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**03.04.20**

# Medical marijuana bill passes Senate Judiciary Committee vote

*John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press*

A bill that would legalize and provide for state regulation of medical marijuana in Alabama cleared its first path in the Alabama Senate when the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 8-1 to move the bill out of committee and onto the Senate floor for a vote.

Sen. Larry Stutts (R-Tusculumbia) was the lone member of the committee to vote against Senate Bill 165. Sen. Sam Givhan (R-Huntsville) abstained.

The bill is being sponsored by Sen. Tim Melson (R-Florence), a physician, who introduced similar legislation last year.

SB 165 provides for the use of medical marijuana for any of the following conditions: anxiety or panic disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, cancer-related cachexia, nausea or vomiting, weight loss or chronic pain, Crohn's

Disease, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, HIV/AIDS related nausea or weight loss, persistent nausea that is not significantly responsive to traditional treatment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, sleep disorders, spasticity associated with a motor neuron disease, spasticity associated with Multiple Sclerosis or a spinal cord injury, a terminal illness in which life expectancy is six months or less, Tourette's Syndrome, a condition causing chronic or intractable pain in which conventional intervention has failed and any other medical condition that may later be added by the commission overseeing medical marijuana use in Alabama.

The controversial legislation saw strong support and opposition at the February 19<sup>th</sup> committee meeting. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall has publicly opposed the bill.

33 states have legalized some form of medical marijuana

See 'MARIJUANA' Page 8

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# Mars Hill purchase in final stages

*John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press*

While reporting that Russellville City Schools has 'purchased' the Mars Hill Bible School Russellville building is premature, both parties took a step in that direction recently by signing an intent to purchase agreement on the facility.

Mars Hill Preschool is located on Lawrence Street in Russellville. Mars Hill officials shocked parents last year with an abrupt announcement that the Russellville location would close December 31, 2019. After concerns were raised by parents, school officials agreed to extend that closing date to May 31, 2020.

RCS Superintendent Heath Grimes issued a press release February 19<sup>th</sup> announcing the agreement to purchase the Mars Hill Preschool building.

Plans call for the facility to house all Pre-K classes for Russellville City Schools. The three existing Pre-K classes at West Elementary School will move to the facility along with creating three more 18-student classes, for a total of 108 students.

"We always have a great response to our Pre-K program, so this will allow us to offer these classes to even more student who will be able to benefit from starting their education with a



**COURTESY PHOTO**  
 Plans for the Mars Hill Bible School, once the purchase is completed by RCS, is to house Pre-K students for West Elementary School.

See 'MARS HILL' Page 7

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Doris Seay McDowell, Sprice Pine, died Sunday, March 1st. Funeral held at Southside Baptist Church. Internment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

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

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# 38th annual Miss RHS Pageant

Submitted to the FFP

The RHS Annual Staff will sponsor the 38<sup>th</sup> annual Miss RHS pageant on Friday, March 6 at 7:00 p.m. in the RHS auditorium. The pageant offers an array of talent and beauty. Miss RHS 2020 will be awarded over \$1100 in cash and prizes. Mrs. Hailey Witt will be emceeing this year's pageant. Miss Elizabeth Pierce, Miss RHS 2019 and student at UNA, will also be assisting and performing. The contestants will be competing in judges' interview, evening gown, and talent. Escorts are Levi Gist, Samuel Franklin, Jacob Davis, Hayden Wells, Diego Lopez, and Shawn Shackelford. Ms. Cindy Smith Coan is the director of the pageant, and Dr. AnnaKay Holland is the coordinator of the pageant and Annual Staff sponsor. Tickets will be sold on the night of the pageant. The costs of the tickets are \$10.00. Programs will be available for \$5. This event is one of the highlights of the year. There will be lots of entertainment that you will not want to miss.

