was bigger than me, I felt like."**

"I am so blessed to walk into a situation like that, with such a solid foundation in place," Tverberg said. "I know the instruction they've been getting was correct, and I just want to take that and build on it and hopefully take them further. They've had a great coaching staff. John and Tommy left, of course, but they still have the core of their coaching staff and all the other assistants in place. I spoke with them, and they all said they want to stay on and help. I look forward to that. Everybody seems very excited. I've already shared some of my ideas with them, and they were very accepting.

"All the people at Belgreen have been very, very nice and accepting of me. I'm ready to get started."

Tverberg, who guided Tharptown to the state tournament in 2012, realizes that nothing less than a third straight trip to Montgomery will satisfy the Lady Bulldogs, who could return as many as eight key contributors from last season's 30-win team.

"Talk about pressure," Tverberg said with a laugh. "But that comes with the job. Their expectations are high, and my expectations are high just based on what I've seen from the outside looking in and what they've done in the past. I've got some big shoes to fill. But I really think that with the coaches in place their already and with what I can hopefully bring to the table, we'll have a good chance to make it deep into postseason play again.

"I'm not gonna lie—I'd be perfectly happy with a state championship. That's the goal. They have the talent there to pull it off, and their eyes are set on that goal. They've been [to state] twice in a row. They've had a taste of it, and they want more. I think they're at that point where they're willing to put in the work and the effort it takes to get it done.

"You can't get better just practicing with school ball. You've gotta do stuff on your own, and a lot of them play travel ball to get better. Belgreen has a lot of community pride. They love their athletics, and they support it. They want a state championship for their high school team. It's nice to have travel ball stuff, but they want their school to be represented well, and I love that."

Tharptown and Belgreen played each other seven times this past season, so Tverberg is very familiar with the strengths, style and personnel of the program she's taking over.

"I like their aggressiveness in the box," she said. "They get in there, and they're not scared to swing the bat. Defensively, they're very sound. Sydney Borden, their shortstop, is very, very solid. She didn't seem to have a lot of mistakes or make too many errors against us. Overall, they're just very sound. I like their style of base running. It's a lot like I do—very aggressive on the bases. You have to catch the defense off guard and make them think you're gonna steal every time you get on base. They had that style of play, and I like it.

"Those girls seem to know the game, and that comes from the coaching they've had in the past. They obviously have a strong foundation."

That foundation starts in the circle, where rising junior Emma Dempsey earned first-team All-State honors in Class 1A from the ASWA this past season after ranking among state leaders with 20 wins, 176.1 innings pitched, 219 strikeouts, 24 complete games and 10 shutouts.

"Wow. To be able to coach Olivia this year and Emma next year...they're two of the best pitchers in this area," Tverberg said. "They can be dominant when they're on their game. I love Emma's style of play on the mound. She's always cool and calm and collected. It never looks like she loses focus. She never looks frazzled. She's so well composed out there.

"I said it several times throughout the year to people who would ask me. We played Lauderdale County, we played 6A and 7A schools the whole year in

preparation for the regional, and Emma—even at a 1A school—was one of the best pitchers we faced all year. She could have pitched with any of those teams. I hope she continues to get better. We'll work on situational pitching, and if she can add that to what she can already do, it will really take her to the next level."

Tverberg has never coached volleyball at any level, but she developed a keen appreciation for the sport while serving as an official for six years.

"I love volleyball. The opportunity to coach volleyball was a big part of this for me. I'm excited about it," she said. "When I started officiating, I absolutely fell in love with it. I look forward to volleyball season every year. When you have a match that's very intense—like, for example, Muscle Shoals and Jasper—it's so intense that by the time the game is over, your adrenaline is so high that you can hardly go to bed at night. That level of volleyball is so much fun.

"I'm taking all the crash courses I can get. I've talked to some of the coaches who I felt like have the best programs, so they can give me some tips. It's important to learn from the best, because what they do works."

Just as is the case with softball, Tverberg is taking over a volleyball program that has enjoyed consistent success at a high level. The Lady Bulldogs went to five super-regional tournaments and made two Sweet 16 appearances in seven years under former coach Teresa Whitten.

"They have been very well coached. They know the game," Tverberg said. "It was always fun to call their games, too, just to watch where they started and where they are now, and how much they've grown. There's a lot of talent on that team.

"I'm naturally competitive. I just don't like to lose. I'm hoping to bring that competitive spirit and help them get to the next level. They expect nothing less than to make the postseason, and I love that about them. I don't ever want anybody to be complacent."

