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10.16.19

Mars Hill Preschool set to close Russellville campus

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Jessica Stidham went to pick up her daughter at Mars Hill Preschool last Thursday afternoon, she was shocked to receive a form letter from Mars Hill Bible School president Nathan Guy informing parents the Russellville Mars Hill preschool campus would be closing in December.

No phone call. No parents' meeting. Just a form letter handed to her with no prior notice.

"We got the letter when we picked up our kids from school on October 10," Stidham said. "President Guy See 'CLOSE,' Page 9



Mars Hill Preschool officials announced last week that the Russellville campus (above) would be closing this December. After hearing from several concerned parents, the Board of Directors voted to postpone the permanent closure of the facility to May 22, 2020.

PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Francisco will remain in custody of Department of Mental Health

Court denies request to release former capital murder defendant

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

In spite of the Alabama Department of Mental Health's request that he be released to a family member, a Russellville man charged with capital murder in 2010 will remain in the department's custody after a hearing last week.

Andres Pascual Francisco, 34, was found not guilty by reason of insanity in June of 2012 after the State of Alabama confessed a motion filed by the defendant's attorneys.

Franklin County district attorney Joey Rushing said the state agreed to the motion based on the defendant's

lengthy history of mental illness and violence.

At the October 9, 2019 hearing, a State of Alabama psychologist testified that Francisco had been restored to competency and was fit to be released back into the community.

According to Rushing, the psychologist said that because Francisco is in the United States illegally, he is not eligible for some of the Social Security government services that would have allowed him to be released into a less secure facility like a group home.

The psychologist asked the court to release Francisco unsupervised into a relative's care in Russellville.

"At that point," Rushing said, "the judge stopped the

See 'CUSTODY,' Page 3

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Paulette Vandiver Hudson, Leighton, age 73
Died Monday, October 7, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Hopewell Church Church of Christ Cemetery.

Vivian Inez Liles, Russellville, age 80
Died Saturday, October 12, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Shoals Memorial Gardens.

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City Council approves new pay scale

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved a new pay scale to reflect the recent across-the-board pay raises for full-time employees.

The council voted at its October 7 meeting to change the pay scale to incorporate the 3.14 percent pay raise that went into effect October 1, 2019.

The council also approved several personnel changes and other items, including:

- Declaring a truck and Ford Explorer as surplus property in the Russellville Fire Department and agreeing to sell the same on govdeals.com.

- Hiring Civil Group as the consultant to perform Construction, Engineering & Inspection (CE&I) for the upcoming improvements to Alabama 24 at the intersection of Lawrence Street and Walnut Gate Road. A traffic signal will be installed at the intersection, along with additional turn lanes.

- Accepting a letter of authorization from the Alabama Department of Transportation to advertise for bids on the above project.

- Accepting an award letter from the Department of Homeland Security for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of \$271,428.57. The City of Russellville will have a five percent match in the amount of \$13,571.43. The money will be used to purchase a new tanker truck.

- Approving the purchase of 12 mid-block light poles and fixtures for Franklin, Madison, Lawrence and Lauderdale streets.

- Hiring Brett Evans as a patrol officer for the Russellville Police Department.

- Accepting a letter of resignation from Richard Reynolds as a patrol officer with RPD.

- Declaring a vacancy for Dispatcher with RPD and approving the hiring of Kari Fitzpatrick as dispatcher.

- Appointing Eva Diaz to the Russellville Library Board.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council is set for Monday, October 21 with work session at 6 p.m. and meeting to follow.

Nine local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the nine Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of September 30-October 4 had scores that fell into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

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

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

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

All nine Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The high score was 100, received by Fourth Street Grill and Steakhouse,

607 4th Street, Red Bay.

Other inspection scores and violations of Franklin County businesses included:

- Backwoods Grill & Fish Camp, 2937 Hwy. 43, Phil Campbell, 86. (Raw hamburger meat sitting out at 58-64 degrees, shrimp and seafood at 51 degrees, chicken tenders at 48 degrees in reach-in cooler).

- Pilgrim's Place, 1314 North Jackson Ave., Russellville, 89. (Chopped lettuce, cabbage and slaw sitting out at 54-59 degrees, also BBQ in walk-in cooler at 44 degrees).

- Dismals Canyon Fountain and Deli, 901 Hwy. 8, Phil Campbell, 94. (No date mark on chicken salad.)

- Red Bay Tiger Mart, 211 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 94. (Lettuce and tomatoes out of temperature).

- The Thrift Store, 109 Lawrence St. West, Russellville, 95. (Operating outside permit category, packaging pork skins, beans and rice from bulk).

- City King Buffet, 520 4th St. SE, Red Bay, 98.

- Red Bay Nutrition, 602 5th St. SE, Red Bay, 98.

Of the 15 inspections done in Colbert County from September 30-October 4, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 100 went to Publix, 3220 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

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

Book Lovers plan 'Walk to Wellness' fundraiser

Submitted to the FFP

The Book Lovers Study Club is sponsoring its second annual "Walk to Wellness" breast cancer fundraiser. The benefit will be held on Saturday, October 26 at the Russellville High School football stadium.

Registration will be held in the RHS Field House starting at 8:30 a.m., and the walk begins at 9 a.m. on the track. The registration cost is \$20 and includes a free T-shirt for the first 100 people to register. Participants can walk as long and as far

as they choose. Last year roughly 80 people participated, with 15 to 20 being breast cancer survivors.

Those who are interested in supporting the cause but do not want to walk may pay the registration fee and watch those who are participating from the field house. Donations are also accepted for the cause.

Afterward, walkers can enjoy refreshments and the chance to visit with one another and take photos at the photo area.

The main purpose of the Wellness Cancer Walk

is to raise money to help people affected by breast cancer, as well as to educate the community about the prevalence of breast cancer.

Patricia Cox, club president, said it is important to the club to keep the money raised local. Money raised from the walk will be disbursed through Russellville Hospital to help women in the Franklin County area with expenses as they undergo treatments.

The club will also make donations to the American Cancer Society and to the UAB Walking the Road to Wellness program.

'CUSTODY' from page 1

hearing and clarified the psychologist's request to release him unsupervised back into the community. When the psychologist affirmed that was his testimony, the judge stopped the hearing and denied the motion to release Francisco."

Rushing said his office and the victim's family were in opposition of the motion for release because of the defendant's previous mental health history and violence. Francisco was returned to the custody of the Department of Mental Health until further order of the Franklin County Circuit Court.

"We were pleased with the court's ruling in this case, because with this defendant's mental history, which includes violence, we did not want to see him released back into this community," Rushing said.

Francisco was charged with capital murder after he was accused of stabbing Francisco Velasquez, 20, multiple times and cutting his neck on July 15,

2010. The capital murder charge was based on Velasquez having been in his car at the time of the stabbing. According to authorities, Velasquez and Francisco were cousins.

Velasquez was able to stagger to the front door of his home, where he collapsed into his father's arms. Velasquez later died at Huntsville Hospital.

After the court adjudicated him not guilty by reason of insanity in 2012, Francisco was placed in the custody of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and was transferred to Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility in Tuscaloosa.

Testimony at the 2012 hearing revealed that Francisco had 26 different mental commitments, including 10 involuntary commitments, prior to being charged with capital murder. Francisco was represented by attorneys Rebecca Thomason and Jamie Sumerel.

Honey Do: Be a hero

"Not every hero wears a cape. Plan and practice your escape."

That's the slogan from the NFPA for this year's "National Fire Safety" event, held in October.

Some heroes, such as firefighters, police officers and other emergency personnel, rush to dangerous situations. This comes after much training and education on how to handle these situations.