We are so excited to again have Rising Stars and Little Sisters at our pageant this year. Each contestant in the pageant was asked to select two girls who are students in Russellville City Schools to assist in their performance. The Rising Stars are girls in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. You will see these little ladies during the evening gown revue. The Little Sisters for the pageant are girls in grades sixth through eighth. They will be introducing themselves and the talent for their Big Sister during the talent portion of the pageant. It is hoped that these young ladies will use this opportunity to be in front of this audience and one day want to be contestants in the Miss RHS pageant. We are continuing to build traditions. Something we are very good

See 'PAGEANT,' page 9



COURTESY PHOTO

Front row: Madison Murray and Kaydee Don Holland. Second row: A.J. Taylor, Alivia Clemmons, Ashton Shipley, Abby Brooke Montgomery, Sydney Grace Medley, Amara Qualls, Yesenia Vargas. Third row: Ashlee Moon, Celia Echeverria, Shelby Carson, Lauren Mae Sturdivant, Destiny Hatton, Sophie Moore, Abigail Dodson, Silvie Miller. Fourth row: Camille Lynn, Tori Tiffin, Sophie Hill, Malorie Pace, Madeline Cooper, and Olivia Borden)

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# Millionaire money moves

Ready or not, it's here: 2020. I'll bet you've already heard all kinds of speculation from the "experts" about the economy this year. How will the election impact the stock market? What about real estate trends?

No matter what happens, I want you to hear me loud and clear: The American Dream is alive and available to those who are willing to work for it. Anyone in this country can become a millionaire, but it won't happen by accident.

The key is to start acting like a millionaire before you become one. And you can do that *today*. Kick-start your year by making one (or all) of these three millionaire money moves.

**Double down on your mortgage payments.** It takes the average millionaire 10.2 years to pay off their home. These folks understand a key wealth-building principle: Interest that you pay is a penalty, and interest that you earn is a reward.

**Make yourself rich**—not the bank or the mortgage company! Even if you can only increase your monthly payment by a couple hundred dollars, do it. Every dollar counts. Can you imagine how exciting it will be to *invest* your monthly payment instead of pouring it into your house? Of course, if you have consumer debt from credit cards, vehicles or student loans, knock those out first and then focus on the mortgage.

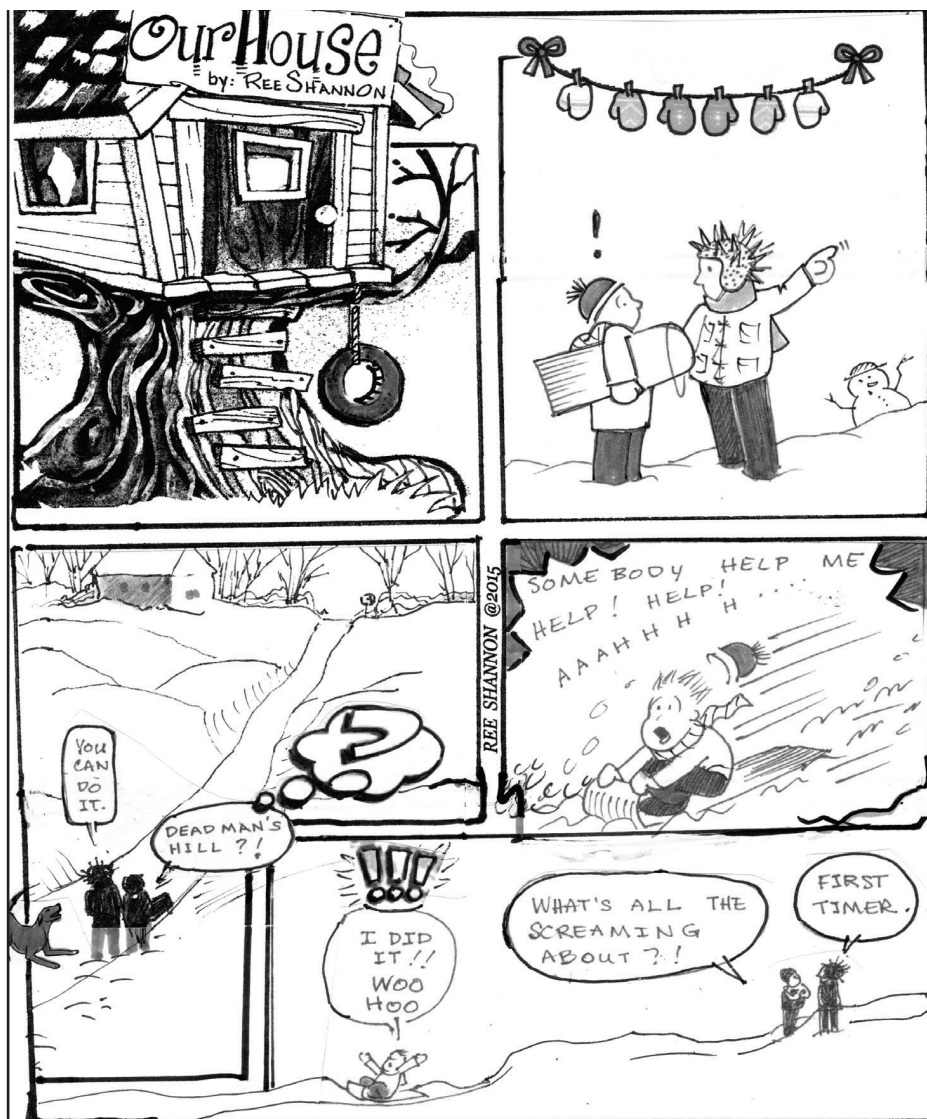
**Increase your workplace retirement plan contributions.** I've got some good news for you! The IRS is raising the annual contribution limits for employer-sponsored retirement plans (like 401(k)s) from \$19,000 to \$19,500.

