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02.12.20

City council authorizes flood study

By John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council will solicit bid proposals for a flood study on the three main creeks that flow through Russellville, after the council unanimously approved the measure at its February 3 meeting.

Councilman David Palmer made the motion to commission the study on Garmin Branch, Payne Creek and Town Branch. Palmer said more than 90 percent of the city's flowing water drains into these three creeks and their tributaries. The flood study will also include all drainage areas that contribute to these three creeks.

"I feel like we're experiencing something I really don't understand much about," Palmer said. "In 30 years of work [as an engineer] I've never seen the types of rains we're getting here the last few years. I don't think it's going to get better.

"The number of places in our town that flood on a regular basis is unusually large. I'm not suggesting this will eliminate all flood problems in the city, but if we approach it the right way we certainly can mitigate them."

As an example, Palmer cited the pipes that cross



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI
 Green Avenue after heavy rains on February 5

See 'STUDY,' Page 8

FC students to work as poll interns

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

When Franklin County voters go to the polls on Tuesday, March 3, some of the election workers will look younger than usual.

A new law that allows eligible high school and college students to intern as unpaid student poll workers went into effect on September 1, 2019. Alabama Act 2019-476 requires that students be recommended by their principal or other school official, and they must be at least 16 years of age at the time of the election.

Alabama secretary of state John Merrill was instrumental in working to get the legislation passed last year. Rep. Alan Baker sponsored the bill in the House of Representatives, and Sen. Donnie Chesteen sponsored the Senate version.

Last week, Merrill contacted Franklin County probate


judge Barry Moore and Moore agreed to work with the student interns in the upcoming primary elections. The student interns will attend all training for poll workers and will have an excused absence from school if they work at least four hours on a training day or election day, Merrill said.

So far, 10 students from across Franklin County will be part of the upcoming election. The student poll workers can handle all duties during election day, except they won't handle ballots or insert ballots into voting machines.

"We want to get young people more involved in the election process, and this law allows student workers age 16 and older to do just that," Merrill said. "By getting them involved while in high school, our goal is that they realize the importance of voting while learning how the process works."

See 'POLL,' Page 5


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for
Commissioner District 2

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Glenda Ann Trapp Cash, Phil Campbell, age 77
Died Tuesday, February 4, 2020. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Phares "Faye" Maggie Hester, Pulaski, TN (formerly of Russellville), age 95
Died Wednesday, February 5, 2020. Funeral held at Frankfort Missionary Baptist Church. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family.

Lois May Holland, Russellville, age 82
Died Sunday, February 2, 2020. The family was planning to hold a private memorial service at a later date. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Robin McCollum, Tuscumbia
Died Saturday, February 1, 2020. Celebration of Life Service held at Highland Park Church of Christ in Muscle Shoals. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family.

Doris Jewell Moore, Russellville
Died Monday, February 3, 2020. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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Holcombe announces commission candidacy

Submitted to the FFP

My name is Misty Holcombe, and I would like to take this opportunity to announce my candidacy for Franklin County Commission, District 4. After several months of prayer, I made the decision to run on the Republican ballot in the March 3, 2020 Republican Primary.

As a Franklin County resident the majority of my life, I love our county and desire to see it move forward and prosper. I could not think of a better way to help put that in motion other than running for County Commissioner. I know our county has many areas of work that need to be addressed, and I would like to help address those concerns for the citizens of Franklin County.

I have spent time over the past few weeks visiting door to door and taking note of many concerns. The next few weeks I plan to continue to knock on as many doors as possible. I have enjoyed the experience of meeting new faces and hearing stories about Franklin County.

On a more personal note, in case I do not get to meet you face to face, I have lived in the Red Bay/Vina area for the past 28 years. My husband Clint Holcombe and I have been married for going on 19 years. We have two children, Braiden Holcombe, 15, and Justus Holcombe, 6, who attend Red Bay school. Our family attends Holly Springs Baptist Church in the Atwood Community, where Clint has served as pastor for the past 14 years.

I would appreciate your vote in the upcoming Republican Primary.



Misty Holcombe and family

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There was a little old black woman who gave her last \$5 to a young student going off to college. She had no idea about the true investment she was making. All she knew was she had cleaned houses, washed and ironed clothes, and taken care of children while their parents were at work, and now she was ready to help as her church took up money by giving her last \$5 bill.

Huntsville city councilman Devyn Keith was the main speaker for the King Holiday Celebration that captured the audience's attention by telling the story of Judge Thurgood Marshall. The \$5 was helping a young man go to Howard University.

This sacrifice was included in many of Thurgood Marshall's speeches, too. It was something he never forgot because it made a difference in his life and he later became the first black Supreme Court Justice. Later he changed his name to Thurgood Marshall and was known as a lawyer who had a passion for civil rights.

I sat in awe to learn from the speaker about Abraham Joshua

Herchel, a Polish rabbi with a social consciousness that led him to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. He was from New York but came to Selma, AL to join the Selma to Montgomery March for Voting Rights. Herchel said he felt like his legs and feet were praying as he walked with Dr. King.