One way that you can be a hero is to formulate a plan of action should your home be attacked by fire. Of course, the main objective is to get everyone out safely, and a little planning and training of your own will help to accomplish that objective.

One way that you can be a hero is to formulate a plan of action should your home be attacked by fire.

To properly plan for an emergency like this, each family member that can walk should be involved. Each person should know the best exits, how to open them, and a safe place for the family to meet that is far enough away from the house but out of the way of emergency personnel.

School-age children should be

familiar with fire drills, as they have practiced them at school. To keep their minds at ease, make this a game and use some of the teaching tools found at

www.nfpa.org. Teach them what your fire alarm sounds like, to stay calm, to stay low to the floor and to exit the house as quickly as possible.

You can create more confidence by providing flashlights to each member of the family. They should be kept by the bedside in easy reach. Instruct the kids that this is emergency equipment and should be left in place.

Many times the natural reaction of a child is to hide somewhere in what they consider to be a safe place. Of course, that is the wrong thing to do in a fire. Just a little training can save a life, and, in their eyes, you'll be wearing a cape simply because you care.

A special thanks to all emergency personnel. Give them a wave when you see them, and remember that help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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Correction Policy

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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Mars Hill closure leaves Franklin County holding the bag yet again

The loud 'thud' you may have heard in Russellville late last Thursday afternoon resulted from the collective dropping of jaws of parents whose children attend Mars Hill Bible School's preschool in Russellville.

As parents picked up their children October 10, they received a form letter from Mars Hill Bible School president Nathan Guy informing them the Russellville campus would be closed permanently at the end of 2019.

The letter cited financial concerns as the primary reason for the closure and states the school has been forced to "divert funds" from other programs in order to offset the shortfall caused by the Russellville campus.

Now, parents of the 40 to 50 students enrolled at Mars Hill Russellville must find new child-care arrangements. And more than a dozen staff members will be looking for new jobs.

The Muscle Shoals and Florence campuses are "doing well," according to Guy. So what's wrong with the Russellville location? Is the problem that Mars Hill's board prioritizes the Shoals campuses at the expense of Russellville? How much of the revenue taken in by the Russellville campus stays here as opposed to being pipelined to the Shoals?

There seems to be an unfortunate pattern developing when businesses have interests in both Franklin County and the Shoals. And in the end, it's Franklin County left holding the bag.

There was some good news Saturday, as Guy sent out another form letter to Mars Hill Russellville families announcing the school would

remain open through the end of the school year, delaying the permanent closure until May 22, 2020.

Guy stated school officials "explored an array of potential solutions," but he doesn't mention any specific effort in the form letter. When asked by a parent last week what efforts they had made, Guy responded that he "didn't have a list."

Parents were told Guy and "other school representatives" would be present at the school Monday evening to answer any questions. The Monday evening meeting was cancelled after Mars Hill officials announced the delayed closing date until next May.

Wouldn't it have made sense to have such a meeting before you decide to make a permanent shutdown of the school? Presumably, most parents will ask the question, "Where do I send my child now for daycare or preschool?"

Many years ago, the YMCA of the Shoals opened a Russellville branch and operated it along with a branch in Muscle Shoals and Florence. Eventually, a board consisting almost entirely of Shoals-area residents voted to close the Russellville branch based on it not holding its own financially.

The Mars Hill story is similar. The Muscle Shoals and Florence campuses are "doing well" according to Guy. So what's wrong with the Russellville location? Is the problem that Mars Hill's board prioritizes the Shoals campuses at



John Pilati
Publisher



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by Dave Ramsey

Now or later?

Dear Dave,
My husband lost his job last week. The good news is we're completely debt-free, and we have a six-month emergency fund saved up. I work part-time, since we have young children, and I've been bringing home about \$800 a month. Should we cut our budget down to bare bones now, or do you think we could continue living as usual for the time being since we have so much money saved?

Jayme

Dear Jayme,
I'm sorry to hear about your husband losing his job. At the same time, I'm really proud of you two for saving and preparing yourselves financially for this kind of scenario. Eight hundred dollars a month isn't bad for a part-time job, but it's not nearly enough to run a household—even one that's debt-free—when there are kids in the picture.

You should already be living on a little as possible in order to make the money in your emergency fund last as long as it can. It's beans and rice time in your house. That means no restaurants, no vacations and no movies. In other words, no spending on anything but bare necessities until your husband finds another good job and you guys are back on your financial feet again. Right now, your priorities are keeping the lights

'BAG,' from page 4

the expense of Russellville?

Parents we interviewed had only positive things to say about the staff and facility. There wouldn't be such an uproar from parents about the closing if the Russellville location wasn't working for their children.

Have Mars Hill officials advertised to encourage new enrollment in Russellville? As far as this paper goes, the answer is no. The last time Mars Hill advertised in the *FFP* was in 2014, during a time when the school was holding its own financially.

How much of the revenue taken in by the Russellville campus stays in Russellville as opposed to being pipelined to the Shoals?

There seems to be an unfortunate pattern developing when businesses have interests in both Franklin County and the Shoals. And in the end, it's Franklin County left holding the bag.

When it comes to competing interests between the Shoals and Franklin County, the elephant in the room is Northwest-Shoals Community College, which was created in 1993 with the merger of Northwest Junior College and Shoals Community College. How's that turned out for Franklin County? That's a subject for another day.

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

on, the water running and making sure there's food in the pantry.

This is a textbook definition of an emergency, Jayme. Use your emergency fund. It's there for times just like these. But be wise, and spend as little as humanly possible. God bless you all!

Dave

A good emergency fund?

Dear Dave,
I have about \$12,000 in company stock. Could I use this as my emergency fund?

Jeff

Dear Jeff,
If you want to call that \$12,000 an emergency fund, that's okay. But if that's the case, I'd strongly advise cashing out the stock and putting the money in a good, easily accessible money market account—one with check-writing privileges. Stocks are long-term investments. The only purpose of an emergency fund is to have cash *on hand immediately* in the event of an emergency.

Specifically, an emergency fund is there to cover the unexpected expenses life throws at you from time to time. It's not an investment, and it's not designed to replace income. That's why I believe it's *essential* to keep your emergency fund liquid and easy to reach!

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.*

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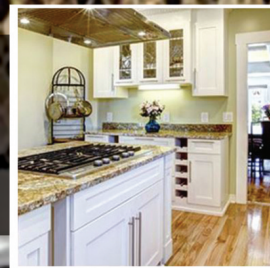
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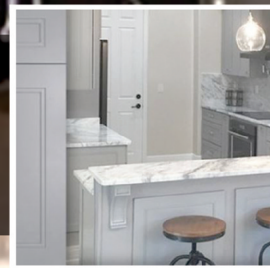
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What's Happening

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

Russellville Masonic Lodge #371 is selling Boston butts for \$30. Pre-order by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, October 26 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.

My Father's House (104 East Lawrence Street) will have special services with missionaries and evangelists Dr. Cyril Curtis and Adina Curtis from Northampton, England October 15-18 and October 20 and 27. Bible study in the morning and worship services in the evening. Morning service only on Tuesday, October 15 at 10:30 a.m. Services will be held Wednesday-Friday at 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Services will be held Sunday, October 20 and 27 at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. For prayer and information on upcoming events or church van ride, please call 256-460-1376. My Father's House...where everyone is special and always welcome!

Mark A. Johnson's "An Irresistible History of Alabama Barbeque" will be discussed at the October 16 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.