It might sound boring, but consistent investing in a workplace retirement plan is the number one contributing factor to millionaires' high net worth. If you're debt-free and you get a raise this year, consider increasing your contributions instead of upgrading your lifestyle.

**Open a Roth IRA.** Over 70% of millionaires invest in both their company plan *and* in outside investments. You should invest at least 15% of your income in retirement plans—and up that number once your home is paid for. Unless you have a Roth 401(k) option at work, open up your own Roth



Chris Hogan



See 'MOVES' Page 10

## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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RUSSELLVILLE, AL 35653  
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The *Franklin Free Press* strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

### Letters to the editor

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

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## DAVE SAYS

Financial Straight-Talk

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

by Dave Ramsey

### It's a better idea to pre-plan

Dear Dave,

My husband passed away last year at just 45 years old. We always tried to be careful with our money, and we were in good enough shape financially that I paid for his funeral with cash. A few days ago, I started getting letters from the funeral homes in town encouraging me to pre-pay for my own funeral. I'm 42, and in very good health, so is this a good idea?

Janet

Dear Janet,

My advice is to *pre-plan*, not *pre-pay*. Unfortunately, you learned first-hand how hard it is to make important decisions in the middle of that kind of grief. Many times, people are so emotional when they face these kinds of things that they make bad decisions. That's why *pre-planning*, and making decisions ahead of time, is a really good move.

Now, here's why it's never a good idea to pre-pay for this kind of thing. If you live to an average age, for what you'd prepay today at your age, you could invest the amount and be self-insured. You'd

have a ton of money sitting there when the time comes.

Events like this make you realize the need for proper planning, but don't ever pre-pay for them. God bless you, Janet. I'm so sorry you're going through this.

Dave

### No, they're not a good deal

Dear Dave,

I have an emergency fund equal to six months of expenses. Considering this, would you consider an extended home warranty to be a waste of money?

Ami

Dear Ami,

My advice to have an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses, sitting in a good money market account with check writing privileges, is designed to cover the unexpected things that life will throw at you. The cash, combined with the easy access that kind of account allows, will make it quick and easy to take care of things in the event of a financial emergency.

Extended warranties, of any kind, are not a good deal and I don't recommend them. You're better off to self-insure against things breaking down, and put what would have been profit for the extended warranty company in your own pocket!