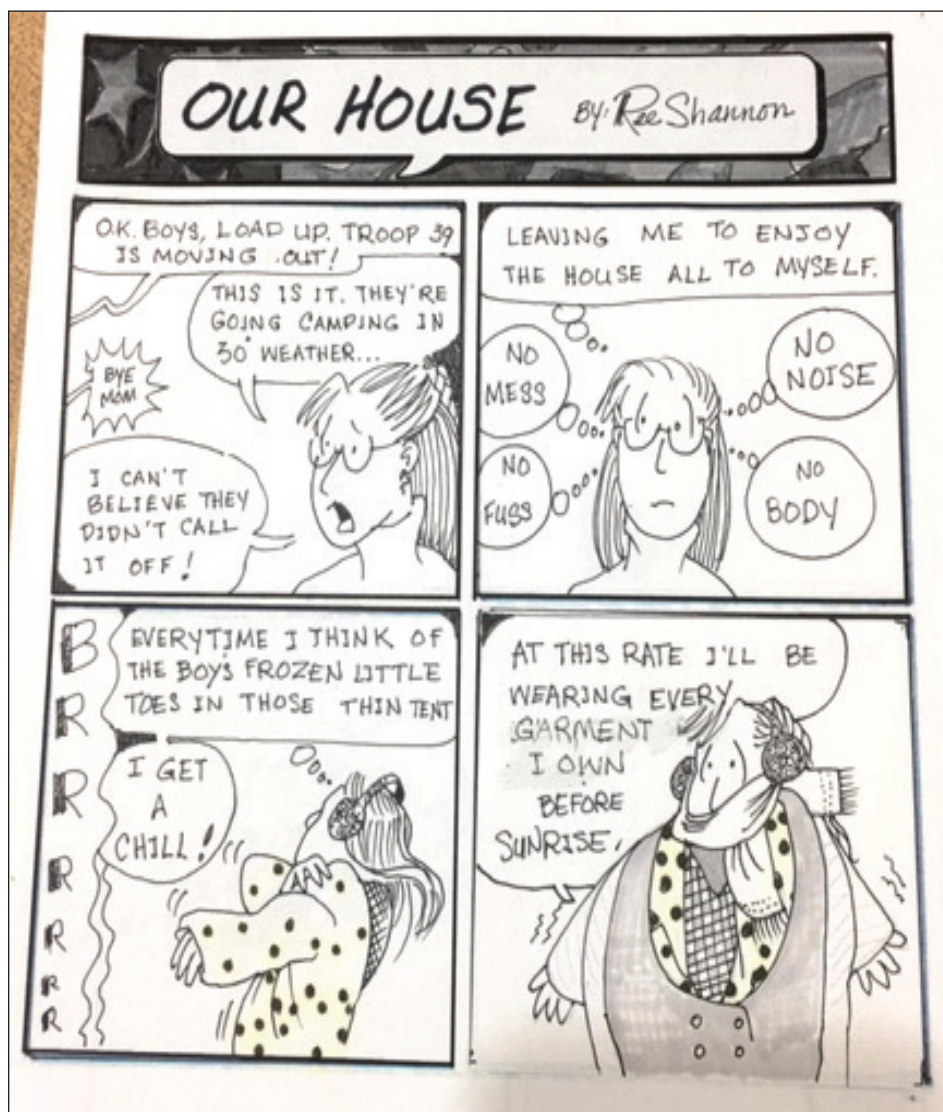
Mr. Jerry Stanford was honored to introduce his grandson, Devyn Keith. The legacy lives on in Devin Jones, who gave the occasion and told why so many were assembled at the Todd Center. He is the grandson of Mr. Melvin Young, co-chair of the event. A number of youth participated in the march, sang in the choir and awaited their message for the day.

Laken Robinson, a graduate of Russellville High School, was the youth speaker. 'Walking in Faith' should have been her topic, but instead she focused on "Stepping out of your Comfort Zone." If you always live comfortable, you can not grow. When you live uncomfortable,



Sheryl Hamilton

See 'CHANGE,' Page 5



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

113 WASHINGTON AVE. NW
RUSSELLVILLE, AL 35653
256-332-0255

The *Franklin Free Press* is published weekly by Pilati Investments, Inc. Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

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Council's action sends message: Public library a valuable resource

It didn't take more than a few moments for the Russellville City Council to unanimously approve *Item 8* on the agenda at the council's February 3 meeting.

There wasn't any discussion about *Item 8* as it was approved, much to the satisfaction of members of the Russellville Library Board who attended Monday's meeting.

But the importance of approving *Item 8* permeates across the community, as it helped to ensure the continued success of the Russellville Public Library under the leadership of librarian Ashley Cummins.

Last week, Russellville Library Board members asked the council to vote on a pay raise it recommended for Cummins, from \$12.50/hour to \$13.50/hour. While not a significant increase, it was a step in the right direction to keep the library moving forward under Cummins' leadership.

The council did more than just approve a \$1/hour raise. It sent a message that city officials realize and appreciate the importance of a vibrant public library in their city.

Last year, the Russellville Public Library was honored by the Alabama Library Association (ALLA) with its Bronze Level Standard Award for Public Libraries. It was the first ALLA award for the Russellville Public Library and was a goal Cummins and her staff had worked toward for several years.

In addition to Cummins, the library staff includes Perla Martinez and Peggy Harrison,

along with a host of volunteers.

City of Russellville officials have come a long way the last 30 years in recognizing the invaluable asset they have with their public library. Through the years, the Russellville Library Board and Friends of the Russellville Public Library have advocated for increased budgets for the library and better pay for its employees.