Gateway Church Youth (15988 Hwy. 43 Russellville, AL) would like to invite you to "Fifth Quarter" this Friday, October 18 after the ball game from 9:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Kingdom Players for Lee University will be the guests. There will be food and lots of fun! Everyone is invited!

The Alvin Baker Family Reunion will be held on Saturday, October 19 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Union Community Center (5988 Hwy. 93, Russellville, AL 35654). Friends and relatives are invited to bring a covered dish. Lunch will be served at noon. For more information, call Louise Baker at 256-398-8158 or Leila Moore at 256-460-0849.

Gateway Church (15988 Hwy. 43 Russellville, AL) will celebrate its 58th Homecoming this Sunday, October 20. Worship Service will begin at 10:30 a.m. with former pastor Joey Kirby ministering. Lunch will be served after morning service. There will be a singing with the gospel group Purpose starting at 1:30 p.m. Please come and celebrate with us! Everyone is invited!

DivorceCare, a special help seminar and support group for people experiencing divorce and separation, will be held on Sunday evenings at 5 p.m. at First Baptist Church Colbert Heights. 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.

You are welcome to all services at Pleasant Ridge Missionary Baptist Church (Hwy. 48 in Russellville). Sunday service times: Sunday School at 10 a.m., worship service at 11 a.m., Sunday night service at 6 p.m. Wednesday night Bible Study is held at 6:30 p.m. Pastor is Bro. Roger Bond.

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 Book Lovers Study Club is sponsoring its second annual "Walk to Wellness" breast cancer fundraiser. The benefit will be held on Saturday, October 26 at the Russellville High School football stadium. Registration will be held in the RHS Field House starting at 8:30 a.m., and the walk begins at 9 a.m. on the track. The registration cost is \$20 and includes a free T-shirt for the first 100 people to register. Participants can walk as long and as far as they choose. Last year roughly 80 people participated, with 15 to 20 being breast cancer survivors. Those who are interested in supporting the cause but do not want to walk may pay the registration fee and watch those who are participating from the field house. Donations are also accepted for the cause. Afterward, walkers can enjoy refreshments and the chance to visit with one another and take photos at the photo area.

All book lovers welcome! A Fall Book Swap will be hosted by the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club on Wednesday, October 30 from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Helen Keller Public Library Classroom, 511 North Main Street, Tuscumbia. For more information, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

There will be a chicken stew sale Saturday, November 2 at the Frankfort Community Center. Serving starts around 10:30 a.m. \$20/gallon, or eat a bowl on-site, which includes a drink and dessert.

The Phil Campbell Civitan Club will hold its annual Civitan Country Christmas on Saturday, November 2 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Phil Campbell Community Center, 135 Sherry Brice Drive. There will be lots of arts and crafts for sale as well as great gift ideas, including homemade quilts, handmade wood décor, wreaths and arrangements, crocheted items, costume jewelry, Kidsworld Kreations, Tupperware liquidation, Papparazzi Jewelry, Arbonne, Thirty One, Scentsy, door signs and shirts. Door prizes will be given away. Shop early for Christmas and help support the Phil Campbell Civitan Club!

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 November 5. All members and friends are urged to attend.

American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, November 14 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

If you are interested in the study of the Civil War and have an ancestor who was in the Confederate Army, join the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month (except January and July) at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center. Next meeting will be November 7. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317. The Sons of Confederate Veterans is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Membership is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate Armed Forces. Membership can be obtained through either direct or collateral family lines, and kinship to a veteran must be documented genealogically. The minimum age for membership is 12. We hope you can join us for the celebration of our heritage! For more information, call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317.

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, November 9 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.

Come join us for a Gospel Singing, featuring Resound, on Sunday, November 10 at 5 p.m. at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, 305 Bethlehem Road, Russellville.

The NACOLG SenioRx Medication Assistance Program supplies free and low-cost medications for anyone in Alabama with a disability or a chronic illness, regardless of age, that requires daily medication. Medicare recipients may also be eligible. For more information, contact NACOLG SenioRx today. There is no charge for this service. Call 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463) or 256-389-0529 and ask for Paula Pardue. This program is in partnership with the state of Alabama and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

TOPs (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weight loss support group meets each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center. Weigh-ins begin at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more information.

The Newburg Masonic Lodge #388 meets the first Thursday of every month. The Russellville Masonic Lodge #371 meets the first and third Tuesday of every month. The Franklin County Shrine Club meets the second Tuesday of each month. The Order of the Eastern Star Chapter 256 meets every second and fourth Tuesday of each month at the Russellville Masonic Lodge. Spruce Pine Masonic Lodge #608 meets the second and fourth Thursday of each month. Phil Campbell Masonic Lodge #880 meets the first and third Thursday of each month. Burlson Lodge #143 meets the second and fourth Monday of each month. Belgreen Lodge #428 meets the first and third Monday of each month. All meetings start at 7 p.m.

Village Square Apartments in Russellville host George's Country Boys each Monday from 6-8 p.m. for some Gospel and Country singing!

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What does #ShopRussellville1st look like?



Buy your gas at one of our local gas stations.

Whether you live here or live out of town, plan ahead and make sure you can fill up at one of the gas stations located in the Russellville city limits. By planning ahead, you can avoid letting your tank run almost empty while you're elsewhere and having to fill up there, contributing those sales tax dollars to their economy instead of our own.



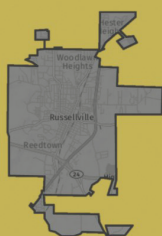
Buy your groceries in the city limits.

Whether it's a local store or a big chain, make a commitment to do your weekly grocery shopping here in town. Even if you don't live here, you can bring hot/cold bags to keep your groceries the appropriate temperature until you get home.



Eat at Russellville restaurants.

Russellville has many local restaurants as well as fast food chains where you and your family can grab a bite to eat. Instead of always defaulting to eat somewhere else, make an effort a few times a month to only eat at local restaurants.



Use services located in Russellville.

Need your oil changed? Looking for a new hairdo? Want to get a manicure? Need your lawn mowed? Having plumbing problems? Need new tires? Have banking business to tend to? Need a prescription filled? When you need to take care of these things (and many others), consider using local people or businesses instead of going elsewhere.

If you need to spend money on anything else that can be purchased or obtained in the city limits of Russellville, make a conscious effort to do that. Before resorting to shopping elsewhere, try to find the things you need here locally and give local people your business and keep those sales tax dollars local.



School system teams with city to promote 'Shop Russellville 1st'

Submitted to the FFP

Russellville City Schools is excited to announce our partnership with the city of Russellville to promote the new "Shop Russellville 1st" campaign that encourages shopping locally at businesses located inside the Russellville city limits.

RCS superintendent Heath Grimes said many people are aware that "shopping locally" is the right thing to do, but they may not be aware of just how impactful and beneficial it can be, not just for the city but for the city schools as well.

"In times past, shopping local was something our parents taught us, and we all made a conscious effort to spend money in our hometown," Grimes said. "But just like many other things we all love to talk about but aren't actually put into practice, shopping local has fallen by the wayside in favor of convenience and what better fits our schedules and lifestyles.

"When people shop inside the city limits, that sales tax money goes to the city of Russellville. RCS receives a portion of the city's sales tax revenue, so the more sales tax revenue that comes in, the more funds we're able to receive for the schools."

Grimes said shopping local is a simple way that anyone who lives or works in Russellville can boost the local economy and support the schools at the same time.

"We talk a lot at RCS about 'showing your Golden Tiger Pride,' but we want people to understand that means more than just cheering for a team at an athletic event," he said. "It's being an integral part of the community and supporting the city and schools in any way you can. It's taking pride in our city and its businesses and services. It's supporting our neighbors and friends and making shopping local a priority."