Dave

\* Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including *The Total Money Makeover*. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 16 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at [daveramsey.com](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

# At its meeting held February 10, 2020, the Russellville Gas Board adopted the new Natural Gas Rate Schedule, effective February 24, 2020, as follows:



## NATURAL GAS RATE SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 24, 2020

### **Tier 1 - General Service Rate:**

*Available to new/current residential & commercial customers using an annual average of less than 1,000 CCF per month.*

*New customers must meet the RGB Marketing Program requirements for Tier 1 – General Service (i.e. customer appliances must include a Natural Gas Water Heater or Primary Natural Gas Heating System). Note: prior customers who have discontinued their gas service for more than 12 months are considered new customers.*

Availability charge per month	\$ 9.50
Volumetric charge per CCF *	\$ 1.295

### **Tier 2 - General Service Rate:**

*Available to new residential & commercial customers using an average of less than 1,000 CCF per month, and meeting the RGB Marketing Program requirements for Tier 2 – General Service (i.e. customer appliances do not include a Natural Gas Water Heater or Primary Natural Gas Heating System)*

Availability charge per month	\$ 25.00
Volumetric charge per CCF *	\$ 1.295

### **Large Commercial Rate:**

*Available to commercial customers using an annual average of 1,000 CCF per month or more.*

Availability charges per month	\$ 28.00
Volumetric charge per CCF *	\$ 0.982
Volumetric charge per MCF *	\$ 9.820

### **Special Poultry Rate:**

Volumetric charge per CCF *	\$ 1.030
-----------------------------	----------

### **Small Industrial Rate:**

Minimum Charge	\$ 55.00
Volumetric charge per CCF *	\$ 0.780
Volumetric charge per MCF *	\$ 7.800

### **Large Industrial Sales Rate:**

By contract with the Russellville Gas Board.

\*Note: Rates for CCF and MCF volumes are calculated based on an average BTU content of 1,050 BTUs per cubic foot.

\*\*Rates are based on a March 2020 gas cost of \$2.88 per MMBTU. All rates are subject to a purchased gas cost adjustment (PGA), on file at the Russellville Gas Board.

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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 Easter hams. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. 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 more info, visit <https://www.rcs.k12.al.us> and go to the West Elementary page.


 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 is welcome to attend!


 Flag Day Celebration will be held this Saturday, March 7 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Sloss Lake Park in Russellville. Please call 256-324-2317 for more information.


 The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will hold a Private Applicator Training Course and exam Tuesday, March 10 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Upper Coastal Plains Substation, 171 Experiment Station Loop in Winfield. Immediately following the training, a Sprayer Calibration Workshop will be held from 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m. This workshop will consist of demonstrating methods to accurately calibrate various spray rigs to ensure correct pesticide application. A meal will be provided at the Winfield Private Applicator Training Course and there will be a \$25 charge to attend. To RSVP, call Lisa Murphy at 205-921-3551.


 American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, March 12 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. with meeting to follow.


 Phil Campbell Friday Night Dance will celebrate 18th Anniversary next Friday night, March 13th. All previous musicians and public are invited to attend; Phil Campbell Community Center, Sherry Bryce Drive, off College Road, 7:00 p.m., \$5. admission.


 Revival at Gateway Church, 15988 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL. Special Singing each night. Dates: March 13th- March 15th. Evangelist is Floyd Lawhon. He is an International Evangelist. Services will begin Friday and Saturday at 7:00. Sunday Morning service at 10:45 and Sunday Evening at 5:00.


 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Marty Harris 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.

 Osborn Hill Cemetery will meet on Thursday, March 19 at the Littleville Town Hall at 6 p.m. to elect officers for the coming year. Donations are needed to help maintain the perpetual care now and in the future. Please make check payable to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan, 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tusculumbia, AL 35674, or to the Valley State Bank in Russellville, AL 35674. We encourage everyone to come!

 There will be a one-year celebration of the Little Free Library at Phil Campbell Memorial Park on Saturday, March 21 from 10 a.m.-noon. Guest authors DeCory Hale and Jake Owens will be in attendance, and a book swap will be held. Everyone is welcome!