It wasn't too long ago when the librarian wasn't even a full-time position, and efforts to change that were met with resistance from some elected officials.

By approving *Item 8*, the council did more than just approve a \$1/hour raise. It sent a message that city officials realize and appreciate the importance of a vibrant public library in their city.

The Russellville Public Library offers more than just books available for checkout. Public computers are available for Internet usage, often the only Internet access some residents have.

The library staff hosts a variety of events throughout the year, both for children and for the community.

You may be surprised to learn that prospective Russellville residents often visit the public library in advance of making a decision whether to move here.

"The library is often one of the first places a visitor to Russellville calls on as a resource," Russellville mayor David Grissom said. "It's an



John Pilati
Publisher

See 'LIBRARY,' Page 5

Love is in the air: FFP Valentine's Day contest winners

Email entries in Valentine Contest:

My Special Valentine is my hubby of 6 years Zach Smith! He is my rock, my best friend, my encourager, the daddy to our 3 babies, oh and also my Pastor! He loves me with all he has and prays for me daily! He's also the hardest worker I know! Blessed with a wonderful man! We would love to win a basket full of goodies!!!

My special Valentine is my husband Brad Rickard of 8 years. We haven't always had the easiest life starting out but he has always worked hard for my 3 children and I to make ends meet and provide what we need. He is a hard worker at work and at home helping the public at Walmart and taking care of our 3 boys and the home duties. We work opposite shifts so we don't see each other much. He is very special to us and very much appreciated and this would be an awesome way to show him his dedication as a father, a husband and provider does not go unnoticed!

My special Valentine is Jeff Murray. I never knew what love was until I met him. He is my best friend, my soul mate, and the love of my life. I never thought I would find someone to except me and my kids and then and now 20 years later we have 4 kids NOT his 2 and my 2. He has always treated my kids as his and me the same. We have 4 kids and we have 4 grandkids together. We love them all the same. This is the most amazing life I have with the most amazing man in the world. I love you Jeffery with all my heart and then some. Thank you from your wife Tina

My special someone this year is my grandma(i call her bebe) she has been there all my life practically raised me for a good portion of my life she means the world to me and it without her I don't know where I would be don't know who I would be today she is the reason why I am who I am today she's just like a mother figure to me I wouldn't trade her for anything in the world any amount of money in the amount of anything I wouldn't trade her she's my rock my life and I love her she has been through a lot in her life that most would know about she has a device in her chest it helps her heart because it cannot physically pump itself any-

important part of our community, and we appreciate the job our library staff is doing."

Major advances in technology haven't obviated the need for a public library. Actually, they've enhanced it, as the library provides access for all

you continue to grow.

Dream, speak it into existence. and God will do the rest. God will move you and send you places that amaze you. Simply walk by faith.

Robinson honored her grandfather, Mr. Jack Dale, who was a Vietnam Veteran and saluted the other men who had served their country. After

Merrill said students must meet certain criteria in order to participate. They must be recommended by a principal or school official, be at least 16 years old on election day, be a resident of the county or municipality for which the appointment is made and be enrolled in school or be home-schooled.

more she can't hardly hear all that great she has three years left battery life on her defibrillator she gets around the city but still need help I have always helped her I've always made sure she had her medicine and yes I know since I've grown up I haven't been by her side like I used to when I lived with her and I was a kid but I have always been a phone call or a text away she knows she can call or text me if she needs anything and I know I can do the same we have always been super super close nothing will come in between us and I know she's going to be here for 90 more years and I just really really appreciate everything she's done for me no amount of words can express the love I have for my grandma She has my back when nobody else does when times get bad and I need someone to talk to I know I can go to her there's very many more Words I could say but I'm going to leave it there I love her with all my heart may be late but I will always be there. Sincerely, her granddaughter, jennifer allred

My special valentine(s) are my babies, Natalie, Abby, and Kloe! Although, they are my little cousins, they are more than just that. They make my gray skies turn to a beautiful hue of pink, purple, and blue. They keep me floating even when I feel like I am sinking. They make me want to become a better person. They make me want to chase my dreams so I can help them chase theirs. I have a bond with them like no other. So babies, if you're reading this, I love you. Over the moon, past the stars, and through your heart<3

So much love, Adriana :)

-Adriana Mojica

My special valentine is my wife Brittaney Morales. We have been together for 7 years married for 5. She is my rock, my best friend, the one I laugh with the most, an amazing mother to our 2 daughters. She has made me the confident man that I am today. If only she would know how much I love her more than she loves me I would do anything in my powers to tell or express to her.

Many thanks.

-Erick Morales

My special valentine is Derrick Standridge. I have been married to my valentine for 22 years.

'LIBRARY,' from page 4

to that technology.

It's a source of history, recreation, education and summer activity for kids, as well as a source of pride for the community. At least, it should be.

With the City of Russellville, our leaders recog-

'CHANGE,' from page 4

graduating from college, Laken moved to Atlanta, GA to pursue her career. She does not have family there, but she is managing well.

My heart rejoiced to know that I was doing something good with my change and helping students to continue their education with the Rev. C.D. Hamilton Memorial Scholarship. For many

'POLL,' from page 1

The Alabama Secretary of State's website, www.sos.alabama.gov, has a link for students to complete an application online to take to their principal. After it's completed by the school official, the application must be returned to the probate judge's office.