Russellville mayor David Grissom said he and the city council were excited about the campaign as well and appreciated the city schools getting on board to help.

"We have a lot to be proud of in our city," Grissom said. "We have good folks who own and operate businesses here who need our support. When you buy your groceries from a local establishment, you're helping a family put food on their table. When you go to a local hairdresser or barber, you're helping that person pay their bills for the month. When you buy your gas locally, you're helping those employees earn a salary that allows them to take care of their families.

"These people are our friends and our neighbors. We see them at church or at the football game on Friday night. We pass them on the roads. Our kids go to school with their kids. These are the people we want to support. And in turn, when our sales tax revenue increases, we can turn around and invest that money back into the city and local economy to continue to make Russellville a great place to live and work."

Grimes said RCS is not only partnering with the city to promote the campaign, but they're also actively working on the campaign and giving students at RHS valuable experience in the process.

Russellville High School Career and Technical Education director Natalie Bendall said students who are members of the Russellville High School Youth Leadership Academy as well as members of the CTE entrepreneurship class will be helping with the Shop Russellville 1st campaign by brainstorming ideas, creating graphics, creating promotional material and executing the campaign.

"This is such a great opportunity for our students specifically interested in leadership, business, and entrepreneurship to step into a leadership role outside the school and in the community," Bendall said. "They will be working on something that will have a direct impact on the city and on the schools. And in the process they're going to learn a lot about the city and what we have to offer here."

Grimes said he hopes the community will get behind this campaign and truly make a difference in the city.

"This has the potential to really help many local business owners and employees of these businesses as well as the schools," he said. "For RCS, the sales tax revenue we receive goes towards things like our fine arts department classes and organizations, our extracurricular activities, our career tech department, our athletic programs, and even salaries to help employ enough people in these areas and others.

"It's a great campaign and something everyone can get involved with."

'CLOSE,' from page 1

was at the school, and the staff said we had to speak with him if we had any questions.”

Rest assured, Stidham and other parents have plenty of questions related to the news that they will have to find another child care location for their children in less than three months.

The form letter said Guy and “other school representatives” would be available at 5:30 p.m. on October 14 to answer any questions.

“[Guy] told us the campus had been non-profitable for several years. If that’s the case, why close in the middle of the year. Why not wait until the end of the school year?” Stidham said. “He responded that the decision had already been made on October 8 and that the October 14 meeting was just for informational purposes.”

Apparently, the concerns of Stidham and other parents were heard, as Guy sent a letter to all Russellville Mars Hill Preschool families on Saturday informing them the school would remain open through the remainder of the school year. That means the permanent closure will take place May 22, 2020.

Guy’s letter stated that, “We have listened to your concerns and have worked diligently to find a viable solution for avoiding a December closure. While our financial status remains pressing, we are happy to report that at the request of the administration, the Board of Directors has voted to keep the Russellville campus open for the remainder of the school year. Due to this change, there will not be a meeting on Monday evening.”

Guy released a written statement last Friday that read:

“The decision to close the Russellville preschool campus was an extremely difficult one. The love and care that our staff invests daily in our students is truly extraordinary, and that’s why this decision is so painful for all involved. The teachers and children at our Russellville campus have been and continue to be a beloved part of our school family, and we are hurting with them today. However, the financial reality is that, for some time, the campus has operated at a substantial loss. In order to be good stewards, the board of directors and administration have found it necessary to redirect those funds into other programs. We are committed to helping our Russellville preschool parents and children navigate this transition, and we continue to explore every possibility to assist them.”

The October 10 letter states the Mars Hill preschool campus became a reality in Russellville in 2006, although the school actually began behind North Highlands Church of Christ years earlier. Guy said that was a mistake on his part and he was trying to refer to the new building that was, in fact, constructed in 2006.

The brick building that houses Mars Hill is located at 1509 Lawrence Street East in Russellville. According to Guy’s letter, the building resulted from a “generous donation by James Bobo that provided us the opportunity to build a beautiful new red brick building for the purpose of serving the needs of a new community.”

Guy informed parents that the Russellville campus would shut down permanently at the end of this calendar year, at the Christmas break.

“Our two other preschool campuses—those in Muscle Shoals and Florence—will remain open as usual, and we welcome all those looking for another preschool program to consider either location if feasible,” Guy said in the letter.

Guy describes the decision to close the Russellville campus as “a financial one,” indicating that the Russellville campus is not generating sufficient revenue to keep it in the black while “paying our teachers a fair and livable salary.” Additionally, Guy’s letter suggests that exhaustive efforts were made to make the school work, but ultimately, all failed.

“We have explored an array of potential solutions, but none have proved viable. After examining the best use of school funds for the future, our administration and board of directors feel the time has come to redirect those funds into other programs,” Guy stated in his letter.

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Guy elaborated on some of those efforts in a phone interview with the *FFP* last Friday.

“Several things have been tried over a number of years,” Guy said. “We considered starting a kindergarten program in Russellville. We looked into the possibility of a busing system to bring people in, but at the time we looked

at those, neither looked viable. Beginning this year, we looked at enrollment numbers to see if we could bring them up to a number where the finances made sense, and none of those worked at this point. So we have been looking at this for a while.”

Stidham, for one, isn’t satisfied with that explanation.

“He says they exhausted all resources, but when I asked him [what is] the tuition at Russellville and at the Muscle Shoals and Florence locations, he didn’t even know,” Stidham said. “Don’t show up to the doors of our babies’ school to close it, tell us it’s a demand and financial issue and not even know the tuition of your schools.”

“You say the demand’s not here. Show us some statistics that support that. What solutions have you explored? What has your board of directors done to increase enrollment in Russellville? When I asked him these questions, he said he didn’t have a list of what had been done.”

Russellville mayor David Grissom said he began receiving phone calls from concerned parents last Thursday evening, within hours of the closing announcement. Grissom said neither he nor any city officials were contacted by anyone at Mars Hill prior to their decision.

“...They leave us with no plan of anything as far as where we can put our kids,” said Jessica Stidham, whose daughter attends Mars Hill Preschool in Russellville. “Russellville only has two other daycares, and they are at capacity. The pre-kindergarten classes at Russellville are full. What do people who live and work here do with their kids now?”

“We were not contacted. It’s an unfortunate situation, because they’ve provided a good service for many years,” Grissom said. “I wish they would reconsider this decision.”

According to Guy, Mars Hill has between 40 and 50 children enrolled at Russellville and employs eight full-time and six part-time staff. While he would not give a specific number of students required to make the Russellville campus sustainable, Guy said in previous years they were used to an enrollment of 60-65 back when the school was profitable.

Stidham, whose daughter previously attended Mars Hill’s Muscle Shoals location, said she has always been impressed with the staff and conditions at the Russellville campus.

“The Russellville campus is outstanding,” Stidham said. “I had a list of things my daughter experienced at the Muscle Shoals campus. Russellville has been so much better for my child. The campus is so well taken care of. They follow the sick policies and are constantly cleaning non-stop.”

“Now they leave us with no plan of anything as far as where we can put our kids. Russellville only has two other daycares, and they are at capacity. The pre-kindergarten classes at Russellville are full. What do people who live and work here do with their kids now?”

Russellville resident Mickey Gentry also has a child enrolled at Mars Hill. Gentry wonders why school officials, if they knew the decision to close the campus was a possibility, didn’t notify parents in advance.

“If they had an audit done or something like that, why not do something to bring forth more notice to parents to allow them time to find other daycares?” Gentry asked. “Most other daycares are full. We had no advance notice on their decision.”