 Ronnie McDowell returns to Russellville to celebrate his 70th birthday with a special show at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, March 21 at 7 p.m. Joseph Baldwin and Johnathan Len will open the show. Tickets are on sale now. Reserved seats are \$20-\$35, and general admission balcony seats are \$15. For ticket information, call 256-415-3270. Proceeds will benefit the Roxy Restoration Fund.

 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.

 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.



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# 'MARS HILL,' from page 1

quality Pre-K program," Grimes said. Grimes expressed his appreciation to Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) for his work in bringing the parties together. Kiel set up a meeting between RCS officials and Alabama Secretary of Early Childhood Education Jeana Ross to help coordinate the agreement. Grimes also expressed appreciation to Ross for her support in expanding Pre-K across Alabama.

"Rep. Kiel knows the importance of Pre-K and the quality of Alabama's First Class Pre-K Program," Grimes said. "When he saw this potential opportunity for us here at RCS, he was glad to step in and lend his support. His efforts, along with the support of Russellville Mayor David Grissom and City Councilman Jamie Harris, played a huge role in this acquisition.

"Alabama First Class Pre-K is nationally recognized as the highest quality program in the country, and we know that children who participate in it are more likely to be successful in school, both in the short and long term," Grimes said. "This will greatly benefit the students of Russellville for years to come."

At the February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Russellville City Board of Education, Grimes told board members school officials were working on grants to help with the expansion to six classes. He said community response to the news has been positive.

"There is a lot of interest and pride in the fact that we are going to have our Pre-K program there," Grimes said.

Grimes also said the Pre-K program at the Mars Hill facility may expand to include before-school and after-school care from the hours of 6 a.m.-6 p.m.

This would alleviate transportation concerns and allow for more families to enroll their children in Pre-K.

For those interested in signing their child up for Pre-K at WES, online applications can be completed at <https://alprek.asapconnected.com>.

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. Upon enrollment, a copy of the child's immunization form must be provided.

Acceptance to the program is done through a random drawing to be held on Friday, March 13, 2020, at 9 a.m., at the RCS Board of Education.

Have an event we can help publicize? Call us at 256-332-0255.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us online at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net). Send your letters to the editor and other creative submissions to [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com).

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# 'MARIJUANA,' from page 1

na use. The Alabama bill would allow 34 dispensaries around the state to sell medical marijuana. A state commission would oversee the growing, distribution and taxation of marijuana if SB 165 becomes law.

Stutts' opposition to the legislation is twofold. He opposes it on medical grounds as well as his belief that its passage would expand government. He even has concerns about the use of the term 'medical marijuana.'

"No other medicine do you have to put the term 'medical' in front of it to make it sound legitimate," Stutts said. "As the United States Surgeon General said, there's no such thing as medical marijuana. It's marijuana.

"Are there some benefits for some people? Maybe so, but we have a process for approving drugs and a process for how to get different medications. You get a prescription and go to a pharmacy to fill it. This is a totally different process. It would be sold through dispensaries and that is all they would sell," Stutts added.

While acknowledging that prescription drugs prices are too high, Stutts said there are some free market options that could drive those prices down.

"But the whole system of distributing medication to people has worked pretty well in most cases and this totally bypasses that," Stutts said.

Additionally, Stutts fears that passage of SB 165 will unnecessarily expand state government.

"It essentially creates a whole branch of government that would be the Cannabis Commission. If you read the details of the bill, the commission would be nine appointed people and it only allows 34 dispensaries to be set up around the state," Stutts said.

"It's like the ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control Board) on steroids. How much is it going to be worth to get one of those 34 licenses? As a legislator, we are paid \$75 each day for per diem expenses and people on the Cannabis Commission would be paid \$500 per day per diem.