Franklin County superintendent of education

My valentine is special to me because he let's me know I am loved EVERYDAY! Just one of the many things he does is he gets up every morning and makes sure I have everything I need for the day and warms up my car before I go to work. He also sends me sweet text in the day and takes me out every night. I have loved him since the first day we met when I was 16. He loves me on my good days and not so good day :-). I could not do life without my valentine by my side. He also teaches the youth and children at church every week the love of Jesus.

My special valentine is my husband, Elvin Howard. We've been together 43 years this year. I don't remember not knowing him we've been together so long. I hope we have 43 more. I love him so much. He's my everything. I can't imagine a world without him. —Lisa Howard

My Special Valentine is my Husband Marvin Mckinney Jr. Valentines Day is the Anniversary of our very 1st Date after him being very persistent from October to February to get me convinced to go out. After being in a bad relationship before and being divorced for 17 years and dating very little during that time I was scared to trust anyone, but I am so very glad that I did trust him and go out with him that first time. I am Happy to say this October we will celebrate our 3rd Wedding Anniversary and I am very lucky and proud to have him as my husband and I Love him more than he will ever know. He goes out of his way to give me things and do things I like and even to looking for little details. He makes sure I feel loved and he takes very good care of me. —LeAnn Patterson McKinney

My Special Valentine is my granddaughter Jaycee Terry. At 3 months old she was diagnosed with Craniosynostosis and at 6 months old the Dr went into her skull and re opened it. From that moment, she had people praying for her all around the globe. Seemed like everyone in PC knew who she was even when we didn't know them. This 8 year old little girl lights up the heart of everyone that meets her. She is so loved by so many people and is truly an angel touched by God. —Tina James Ortiz

nize this, and they should be applauded for following the lead of the Russellville Library Board in working to say a small *thanks* to the person entrusted with this valuable city asset.

Well done!

years he worked with the MLK Memorial Committee and was a past president. He was inspired to join the movement while he attended Selma University. Marchers from Lauderdale and Colbert counties joined hands with the marchers of Franklin County. Luke Nelson, program chair, emphasized that we must learn to live together.

Greg Hamilton said he was pleased to learn about the new law, and he's advised administrators at each high school to encourage students to participate.

"This is a special opportunity and something we are excited about seeing our students get involved with," Hamilton said.

“In God We Trust!”

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


- 


Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Easter hams. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-8970. Pickup will be Saturday, April 11 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.
- 


West Elementary School is currently holding registration for Alabama's First Class Pre-K program at WES, a nationally recognized Pre-K program that sets school-ready children up for success as they continue through their educational career. Online applications can be filled out at <https://alprek.asapconnected.com>. Applications will be accepted through March 12. Enrollment is open to all children who will be four years old on or before September 1, 2020 and are residents of Alabama. Enrollees must provide a copy of the child's birth certificate and proof of residency (either a current utility bill or a copy of a loan or mortgage). Upon enrollment, the child's immunization form must be provided. Acceptance to the program is strictly through a random drawing that will be held Friday, March 13 at 9 a.m. at the RCS Board of Education. Parent/Guardian does not have to be present for drawing. For those interested in registering for Kindergarten at WES, registration will take place Monday-Friday, February 3-21, from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Russellville Board of Education located at 1945 Waterloo Road in Russellville. Documents required to register include: Birth certificate; Alabama shot record (not expired); lease, rental agreement, or deed; and a corresponding utility bill. Children who will be five years old on or before September 1, 2020 are eligible. For more info, visit <https://www.rcs.k12.al.us> and go to the West Elementary page.
- 


Sarah Collins Rudolph, the lone survivor of the bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham on September 15, 1963, will be the guest speaker in the worship service at First Missionary Baptist Church, 521 College Avenue in Russellville, at the 11 a.m., service on Sunday, February 23, 2020, in celebration of Black History Month. A reception will be held from 9-10 a.m., in the church vestibule. On Saturday, February 22, from 5-7 p.m., there will be a Meet and Greet with Mrs. Sarah at the Reedtown Back to Basics Life Skilled Center (Old Reedtown School). Pastor B.J. Bonner and congregation invite everyone to attend.
- 


American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, February 13 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. with meeting to follow.
- 


The Shoals Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Media Room at Park Place (500 N. Montgomery Avenue, Sheffield) this Thursday, February 13 at 2:30 p.m. Ellen Bryson will lead the study "Healing the Human Spirit" from the book *Anointed to Heal* by Larry and Audrey Eddings. We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. Prayer for healing will be offered. All are welcome.
- 


The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces its second production of the 2019-20 season, *Til Beth Do Us Part*, written by Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten and directed by Mark Richardson. The performance dates are February 13-15 at 7 p.m. and February 16 at 2 p.m. at the Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. Tickets are on sale at the Weatherford Centre. You may call between the hours of 2-4 p.m. weekdays to reserve tickets at 256-356-9829 or go by during those hours to purchase them. A dinner is offered for this production but must be purchased in advance, with the play ticket at \$8.00 and the meal at \$17.00. Total cost \$25.00 for both.
- 


Spruce Pine Community Center will be the site of a Candidate Supper this Saturday, February 15 at 6 p.m. Plates will be available for \$5, and candidates for local office will speak. Everyone is invited.
- 