Gentry said he was told by another parent who called Mars Hill’s Muscle Shoals campus that the school was full and had a waiting list. But Guy’s letter states that Mars Hill “welcomes all those looking for another preschool program to consider either the [Muscle Shoals or Florence] location if feasible.”

So a crowded daycare and preschool system will now have nearly 50 more children looking to be added to it.

“That’s a major problem,” Gentry said.

Stidham also pointed out how the campus closing will have an economic impact on the community.

“If people have to drive to Muscle Shoals or Florence for child care, they will also go look for jobs there. There’s a better job market in those areas anyway,” Stidham said. “Russellville will lose tax dollars and city revenue, and there will be lost jobs. It’s a lot more than just a small daycare closing down.”

Guy said the decision to close the Russellville campus was made by Mars Hill’s Board of Directors. As to whether school officials would reconsider, Guy wasn’t direct.

“The decision has been made. We are always open to consider options as they arise, though,” Guy said.

Guy closes his letter by telling Russellville parents how well Mars Hill’s other campuses are faring.

“Our other campuses are doing well, and we have begun or expanded several exciting programs. We believe Mars Hill’s best days are ahead of us, and will continue to grow and serve our community,” Guy said.

As of May 22, 2020, though, Russellville will no longer be a part of the Mars Hill community.

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YARD SALES

Yard Sale.
Thurs./Fri./Sat. Oct. 17-19. 8-5. 603 Pierce St. NE, Russellville.

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Thurs./Fri./Sat. Oct. 17-

19. 8-5. 603 Pierce St. NE, Russellville. First time sale. Baby clothing, boys/girls clothing, wheelchairs, lots more!

Three Family Yard Sale. Friday/Saturday, Oct 18/19. 7 a.m.-until. 206 St. Clair Street in Russellville.

Multi-Family Yard Sale. Friday/Saturday, Oct. 18/19. Hwy. 26 in Spruce Pine. Look for signs. Band saw, Scroll saw, recliner, old comic books, baseball/basketball cards. Glassware, clothing, too much to mention!

Yard Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19. 8 a.m.-until. Hwy. 48 by Deb's Hair Shop. Lift chair, king size bedroom suite and mattresses, laptops, table saw, lots more!

Yard Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19. 419 Burgess St., Russellville. One block off of Waterloo Road. Sale in backyard. 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Indoor Yard Sale at 232 Front Street, Russellville,

this Saturday, Oct. 19 at 7:00 am.

Antique furniture, lamps, dishes, men's clothing, books, knick knacks, etc.

Two-Family Garage Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19. 7 a.m.-until. 65 Spring St., Russellville. Turn in front of Russellville High School off Waterloo Road. 5th house on right.

Multiple garage sales will be held in Brookwood Subdivision (Underwood Road) on Friday & Saturday, Oct. 18-19, starting at 7am both days.

Yard Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19. 8 a.m.-until. 513 Lauderdale St. NW, Russellville. Household items, tools, misc. items. Come see us.

Huge Five-Family Yard Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19. 7 a.m. 605 Witt Store Road. LaGrange Community off Hwy. 48 in Russellville. Name brand clothing, most \$1. Harley Davidson items, name brand purses,

shoes. Huge Selection of Comforters, rugs and home décor. Jewelry, cast iron, lots of Misc. Men's stuff. Everything priced to sell. Home of Pat Shelton. NO early sales.

Inside Yard Sale. Saturday, Oct. 19 and Saturday, Oct. 26. The Living Word Church. Highway 24 West, Russellville. 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Cancelled if Rain.

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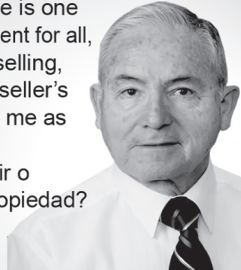
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Democrats vote to open qualifying for March 3rd primary on October 21st

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee met last Tuesday evening to set dates for the candidate qualifying period for the March 3, 2020 primary.

Committee members voted to open qualifying on Monday, October 21 at 9 a.m. Individuals wanting to qualify for local office should contact Wanda Myrick at 256-415-3270 or Eddie Britton at 256-436-8330.

The deadline for submitting candidacy papers with both the Democratic and Republican Parties is Friday, November 8 at 5 p.m.

Committee members had two special guests at their meeting, including Fayette County Democratic Executive Committee chairman John Underwood and former Lauderdale County Democratic Executive Committee chairman Will Boyd. Boyd was also the Democratic nominee in 2018 for lieutenant governor in Alabama. Boyd is a candidate for the chairman position with the Alabama Democratic Party. An election for state officers will be held next month.

Franklin County offices on the ballot in the March primary include Revenue Commissioner, Franklin County Superintendent of Education, Franklin County Board of Education District 3 and the four seats on the Franklin County Commission.

Qualifying fees for Democratic candidates were set at \$1,500 for superintendent, \$1,000 for revenue commissioner, \$350 for county commission candidates and \$250 for the District 3 Board of Education seat.

Britton, the Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee chairman, gave an update on the situation with the state Democratic Party.

"The Alabama Democratic Party is in a bit of chaos right now," Britton said. "[Chairwoman] Nancy Worley did not follow the guidelines set by the national party. She refused to update the bylaws. At a meeting last Saturday in

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Annual Torch Run a success at RCS

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Schools Education Foundation hosted its annual Torch Run 5K and one-mile Fun Run on Saturday, October 5. Entry fees and donations for the event benefit the RCS Education Foundation, which supports Russellville City Schools students and teachers through scholarships for graduating seniors and teacher grants for instructional materials.

Education Foundation members expressed their appreciation to all who participated as well as the Russellville Police Department and Russellville Fire Department for their assistance working the event.

West Elementary School won the team competition, based on once again having the most participants and supporters at this year's run.

Those who received medals for finishing first overall or in their age division in the 5K included:

- Top Overall Female: Leslie Perez, 28:20.
- Top Overall Male: Efrain Pedro, 21:37.
- Top Female Masters: Maria Argumedo, 31:30.
- Top Male Masters: Joe Fields, 23:24.
- Top Female Age 9 and Under: Brookelynn Davis.
- Top Female Age 10-14: Ella Copeland.
- Top Female Age 15-19: 1st, Sissy Vicente; 2nd, Rosa Maravilla.
- Top Female Age 25-29: Rachel Seal.
- Top Female Age 30-34: Suzanne Glass.
- Top Female Age 35-39: Priscilla Davis.
- Top Female Age 55-59: Susan Godsey.
- Top Male Age 9 and Under: 1st, Ishmael Perez; 2nd, Darron Jones.
- Top Male Age 10-14: 1st, Houston Askew; 2nd, Javan Poss.
- Top Male Age 15-19: 1st, Diego Juan; 2nd, Noah Miller.
- Top Male Age 25-29: 1st, Ernesto Pascual; 2nd, Andrew Miller.
- Top Male Age 35-39: Jason Davis.
- Top Male Age 40-44: Jonathan King.
- Top Male Age 45-49: 1st, Scott Smallwood; 2nd, Jeff Askew.
- Top Male Age 50-54: 1st, Manuel Francisco; 2nd, Mark McNatt.
- Top Male Age 60-64: Mike Mayfield.
- Top Male Age 65-69: Stan Walker.



West Elementary School won the team competition, based on once again having the most participants and supporters at this year's run.

'PRIMARY,' from page 10

Montgomery, delegates called for an election of state officers. That election is set for November 2."