"It was worth half a million dollars to Richard Scrushy to get on the CON (Certificate of Need) Board. If it's worth that much, how much would it be worth to be one of these nine people who get appointed to the Cannabis Commission that will oversee this multi-million dollar business and allow only 34 licenses for dispensaries? It's fraught with the potential for corruption," Stutts added.

SB 165 will now move to the Senate floor for a vote. If approved there, it moves on to the House, where similar legislation died last year.

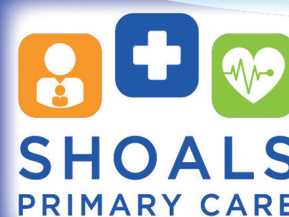
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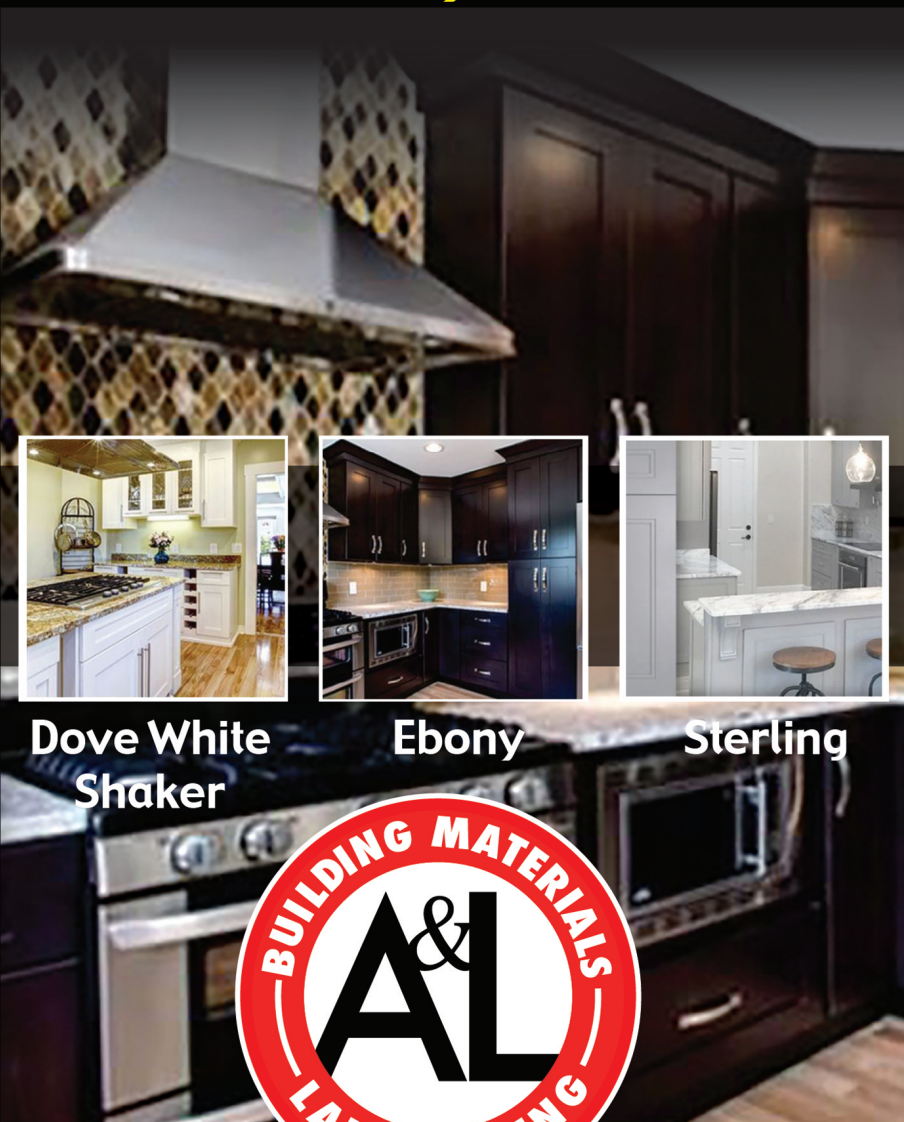
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# Commission approves key 2020 census hirings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission held a special meeting January 31<sup>st</sup> to approve the hiring recommendations of the Franklin County Census Committee to fill grant coordinator and aide jobs for 2020.