The book *Scandalous Women: The Lives and Loves of History's Most Notorious Women*, by Elizabeth Kerri Mahon, will be discussed at the February 19 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 information, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.
- 

There will be a Candidate Supper at the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department on Friday, February 21 from 4 p.m.-7 p.m. William Earl Bishop's smoked chicken and pulled barbecue pork plates will be sold for \$10 each. Proceeds will go to the repair of the pump on Fire Engine #3. The East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department is located at 10443 Hwy. 81, Phil Campbell.
- 

Everyone is invited to a campaign rally for Tommy Tuberville for U.S. Senate. The rally is scheduled for Sunday, February 23 from 5-7 p.m. at the A.W. Todd Centre, 201 South Washington Avenue in Russellville.
- 

Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Next meeting is March 3. All members and friends are urged to attend.
- 

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris, Jr., Camp #1833, will meet Thursday, March 5 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more info, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!
- 

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, March 14 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 historic Roxy Theater.

NWSCC President's, Dean's list

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Northwest-Shoals Community College recently announced its President's and Dean's Lists for the 2019 fall semester.

Requirements for the President's List are a semester grade point average of 4.0 and the completion of a minimum semester course load of 12 semester credit hours of college-level work.

Students earning President's List Honors who are from the *Franklin Free Press* readership area include:

Hackleburg: Darby Elliott and Mya Mujica.

Hodges: Connor Stults.
Mt. Hope: Emma Henderson.

Phil Campbell: Brooke Baker, Anna Benford, Karley Ertle, Olivia Knight, Angelia Mims and Abby Swinney.

Red Bay: Hunter Bays, Joseph Lugo and Emma Russell.

Russellville: Jennifer Corona, Anna Garrison, Lauren Hammond, Madison Hargett, Alejandro Lugo, Tonya Rhudy and Justin Vincent.

Spruce Pine: Maggie Fowler, Christopher Gonzalez and Kristy Heath.

Requirements for the Dean's List are a semester grade point average of 3.5 or above but below a 4.0, and

the completion of a minimum semester course load of 12 semester hour of college-level work.

Students earning Dean's List Honors who are from the *Franklin Free Press* readership area include:

Hackleburg: Cassidy Mason.
Hodges: Brooke Brown.

Phil Campbell: Isaac Cummings, Samantha Fragale, Ethan Hall, Austin Jeane, Jeremy Mohr and Carly Rice.

Red Bay: Amy Kanehl, Jesus Kelly, Grace Pendergraph, Kevin Pineda Figueroa, Christopher Scott and April Tucker.

Russellville: Irma Ajualip Huarcas, James Bates, Christina Chavez, Kaitlyn Darracott, Stephanie Garcia, Lisette Gonzalez, Karlie Greenhill, Morgan Hill, William Hunderman, Halli Hunter, Elizabeth Jenkins, Matthew Johns, Jarrod Lasseter, Jasmine Martin, Erica Mateo Lopez, Lisette Mojica Osorio, Leslie Montgomery, Grayson Moore, Courtney Murphree, Jenny Ordonez Lopez, Yaslin Perez, Kaylee Smith, Blake Swinney, Cameron Vandiver, Triston Vandiver and Brianna Weeks.

Spruce Pine: Johnathan Gonzalez.
Vina: Colton Corum.

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'STUDY' from page 1

County Road 48 just inside the city limits.

"This was a bridge at one time, but it was taken out and replaced with a fraction of the area that was there and they put metal pipes in," Palmer said. "It's not just flooding. Water over-tops those structures, and its velocity is excessive.

"I'm concerned not only about the flooding situation but the scouring out of the structure. That can lead to very serious issues. I'd like to replace the structures there as soon as we can with something that makes sense."

Palmer estimated the cost of the city-wide flood study to be between \$100,000 and \$140,000. Once the flood study recommendations are presented to the city, there are several possible avenues of grant funding to help with the cost.

"We can try and get grant money to help rectify the problems," Palmer said. "We all know about the situation on Washington Avenue. We all know that structure is undersized, and it's ridiculous how much.

"There's the KFC and hospital, Hal Kirby Park. All up and down with these drainage areas there are issues."

Palmer explained that prior to doing any repair work to alleviate flooding, a flood study would be a prerequisite.

"We can't think of repairing structures within those watersheds without a flood study," Palmer said.

The council also approved hiring the Civil Group to draft plans and specifications to mitigate flooding problems on Washington Avenue behind First Baptist Church. Once the plans are received, the city will let the project out to bid.

"We've talked about this two times and actually acted on it, but we can't get a contractor to come in and rectify that problem," Palmer said. "We'll now have a fairly simple set of plans and can take bids and give a time frame to get it done.

"They have a real problem there. It's getting worse and worse. I'm disappointed we have tried hard to get it fixed and haven't been successful."

In other action at the February 3 meeting, the council: •Approved the renewal of a \$500,000 line of credit with CB&S Bank, at a one-year interest rate of one point below prime, which would be a current rate of 3.75 percent. This emergency line has no balance, and mayor David Grissom said it's only been utilized twice since 2012 and was paid back promptly both times.

•Approved the adoption of the Russellville Airport Layout plans and authorized Grissom to sign the same.

•Approved the hire of Jimmy Shawn Hines as a firefighter with the Russellville Fire Department.