Executive Committee members are doing a fundraiser by selling chances to win a kids' 110cc four-wheeler. Tickets are \$2 each or three for \$5 and are available from all committee members. The drawing will be November 28.

Britton said the party is going through a difficult stage, but politics is cyclical and he believes the political climate will change again.

"These are trying times for the Democratic Party, but we will persevere. We'd like to have a full slate of candidates. A couple have talked to me about running," Britton said. "If you are willing to put your name on the ballot and let us do what we can to help, please contact us."

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Week 8 in the SEC

Last week's record: 3-1
Year-to-date record: 23-5
This week's games:

Florida (-5) at South Carolina – 11:00 on ESPN

South Carolina took a page out of Florida's book last week against Georgia, picking off the previously pick-proof Jake Fromm three times to pull off a 20-17 stunner in Athens. The turnovers definitely helped, but the Gamecocks more than held their own in the trenches against Georgia's outstanding offensive line.

The Gators, meanwhile, failed to generate their usual allotment of takeaways against LSU and got Joe Burrow-ed in a 42-28 loss. Now comes the really hard part for Florida—answering the bell emotionally and physically for a third straight week after tough back-to-back showdowns with Auburn and LSU. There's always something about that third game....

The Pick: South Carolina 24 Florida 23
Auburn (-18) at Arkansas – 11:00 on SECN
The Razorbacks' search for that elusive SEC win continues after they came from ahead to lose 24-20 at Kentucky last week. Their streak of 14 straight losses in conference play doesn't figure to end against an Auburn team coming off a bye and looking to bounce back from its first loss of the season.

At some point very soon, the Tigers are going to miss injured tailback Ja'Tarvious Whitlow. Just not this week.

The Pick: Auburn 30 Arkansas 13
Texas A&M (-6) at Ole Miss – 6:30 on SECN
Dangerous spot here for the Aggies, who must try to avoid a post-Alabama hangover in Oxford against an improving Ole Miss team. We'd like the Rebels' chances a little better if A&M wasn't so tough against the run, but the two-quarterback system with John Rhys Plumlee and Matt Corral could be a challenge to prepare for.

Against Missouri last week, Plumlee had another huge game on the ground, rushing for 143 yards and two scores on 23 carries. Corral, meanwhile, threw for 133 yards on 10-for-16 passing. Unconventional, but productive.

Offense aside, Ole Miss under Mike McIntyre may now possess the defensive chops to pull the upset and take Texas A&M's season from disappointing to downright depressing.

The Pick: Ole Miss 33 Texas A&M 30 (in OT)
Tennessee at Alabama (-35) – 8:00 on ESPN

Tua finally threw an interception, so...not sure where the drama is going to come from in this one. [Unless Jeremy Pruitt makes good on his threat to onside kick every time. Which he totally should. Keeping Alabama's juggernaut of an offense off the field might be the only way to slow them down.]

Alabama has won 18 straight games in the regular season, 29 straight at home and 12 straight over the Vols. All those streaks should continue on Saturday.

The Pick: Alabama 52 Tennessee 17



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Back to basics



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Prior to Russellville's 17-0 loss at Hamilton last week, Ritter (left) had not been shut out as a head coach since his West Morgan team lost 56-0 to Colbert County in September of 2016. After averaging 40.4 points and 413.4 total yards per game during a 5-0 start, the Golden Tigers have averaged just 11.0 points and 220.5 total yards over their past two games.

Russellville looks to regain its rhythm on offense as top-ranked Jasper comes calling

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Through the first five games of the season, Russellville's offense was nothing short of stellar, averaging 40.4 points and 413.4 yards per contest to fuel a 5-0 start.

Over the last two weeks, however, that previously prolific attack has gone AWOL.

In two October games against Lawrence County and Hamilton, the Golden Tigers have averaged just 11.0 points and 220.5 total yards. They managed to grind out a 22-14 win over the Red Devils on October 4 to remain unbeaten, but the offense bottomed out last Friday night against the Aggies with a season-low 192 total yards and five turnovers in a stunning 17-0 loss that left head coach John Ritter searching for answers.

"That was the most frustrating game I've been associated with on the offensive side in twelve years of coaching," Ritter said. "We established no

rhythm, and we couldn't take advantage of any breaks. Every time we made a big play, we shot ourselves in the foot with a penalty, a missed assignment or a turnover. We would take one step forward and three steps back."

"We haven't changed what we're doing," Ritter said. "We've just changed how we're executing. And that falls back on me."

Russellville's six first-half possessions at Hamilton resulted in three interceptions, a lost fumble, a turnover on downs and a punt. Trailing just 3-0 at the break thanks to an inspired effort by their own defense, the Golden Tigers (6-1, 4-1 in Class 5A, Region 7) proceeded to lose another fumble on the second-half kickoff and never got on track.

They crossed midfield just once the rest of the game and promptly fumbled on the next play, essentially sealing their first shutout loss since a

Wildcats edge Lexington, close in on playoff berth

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Any high school football coach—or any parent of a teenager, for that matter—can attest to the fact that delivering your message is merely half the battle. Making sure your message is received and understood is the hard part.

Colbert Heights head coach Taylor Leathers tried his best throughout last week to convince his team that Lexington, despite its five-game losing streak and winless record in region play, would arrive at Amos Mitchell Stadium fully intent on giving the Wildcats everything they could handle and then some.

When the visiting Golden Bears jumped out to an early 14-0 lead last Friday night, it appeared that Leathers' warning might have fallen on deaf ears. To their credit, though, the Wildcats circled the wagons and fought back, rallying with three unanswered touchdowns and then getting a key interception late from sophomore Andrew Tedford to seal a 21-20 win that kept them on track to earn a playoff spot for a third consecutive season.

Sometimes you win games. Other times you learn lessons. Leathers sincerely hopes his young team did both last week.

"I knew, regardless of them being 1-5 coming in, a Jason Lard team is going to give great effort, and they're going to be well coached," said Leathers, who played under Lexington head coach Jason Lard when Lard was an assistant at Winfield and later served as Lard's offensive coordinator with the Golden Bears for four years before taking over the Colbert Heights program in 2016. "He's a motivator of kids and an excellent coach. They've taken some bad losses this year, but at the same time I knew going in we couldn't overlook them. I wasn't able to convey that to my team as well as I needed to. That had a lot to do with the youth of my team.

"We played four seniors in the game. When you tell a sophomore that Lexington is gonna bring a good team over and it's gonna be a barnburner and it's gonna be a good game, all they do is look up and see that they're 1-

5. So we came out and played like we were playing a 1-5 team. That's what was disheartening."

If the Wildcats (5-3, 3-1 in Class 3A, Region 8) were guilty of sleep-walking into last week's game, the first quarter-plus certainly served as a wake-up call. Lexington (1-6, 0-5) scored on its opening drive, marching nine plays and taking a 7-0 lead on a touchdown run by Trey Martin.

Colbert Heights answered with a nine-play drive of its own but fumbled at midfield, giving the ball back to the Golden Bears. They promptly drove 12 plays for another score, extending the lead to 14-0 on a 13-yard touchdown run by Lucas Thigpen with 8:39 left in the first half.

The Wildcats answered with their first score of the night, putting together a seven-play drive and cutting the lead to 14-7 on a touchdown run by junior wingback Carson Shaw with 5:21 left in the half.

After forcing a Lexington punt, Colbert Heights struck again when junior wingback Gage Pugh ripped off a 48-yard gain to set up his own touchdown run. The extra point was no good, but the Wildcats were back in the game and went into the locker room trailing just 14-13.