Eight people were hired, three as grant coordinators and five as aides. The census employees will be paid out of Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs grant funding, not out of the Franklin County general fund. The commission approved the hiring of Kellie Singleton as Media Coordinator, Tammy West as Event Coordinator and Aaron Catalan as Public Relations Coordinator.

The five aides approved by the commission were Bryan Jimenez, Brian Mouser, Lonneta Peters, Cinthia Montes and Errol Jones.

Commissioners also approved the addition of Guillermo Vasquez to the Franklin County Census 2020 Evaluation Committee, which also includes Dick Rowland, Leah Mansell, Katerina Cole-Coffey and Dr. Susan Hargett.

Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore described the pool of applicants for the census positions as "excellent." Applicants were interviewed and committee members made their recommendations to the commission.

The role of the aides will be to assist at various census events planned during 2020. Several of the aides are fluent in Spanish, so they will be able to work with and assist Hispanic residents in understanding the importance of completing and sending in their census answers.

Moore said each hiring was contingent on the applicant accepting the position, availability of funds and accessibility of events.

County and local governmental officials are stressing the importance of all Franklin County residents answering the census.

"We have a possibility of losing a Congressional seat if we don't have a good census response from Alabama," said commissioner Rayburn Massey. "That would be very detrimental to our state."

Federal funding is often distributed based on census reports of population to each county. Most officials believe Franklin County's population was well

above the 31,704 that was reported based on the 2010 census.

"We want Franklin County to be represented well through the 2020 Census so we can continue to receive benefits that will help all of Franklin County citizens," Moore said.

2020 Census notices and forms will start arriving in the mail in March. For households that don't respond to the census, non-response follow-up begins in April and wraps up at the end of July.

## 'PAGEANT' from page 3

at doing at Russellville City Schools. Miss RHS Rising Stars are: Ava Bianco, Annalesa Bonds, Maci Reagan Boyd, Tinley Cleveland, Brookelynn Davis, Bella Rae Entrekin, Erin Hope Grimes, Kerby Grissom, Macy Adeline Hall, Ruby Gist Harbin, Madelyn Hatton, Lyza Shaw Herring, Karlei Mitchell, Jemma Moore, Sadie Grace Odom, Mackie Drew Parker, Deborah Perez, Daniela Perez, Dorle Pineda, Kingzlee Poss, Addison Hope Rikard, Layla Joy Rush, Allie Catherine Smith, Isabella Torres, and Ella Blayke Wimberley. Miss RHS Little Sisters are: Elizabeth Antonio, Maggie Bishop, Emma Campbell, Camden Elizabeth Carson, Dixie Dover, Natalie Nichols, Emmy Green, Stella Hill, Aidyn Kate Marshall, Jacey Moore, Hailey Rogers, Audrey Oliver, Lexie O'Neal, Lily Cate Pace, Peyton Leigh Parrish, Avery Watts, Chloe Sheffield, Kaitlin Speck, Raney Stone, Sofia Tiffin, Annie Willis, and Ebony West.

The proceeds from this event will benefit the students by defraying their cost of the yearbook. We hope your schedule will permit you to come and support our RHS students.

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## 'MOVES,' from page 4

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## Will dominance continue for PC girls next year?

For the better part of two decades, Red Bay reigned supreme in girls basketball in Franklin County, winning 18 county titles in a 19-year stretch from 1999 through 2017.



Mike Self  
Sports Editor

When the Lady Tigers' dynasty came to an abrupt halt in 2018, Phil Campbell's girls were ready and waiting to assume the throne. The Lady Bobcats have quickly established the makings of their own dynasty, claiming three consecutive county crowns and winning 25 straight games against (mostly overmatched) county competition.

Will Phil Campbell's streak of dominance continue next season? Only time will tell, but it seems safe to say the Lady Bobcats will be heavy favorites to win a fourth straight county championship once January of 2021 rolls around.