•Approved the recommendation of the Russellville Library Board to increase the hourly pay of librarian Ashley Cummins from \$12.50 to \$13.50.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be February 17 with work session at 6 p.m. and meeting to follow.

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Borden signs with Bevil State

PC boys win area

Bobcats advance to sub-region game for second year in a row

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

As Belgreen High School senior Sydney Borden was preparing to sign her name to a letter of intent to play collegiate softball, stories of her hardworking approach to the game flew across the room. From tales of staying hours past practice to work or tweak some mechanics, to working on things during the offseason, it was clear that Borden was destined to play at the next level.

Signing with Bevil State Community College on Wednesday, January 7th, in the Belgreen school library, the culmination of Borden's hard work finally came to fruition.

"I have been trying to do this my entire life. I used to watch Alabama's softball team on TV and I always told my dad that's what I wanted to do," Borden said. "So I've known since I was little that this is what I wanted to do."

The upcoming softball season will be the first as the head coach for the Belgreen Lady Bulldogs for Susie Tverberg. After coaching at in-county rival Tharptown High School for 10 years, Tverberg made the move to Belgreen this year. While she hasn't yet had the chance to coach Borden, she has long been impressed with her skill set watching her from across the diamond.

See 'BORDEN,' Page 16



PHOTO BY BRADY PETREE

Borden (center) who hit .378 her junior year, parlayed her hard work into a scholarship with Bevil State Community College

PHIL CAMPBELL - During a timeout with 2.6 seconds remaining in Thursday's Class 3A, Area 14 championship game against Colbert Heights, Shane Clay the Coach was all business.

But when the huddle broke and freshman guard Canaan Clay headed to the foul line to try and break a 53-53 tie, Shane Clay the Dad was all nerves.

"I think my dad was more nervous than I was," Canaan would later say.

Then again...

"I was pretty nervous," Canaan admitted. "The game in my hands and everything. Excitement, nerves, adrenaline—all that. All at the same time. But I was pretty confident I was gonna make it."

From his viewpoint near the Phil Campbell bench, Shane Clay could tell immediately that Canaan's adrenaline-fueled first attempt was too strong.

"The first one, I looked from the angle, and I knew that was long," Shane said. "The second one, it was either gonna be good or short. It had good line. It was right there."

It was indeed. Canaan's second free throw touched nothing but net, putting Phil Campbell in front by one and allowing Shane Clay the Dad to smile and breathe a sigh of relief. All that remained at that point was for the Bobcats to execute what Shane Clay the Coach had talked about during that last timeout.

"In the huddle, we just said, 'Hey, Canaan is gonna hit one or two, and that's gonna put us up,'" Shane recalled. "[Carson] Shaw is gonna get the ball, and he's gonna try to drive coast to coast. Brett [Saint], you're gonna deny him.' And he did a good job with two seconds on the clock."

Shaw, a 6'1 junior guard who had already scored a game-high 23 points for the Wildcats, caught the inbounds pass deep in the backcourt and was forced to heave up a desperation shot from just shy of mid-court. The ball clanged harmlessly off the top of the backboard, giving Phil Campbell a 54-53 win and its first area tournament championship since 2006.

"I was hoping and praying that shot wouldn't go in," Shane Clay said of Shaw's half-court heave. "It looked good from the side. I was like, 'No, no, no!' Then it hit the top, and I just said, 'Yes!'"

Luke Garrison led the Bobcats (6-17) with 15 points, 11 of which came in the second half. Saint added 10 points, and senior Ben Williams chipped in with eight points and eight rebounds.

Williams and junior guard Jonah Fisher each

knocked down a timely three midway through the fourth quarter to give Phil Campbell a five-point lead at 51-46. Colbert Heights (6-21) answered with a three by Austin Castle—his fourth of the night—and eventually pulled even at 53-53 on a steal and layup by Skyler Balta with 35 seconds remaining.

Fisher missed a pair of free throws with 24 seconds left, but Clay bought the Bobcats another possession when he tipped the rebound to Williams. Phil Campbell failed to capitalize, however, turning the ball over out of a timeout.

On the Wildcats' ensuing trip, Zack Ward drove the lane and tried to kick the ball out, but Garrison deflected it into the hands of Clay, who was fouled with less than three seconds on the clock. The Bobcats were in the double-bonus, and Clay—who split time during the regular season between the B-Team and the varsity and was 10-for-16 from the line on the year as a varsity player—made the most of it, draining what is undoubtedly the most important free throw of his life to date.

"That's huge. For him as a ninth-grader...I'm super proud," Shane Clay said. "I can imagine what he was going through at the line, one free throw to win the area championship. He's just a ninth-grader. Every day, he's in the gym at seven o'clock, getting shots up. Shot after shot after shot. He stays late after practice, shot after shot after shot. It finally paid off. To step to the line as a ninth-grader in the biggest game of the year, in front of the best crowd we've had all year...then to miss the first one and step back up and knock the second one down was great to see—not just for a coach but for a dad as well."

"It's a little different from a coach to a dad," Clay added with a smile. "I'm super-proud of him, and everybody else, too. It's been fourteen years since they've won an area tournament here, and that's what we're trying to do here, trying to build."