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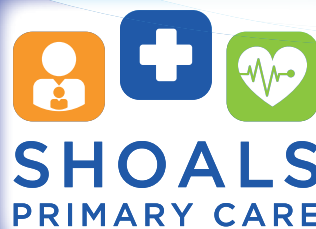
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*Catch of the day*



PHOTO BY DENNIS VICTORY/AL.COM

Former Russellville standout Devin Buckhalter makes an acrobatic catch for the North squad last Thursday during the AHSAA All-Star Football Game at Cramton Bowl in Montgomery.

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**'SEC,' from page 13**

back (1,200-yard rusher Larry Rountree III), at tight end (Albert Okuegbunam, who has 17 touchdown catches over the past two seasons) and on the O-line (guard Tre'Vour Wallace-Simms, a veteran of 26 straight starts).

The problem is on the other side of the ball, where Missouri failed to generate its trademark pass rush last season and consequently allowed more completions of 40-plus yards (19) than any other team in the SEC. Defense was a consistent problem for the Tigers, who went 8-2 when they scored 30-plus points and 0-3 when they didn't.

The schedule is soft, though, with a friendly crossover from the West (versus Ole Miss, at Arkansas) and winnable road games within the division at Vanderbilt and Kentucky. That should give Missouri a good chance to improve upon its 4-4 conference record from a year ago.

**FFP Pick: Third in East**

**South Carolina**

**SEC Media Pick: Fourth in East**

**The Skinny:** The Gamecocks have a problem—well, two, actually. For starters, they haven't run the ball well at all, finishing no higher than 12th in the league in rushing offense in three seasons under Will Muschamp. They played ten Power 5 opponents last year and only out-rushed two of them (Vanderbilt and UT), winning both of those games; they were just 2-6 when getting out-rushed by Power 5 foes.

Secondly, the defense slipped badly last year, giving up monster rushing totals to Georgia (271 yards), Missouri (286), Florida (367) and Clemson (351) while ranking 11th in the league in points allowed. An inability to fix these issues, combined with perhaps the toughest schedule in the entire conference, could make South Carolina an afterthought in the division race.

**FFP Pick: Fifth in East**

**Tennessee**

**SEC Media Pick: Fifth in East**

**The Skinny:** UT got hammered with regularity

last season, losing six games by 25 points or more and finishing with a losing record for the sixth time in the last 10 years. So why is there reason for optimism in Knoxville? Three reasons.

One: The schedule, which features only one road game before October 19 and looks very friendly after that trip to Tuscaloosa. Two: The hiring of coordinator Jim Chaney to fix an offense that finished last in the league in total yards a year ago but has some intriguing weapons at the skill positions. Three: The arrival of two five-star freshmen (tackles Wanya Morris and Darnell Wright) and the potential return to health of another former five-star recruit (Trey Smith), which could drastically improve an O-line that really struggled last year. [Not counting sacks, 33 percent of Tennessee's running plays resulted in no gain or a loss of yards, easily the highest percentage in the country.]

**FFP Pick: Fourth in East**

**Kentucky**

**SEC Media Pick: Sixth in East**

**The Skinny:** The 'Cats won 10 games last season despite fielding an offense that ranked bottom-three in the league in scoring, passing and total yards. That offense now must replace all-time leading rusher Benny Snell, holder of 14 school records. On the other side of the ball, a defense that was the driving force behind last year's breakthrough loses National Defensive POY Josh Allen and the entire secondary. Five of the top seven tacklers in 2018 were seniors.

We rated Kentucky's schedule the easiest in the division, but the departure of such top-shelf talent is going to take a heavy toll.

**FFP Pick: Last in East**

**Vanderbilt**

**SEC Media Pick: Last in East**

**The Skinny:** The schedule is rough, with early visits from Georgia and LSU and late trips to South Carolina, Florida and Tennessee. The offensive line must replace three players who started 35 games last year, and the defense must improve after allowing 6.14 yards per play last season—the team's worst figure in the last decade. But...

The 'Dores actually have some big-time talent at the skill positions. Tailback Ke'Shawn Vaughn averaged an SEC-best 7.9 yards per carry last season and lead the league with six runs of 60-plus yards. [Nobody else had more than two.] Receiver Kalijah Lipscomb led the SEC with 87 receptions and had nine touchdown catches—the most by a Vandy player since Earl Bennett also had nine in 2005. Tight end Jared Pinkney caught 50 passes for 774 yards and seven touchdowns. All three are second-team pre-season All-SEC picks.

If grad transfer Riley Neal (who threw for more than 7,000 yards and rushed for 1,363 more while starting 32 games at Ball State) can adequately replace Kyle Shurmur at quarterback, Vanderbilt should be competent enough on offense to avoid the basement.

**FFP Pick: Sixth in East**

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