"I was disappointed in how we played in the first half," Leathers said. "We didn't play well defensively, and I was disappointed in the turnover. I was really disappointed that they jumped out 14-0 early. We talk to our team a lot about playing to a standard, and that was the main thing at halftime: Play to a standard every time you step on the field. Don't play based on people's record or the size of the school. A lot of that is our guys being young and not approaching things like they should."

The Wildcats opened the second half with a 14-play drive but ultimately turned the ball over on downs. After a quick three-and-out by Lexington, Colbert Heights got a key 40-yard punt return from Shaw to set up a two-play scoring drive. Shaw scored his second rushing touchdown of the night, and then Pugh ran in what turned out to be a critical two-point conversion to make it 21-14 with 3:08 left in the third quarter.

The Golden Bears answered with a 13-play drive but failed to score when Colbert Heights stuffed them on fourth-and-goal from the one. The Wildcats went three-and-out, however, and Lexington scored quickly on a 47-yard

See 'WILDCATS,' page 15

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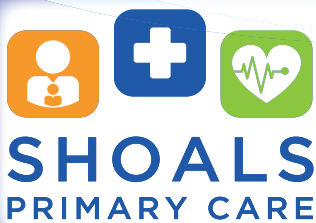
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'WILDCATS,' from page 14

touchdown pass from Martin to Brandon Butler. The Golden Bears missed the extra point and still trailed 21-20 with 6:06 left in the game.

The Wildcats ate up some clock with a 10-play drive but failed to convert a fourth-and-short and turned the ball over on downs. Lexington ran five plays on its final drive but failed to cross midfield, and Tedford sealed the win when he picked off a Martin pass and returned it all the way to the Golden Bear one-yard line.

"I felt the goal line stand was big, even though they eventually scored anyway," Leathers said. "But it was big. We started playing better defensively in the second half. We gave up a lot early that we shouldn't have. On the positive side, it doesn't matter how pretty or how ugly it was; a win is a win, and nobody can take it from you. We were able to get the job done in the final seconds there and get a huge region win to get us one step closer to getting to the playoffs."

The Wildcats are now in position to clinch a playoff spot with a win at Clements on Friday night. They could also take another step toward earning the right to host a first-round game for an unprecedented third straight year.

Clements improved to 4-3 overall and 2-2 in region play with a 26-13 win over East Lawrence last week. The Colts have a potent ground game led by tailback Jarraice Pryor, who ran for 272 yards and four touchdowns on 28 carries earlier this season in a 44-27 win over Phil Campbell.

"I can tell you what I know. The Pryor kid is an incredible athlete," Leathers said last Friday night. "He's gonna be a big key factor in their offense. Playing in the region, you usually stumble across film when you're preparing for other region opponents, and you try to focus on the team you're playing that week. But we actually have not seen any Clements tape or any Phil Campbell tape either. So these last two teams we play, we have not seen any tape on them. But I've heard through the grapevine how good of an athlete and a running back Pryor is. I know it'll be a dogfight. We'll have to play better than we played tonight."

Shaw finished with 140 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 15 carries versus Lexington. Pugh rushed 16 times for 141 yards and one score. For the season, Shaw has rushed for 740 yards and eight touchdowns on 94 carries, while Pugh has run 105 times for 722 yards and seven scores.

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'RHYTHM,' from page 13

51-0 defeat at Hartselle on September 29, 2017. Ritter, who previously ran the show at Red Bay from 2012 to 2013 and West Morgan from 2015 to 2017, absorbed only his fourth shutout loss in 74 games as a head coach. [Prior to last week, his teams had scored in 35 consecutive games dating back to a 56-0 loss by West Morgan at Colbert County on September 16, 2016.]

"For our defense to hold them to three points in the first half was phenomenal," Ritter said on Sunday night. "We only had the ball for 22 plays in the first half. That was the most frustrating part—we didn't do much to help out the defense.

"At no point did I ever think we were gonna lose 3-0 or 10-0. I was thinking, 'If we can just punch in two scores, we win 14-10.' We were playing so well defensively, and I felt really good about us getting on track and finding a way to score."

That never happened, leaving Ritter and his staff to assess what exactly has gone wrong over the previous two games. Eight turnovers by the offense seem as good a place to start as any.

"When you turn the ball over five times [as Russellville's offense did at Hamilton], that's not necessarily [the opponent]," Ritter said. "It was fifty-fifty them and us. It's us making some mistakes, and it's them kind of forcing mistakes. I think it's a combination of turnovers with a lack of execution, and when you throw that in with a lack of focus and a lack of consistency, that's what we've got out of [the offense] the last two weeks."

Ritter gave credit to Lawrence County and Hamilton for doing their part to hold the Golden Tigers in check, but he balked at the notion that his team's recent struggles are primarily the result of facing better defenses the past two weeks.

"That's a tricky question," he said. "Deshler [a team Russellville beat 27-21 in overtime to open the season] had a really good defense, and Haleyville [a team the Golden Tigers routed 35-0 in Week 5] had a good front seven. I think it's probably 25 percent the schematics of what our opponents are trying to do and 75 percent stuff that we can control.

"Hamilton deserves a lot of credit. They played us a defensive front that we had not seen from them in six games. They were playing us an odd front. We had seen an odd front out of them, but not that particular alignment. They had a really good game plan to stop our offense. Once we settled down and figured out their alignment and how we had to adjust to it, we had some opportunities, but we just didn't execute. I think four out of the five turnovers we had were just a lack of focus on our part."

After rushing for 200-plus yards in each of their previous five games, the Golden Tigers ran for just 153 on 32 carries in the loss at Hamilton. Sophomore tailback Airreon "Boots" McCulloch ran 16 times for 63 yards, and senior back Austin Ashley had 20 yards on four attempts. That duo came into last Friday averaging a combined 143.7 yards per game and 5.9 yards per carry.

"I thought Ashley and Boots ran hard," Ritter said of the Hamilton game. "We didn't have many seams to take advantage of. We have to make sure we've got the right people in the right spots. We may have to move some people around to create some angles and create some seams for our guys to run in.

"It's always about us [at practice], but this week it's gonna be even more about us. It's about reestablishing what we want to do on offense and how we want to play. It's 100 percent focus on us as individuals. We'll try and create some competition by moving some guys around up front, flopping some guys from defense to offense up front to help us find the right combination."

Ritter sees no reason why his offense can't get back to the level of production they sustained for the first five weeks of the season.

"We haven't changed what we're doing," he said. "We've just changed how we're executing. And that falls back on me. We've talked with our guys about the expectations we have for each other. They expect a certain level of coaching. They have certain expectations of me, and we have certain expectations for them. When we talk about expectations, it's a two-way street.

"We have certain standards, and at the end of the day it's our goal to put a good product on the field—win, lose or draw. Putting a good product out there is not always about winning and losing. It's about doing things the right way, and last Friday night at Hamilton we didn't do that. The way we played was not acceptable. As coaches, we're gonna do our best to get those problems corrected."

The sooner, the better, given who's up next on the schedule. That would be unbeaten Jasper, the top-ranked team in Class 5A and the reigning Region 7 champion. The Vikings (7-0, 5-0) have allowed a total of just 27 points in their five region games, and they can clinch a second straight region crown with a win at Golden Tiger Stadium on Friday and a loss by Hamilton (6-1, 4-1) at Lawrence County.

"They don't have any weaknesses," Ritter said of the Vikings, who have

See 'RHYTHM,' page 17

Carson Shaw Junior RB, Colbert Heights

Shaw helped the Wildcats rally from an early 14-0 deficit to beat Lexington 21-20 last week, rushing for 140 yards and two touchdowns on 15 carries. The junior wingback got Colbert Heights on the board with his first touchdown run midway through the second quarter and then broke loose for a 40-yard punt return in the third quarter to set up his second TD run, which put the Wildcats on top to stay.