Clay is in his first year as head coach at Phil Campbell after spending the previous decade-plus as an assistant at Hewitt-Trussville High School. His inaugural season with the Bobcats—who dropped their final eight games of the regular season and didn't record a win between the county tournament and the area tournament—was a struggle at times, but there he was on Thursday night, climbing a ladder with a pair of scissors to do what every coach dreams of doing from the time the season starts.

"He got us through all this and did a great job coaching us all season," Canaan said of his dad.

See 'PC,' Page 13

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'BORDEN,' from page 11

"Sydney's presence in the infield is what has really stood out to me over the years watching her. She's so dominant and if something is hit even remotely near her, you know it's going to be an out," Tverberg said. "She also has an amazing sense for the game. She knows what we're going to do beforehand, she knows why we do it, and she's just a dynamic player."

Not only does Borden have her coach's referral in terms of her talent, she has stats to back her up as well. Last season, Borden's junior year, she batted a robust .378 to go along with a .490 on-base percentage, 42 hits (11 or extra bases), 34 RBI's, 34 runs scored and 25 walks. Borden was also a standout on the pitching rubber for the Bulldogs last season as she went 10-3 with 62 strikeouts across 55 innings pitched. Borden was also named to the all-area team as well a Times Daily honorable mention. Off the diamond, Borden is a member of the Belgreen High School Beta Club and is also a member of the school's volleyball team.

Borden has primarily signed on with Bevil State to play in the infield, but being a dual-threat only increased her odds of landing a scholarship. Tverberg says that the coaches at Bevil State will get everything they asked for and more from Borden as she makes the transition to the college level.

"Sydney's biggest asset is probably her commit-

ment to the game. She's very smart and makes good grades but at the same time is so dedicated to the game," Tverberg said. "I have no doubt when she gets to Bevil she'll be the first one to arrive and the last one to leave. Sydney wants to be better at everything she does and that's the exact thing the coaches at Bevil they were getting."

Looking ahead to the academic side of things for Borden, she says she has expressed interest in potentially going into education and becoming a coach once her playing days are behind her.

As she goes into her senior year, Borden has her sights set on a personal goal she would like to accomplish on the field before she graduates.

"I want to be there for my teammates and Emma (Dempsey). I want to catch everything that's hit to me. If I can go the entire year without committing any errors, that's what I want," Borden said.

When it came time to choose the right college for her to continue her career at, Borden didn't hesitate. She knew that Bevil was the perfect place for her.

"Bevil was a very easy choice for me. It was close to my house and that was a big thing for me. But it was really about how Bevil made me feel," Borden said. "It felt like home. I'm used to a smaller school feel and Bevil felt just like Belgreen does in terms of size and feeling like home. It just made perfect sense for me."

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'PC,' from page 11

"It feels great. I just moved here [this year], and the excitement of the school is great. We hadn't won [an area tournament] in over five thousand days. It had been fourteen years. It's great to bring it back."

Following last Saturday's overtime loss at Phillips in the regular season finale, Shane Clay was able to sell his players on the idea that the postseason represented a brand new start.

"We had a tough game against Phillips, losing in overtime, and the kids were kind of down," Clay said. "At the end of the game, I said, 'Everybody in the state is zero and zero.' And we just kept instilling that at Monday's practice, Tuesday's practice, Wednesday's practice. 'Everybody is zero and zero. You've got the same record as everybody else.' They did buy into it, and they played one of their better games of the year tonight."

"Tonight we played together, from the people on the floor to the bench. I was super-proud of all thirteen of them. They deserve it. They've really been working hard. We've been working since September, and some things haven't gone our way this year. But they kept battling, kept fighting, kept practicing hard. I told them, 'If you keep working hard, good things are gonna happen.' And tonight it happened."

The Bobcats got after Colbert Heights defensively in the first quarter, forcing nine turnovers and holding the Wildcats to just 2-for-9 shooting. Phil Campbell led 13-7 after one and extended the lead to 17-8 early in the second quarter when Garrison found Blain Goodson for a pick-and-roll layup.

Castle woke up the Wildcats with back-to-back threes, and Colbert Heights climbed back to within one at 18-17 on two free throws by Shaw at the 4:27 mark.

Saint, who had exited the game moments earlier after picking up his second foul, reentered at that point and provided a spark. The junior point guard set up Nate Orrick for an easy bucket and then scored seven points over the final three minutes of the half to help Phil Campbell take a 29-23 lead into the break.

"Brett had a couple of turnovers and maybe an ill-advised shot there," Clay said. "We brought him out and let him watch just a little bit, then we put him back in. In seventh period today, I told him we had to have a great game from him tonight. I just had a feeling that Coach [Jacob] Walker was gonna run the box-and-one on Luke and the 1-3-1 [zone], just like they did Tuesday night [in a 56-46 win over East Lawrence]. We prepared for that Monday, Tuesday and yesterday morning."

"Tonight we played together, from the people on the floor to the bench. I was super-proud of all thirteen of them. They deserve it. They've really been working hard. We've been working since September, and some things haven't gone our way this year. But they kept battling, kept fighting, kept practicing hard. I told them, 'If you keep working hard, good things are gonna happen.' And tonight it happened."

Garrison finished the regular season averaging a team-best 17.5 points per game and topped the 30-point mark three times, including a 30-point outing in a 60-44 win over Colbert Heights on December 12. As Clay expected, the Wildcats made the junior guard the focus of their defensive game plan on Thursday night.

"I thought other people stepped up," Clay said, "because Luke didn't have his best game. I told them right before the game, we had a feeling they were gonna try to stop Luke because he had thirty in one of the games against them. Other people stepped up for us. Dylan [Jeane] played well, Easton [Cummings] gave us some good minutes, Blain played well, and Jonah knocked down some really big shots. He's another guy who's been working really hard and getting a lot of shots up. I'm super-proud of him, too."

Garrison got going with nine third-quarter points, but the Wildcats still managed to trim the lead to five at 42-37 going to the fourth. They cut it to one on a pull-up jumper by Shaw with 4:25 remaining, but Fisher answered with his second three of the night to make it 48-44.

Ward scored for the Wildcats to cut the lead back to two, but Williams drilled a three from the right corner to make it 51-46.

"Ben's not our best three-point shooter," Clay said with a smile, "but that was a big one he hit out of the corner. It was one of those shots where you go, 'No, no, no...YES!!' Ben's always battling. We're lacking in height, but he's in there battling. He's just got a knack for the basketball on the defensive end, and he works super hard. I'm proud of him. I'm proud for all of our seniors. This was their last area championship game, and to go out winners, we're super-proud of them, too."

Garrison had five steals to go along with his 15 points. Saint shot 5-for-6 from the line and also had three assists. Fisher had seven points and four

boards, and Jeane finished with five points. Clay pulled down six rebounds to go along with his three points, and Goodson had four points and four boards. Orrick scored two points.

The Bobcats grinded out a win on a night when they shot just 36 percent (20-for-55) from the field and 9-for-20 from the foul line. The Wildcats also shot 36 percent (19-for-53) from the floor and struggled at the line as well, going 11-for-25.

Shaw shot 9-for-12 from the line and had seven rebounds to go with his 23 points. Castle added 12 points. Ward had six points and five boards, and Caden Davis chipped in with five points and eight rebounds.

Phil Campbell will now host Friday night's loser between Lauderdale County and Westminster Christian in a sub-regional game next Tuesday night, with a trip to Hanceville on the line.

"We're excited about hosting a sub for the first time since '06," Clay said. The Bobcats' most recent trip to the Northwest Regional was four years ago, when they lost to Mars Hill in a Class 2A semifinal.

"The boys haven't been [to Hanceville] since 2016," Canaan Clay said. "It's history in the making, already."



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Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

For the third straight season, the campus of Wallace-Hanceville Community College will play host to Craig Thomas and his Lady Bobcats as they advanced to the AHSAA regional tournament with a win over Lexington on Monday night of 39-35. The Lady Bobcats (21-6) defeated East Lawrence en route to their sub-regional match with the Lady Golden Bears as Lexington (11-8) lost to Lauderdale County in their area tournament.

Both the Lady Bobcats and Golden Bears got off to a slow start, with Phil Campbell's first made shot attempt not coming until there were only 3 minutes left in the first quarter. Katie Thomas got the offense started with that first made shot, a 3-pointer, as Phil Campbell would go on a 7-2 run to close out the first quarter. 8 of Thomas's 14 total points on the night would come in the first half as the Lady Bobcats went into the half tied with Lexington at 16 apiece.

Coach Thomas was the first to admit that while the first half wasn't the offensive showing they had come to expect from themselves, they were able to make up for it in the second half.

"Sixteen points in a half is not us. It's just not who we are as a team. But we made some adjustments after the half and we went on some good runs on both sides of the ball," Thomas said.

Coming out in the second half, the Lady Bobcats were able to turn their offensive woes around as they matched Lexington shot for shot throughout the third quarter. Phil Campbell was nearly able to match their first half point total (16) in the third quarter (13) behind Caitlynn Mills' 5 of her 10 total points on the night.

On top by just 4 points going into the 4th quarter, Lady Bobcat Kallie Allen who is also a Wallace State basketball commit, had been contained for a majority of the night. Allen had just managed to score one point through three quarters before the Lady Bobcats looked to her to close the door on their sub-regional victory. Allen would put up 6 points in the game, 3 of which came with under two minutes to play.

Others scoring for the Lady Bobcats included Faith Cook with 4 points, Madison Branch with 3 points, and Olivia Taylor chipped in with 2 points.

As the Lady Bobcats begin to prepare to look ahead to their regional matchup this weekend, Thomas believes that if his team focuses on the right things and does what they're used to, they will be in good shape.

"We have got to play more disciplined and give up less turnovers. Lexington denied the ball really well and we had some issues with it but we are going to work on it throughout the week," Thomas said. "If we can give up less turnovers and just play our game the way we want to always play it, we will be just fine."

According to the AHSAA website, Phil Campbell will take on New Hope High School Saturday, February 15th at 6PM at Wallace State Community College.

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Lane Shewbart
Junior Post Player, Red Bay

Shewbart showed out in last Friday's Class 2A, Area 13 final against Sulligent, scoring a career-high 23 points to lead Red Bay to a 79-56 win. The 6'6 junior (who had made just two threes all season) knocked down two more on Friday and also went 7-for-7 from the foul line on his way to topping the 20-point mark for the first time in his varsity career.

Shewbart averaged 16.5 points in two area tournament games last week. Through Sunday he was averaging 7.6 points per game on the season while shooting 73 percent from the line.



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