A quarterback in 2018, Shaw has thrived at running back this season, rushing for a team-high 740 yards and eight TDs on 94 carries.



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'RHYTHM', from page 16

won 16 straight regular-season games and 18 of their last 19 overall since opening the 2018 season with a 28-27 loss at Cullman. "They're really big. They're really fast. They're very physical. They're very sound on offense and defense."

The Golden Tigers got Jasper's best effort last October, and the result was a 42-13 rout by the Vikings that ended Russellville's unbeaten run at 7-0. On Friday night, the Golden Tigers will try to turn the tables and end Jasper's unbeaten run while also putting themselves in the driver's seat for a region championship. Ritter knows it will take a nearly flawless performance on both sides of the ball for his team to pull the upset.

"We're gonna have to end every drive with a kick, whether that's a punt or an extra point," said Ritter, who is 8-0 in regular-season home games since arriving at RHS. "We can't turn the ball over. We have to control the ball. Whether that's through running it or passing it is yet to be seen; that depends on how they play us. Regardless of the play-call selection, we have to execute."

"We can't allow them to get their backs downhill. Number 20 and number seven [seniors John Collins and Kaden Shelton, respectively] are big, strong, physical, fast tailbacks. Their offensive line is huge. They have a really good set of receivers. Number two [senior Xavier Waldrop] is one of their best speed guys, and they've got two more who can really play. They've got the complete package on offense and defense."

"We're gonna have to play really, really sound and play inspired football. The inspired part should

be easy to come by after this week of regaining our focus on how to do that. We're just gonna have to make sure we limit our mistakes."

While the offense strives to regain its early-season groove, Russellville can rely on a hard-hitting, stingy defense giving up just 12.1 points and 165.0 total yards per game. Coordinator Chris Balentine's unit is yielding just 97.1 rushing yards per game and 2.8 yards per carry. The pass defense has been even better, as opponents have completed only 44 percent of their attempts for an average of just 67.9 yards per game.

Against Hamilton, the Golden Tigers registered four sacks in the first half—including two by junior inside linebacker Brooks Scott, one by junior tackle Angel Moreno and another by the combination of Moreno and fellow linemen Angel Martinez and Jose Gaspar. Reserve lineman Will Calhoun, a sophomore, forced a fumble that junior safety J.D. Bishop recovered. The Aggies finished the night with just 178 total yards.

"In the first half, our defense played as good as they could play," Ritter said. "We only ran 22 plays on offense. I have no idea how many Hamilton ran, because they were slowing it down, but they were on the field a whole heckuva lot more than our offense was. But our defense just kept plugging away. Even after the fumbled kickoff return [to start the second half], those guys still went out and played hard. They played extremely hard."

"We're very proud of the way those guys played. What we've gotta do offensively is make sure we do our part to give our defense some help."

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7-0 Red Bay one win away from region title

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Conventional wisdom would suggest that Red Bay cleared its biggest hurdle toward a 10-0 regular season and a region championship by holding on for a 20-14 win over Colbert County at C.T. Manley Stadium last Friday night, but you won't catch head coach Michael Jackson counting his chickens.

And he better not catch any of his players counting theirs either. "We've still got some games to go now," Jackson said last Friday, shortly after the Tigers out-rushed the Indians 221 yards to 64 en route to improving to 7-0 overall and 4-0 in Class 2A, Region 7. "We feel like we're in a really good spot to win a region championship. But we still have some work to do."

Make no mistake, though: Red Bay did the bulk of its heavy lifting last Friday in Leighton. The Tigers built a two-touchdown lead by the early stages of the second quarter and then survived a late push by Colbert County (5-3, 3-2), coming up with a key defensive stop to seal their 12th straight win in regular-season play.

Red Bay can now clinch its first region title since 2015 with a win at home over Tanner (1-6, 1-3) this Friday or a win at Tharptown (1-5, 0-4) next Friday. Should the Tigers win both of those games and then close the regular season by beating Wilson (2-5), they'll finish 10-0 for the second time under Jackson and the fifth time since 2000.

But, again, Jackson—who is now 49-14 since taking over the Red Bay program in 2014—was not inclined last Friday to look too far down the road.

"We don't talk about it," he said of going 10-0. "We really haven't said a word about it. We just want to beat Tanner next week. That's all our guys talk about. We know how much of a big deal [going 10-0] is, and we'll talk about that later on. It doesn't happen very much for anybody. But that's not our focus right now."

Clearly, the Tigers were focused on the task at hand last Friday night in Leighton. Junior receiver Mason Holt returned the opening kickoff 60 yards, setting up a short drive that culminated in a 14-yard touchdown run by senior back Colyn Humphres. The try for two was no good, but Red Bay led 6-0 with 9:25 left in the first quarter. Neither team scored again until early in the second quarter, when Humphres caught a 25-yard touchdown pass from junior quarterback Jalen Vinson. Again, the try for two failed, but the Tigers led 12-0 with 9:55 left in the first half.

"We jumped out to a good lead, and we were playing really well early," Jackson said. "We had a chance to score right before halftime, but we got stopped on the ten-yard line. We know what kind of athletes Colbert County has. They got a big kickoff return to start the second half, and their kids got really excited about playing. Then they catch a big pass that gets them on the scoreboard, and we're back into a tough game."

The Indians got on the board with a 39-yard touchdown pass early in the third quarter, and the Tigers were still on top 12-7 early in the fourth when Humphres broke loose for a 60-yard run. [He finished the night with 119 yards on 10 carries.] That set up a seven-yard touchdown run by Vinson, and the try for two was good to make it 20-7 with 7:10 left in the game.

Colbert County scored again on an 18-yard touchdown pass to make it 20-14 with 5:11 remaining. The Indians had one last chance to complete the comeback, but Red Bay corner Kiser Jackson broke up a pass on fourth-and-eight to seal the win.

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BEAT BAILEY IS BACK! Submit your picks to us each week in one of two ways: Fill out the entry form on this page and mail it to us at 113 Washington Ave. NW, Russellville, AL 35653, or email your picks to us along with your name and number at franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. **Picks sent in by mail for Week 8 must be postmarked by Friday, October 18, and picks submitted by email for Week 8 must be received by Saturday, October 19 at 10 a.m.** Each week, the contestant who correctly picks the most games will win a free T-shirt and the chance to pick in the grand-prize final-week contest. If multiple contestants correctly pick the same number of games in a given week, the tiebreaker score will be used to determine a winner. Contestants are only eligible to win the weekly contest once. No multiple winners allowed. Thanks for playing, and good luck!

Congrats to Week 7 winner **STEVE WATTS**, who correctly picked 9 out of 10 games and also picked Alabama to beat Texas A&M 41-27!

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Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

| Week 8: October 19 | Bailey's Pick | Your Pick |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------|
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| Florida at South Carolina | South Carolina | _____ |
| Auburn at Arkansas | Auburn | _____ |
| LSU at Mississippi St. | LSU | _____ |
| Missouri at Vanderbilt | Missouri | _____ |
| Texas A&M at Ole Miss | Ole Miss | _____ |
| Tennessee at Alabama | Alabama | _____ |
| Oregon at Washington | Oregon | _____ |
| Baylor at Oklahoma St. | Oklahoma St. | _____ |
| Michigan at Penn State | Penn State | _____ |
| Tiebreaker Score: | Tennessee ____ | Alabama ____ |
| Your Name: | _____ | |
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