They'll have to replace the all-around excellence of Wallace-Hanceville signee Kallie Allen, but the veteran trio of guard Caitlynn Mills (11.4 points and 2.5 steals per game this season, plus a team-high 41 threes made) and forwards Katie Thomas (8.0 points and 4.9 rebounds with 31 threes) and Olivia Taylor (7.0 points and 4.5 rebounds) will form the backbone of what should be a very strong senior class.

Factor in the expected growth by rising junior Faith Cook and rising sophomore Madison Branch in what will be their second varsity season, and Phil Campbell should be well positioned to continue its reign atop the county for at least another year.

Belgreen, which has matched the Lady Bobcats with three straight seasons of 20-plus wins, has filled the role of primary challenger the last three years, but that may not be the case again in 2020-21. The Lady Bulldogs must replace four senior starters (*Free Press* Player of the Year Ansley Tate, plus Autumn Bragwell, Gracie Dempsey and Katie Dempsey) who combined to score roughly 3,200 points in their varsity careers.

Talented post player Emma Dempsey (13.9 points, 6.5 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game this season) will become the focal point more than ever, and young reserves like Kaley Chandler and Noelle Willingham will be counted on to fill much larger roles next year for a team in transition.

If the Lady Bulldogs take a step back, Vina's girls could be poised to make a move. Seniors Kaitlyn King and Sarah Johnson will be missed, but point guard Rayleigh Guin (17.2 points, 7.2 assists and 4.6 steals per game this season as a sophomore) will lead a strong group of returners

See 'DOMINANCE,' Page 15

# Franklin Free Press 2019-20 All-County Girls Basketball

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Another high school basketball season wrapped up in Birmingham last week, which means it's time to unveil our annual All-County selections. We'll start with the girls this week and then reveal our All-County boys team next week.

The 2019-20 season was a strong one for girls basketball in Franklin County, with three teams (Phil Campbell, Belgreen and Vina) reaching the 20-win mark and another (Tharptown, which finished 18-11) coming close. Today we'll recognize players from all across the county who distinguished themselves this season with their performance on the court. Let's dive right in.

### Player of the Year

#### Ansley Tate, Senior Post Player, Belgreen

When Tate erupted for 68 points in a three-game stretch toward the end of her junior season, it was merely a sign of things to come. As a senior, the 5'8 post player picked up right where she left off and blossomed into a full-fledged star, averaging a double-double with 15.1 points (second-best in Franklin County) and 10.6 rebounds per game.

Tate was a force on the low block this season, shooting a highly efficient 53 percent (181-for-343) from the floor and pulling down 3.8 offensive boards per game. She reached double-figures in scoring 26 times in 30 games, establishing herself as the go-to option for a Belgreen team that finished 20-10.

Tate topped the 20-point mark on five occasions, scoring a career-high 32 points (and pulling down 13 rebounds) on January 16 in an overtime loss to Phil Campbell at the Franklin County Tournament. She finished just one bucket shy of the 20-point mark three other times, including an 18-point, 21-rebound effort in a 79-52 win at Lindsay Lane on January 21.

Tate was a factor defensively as well, ranking second on the team in both steals (52) and blocks (30). She also handed out 33 assists and excelled at getting to the foul line, where she shot a solid 64 percent and finished fifth in Franklin County in free throws made (90) and fourth in free throws attempted (141).



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**ON THE DOUBLE** - Belgreen's Tate (33) was a double-double machine this season, putting up 15.1 points and 10.6 rebounds per game.

Over her final three seasons at Belgreen, Tate scored 912 points while helping lead the Lady Bulldogs to 63 wins and two regional tournament berths.

### First-Team All-County

#### Kallie Allen, Senior Guard, Phil Campbell

No player in Franklin County impacted a game in more ways than the versatile, athletic Allen, who averaged 12.0 points, 5.2 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 3.3 steals per game while leading the Lady Bobcats to 23 wins and an Elite Eight berth.

The 5'8 Allen tied for second in the county with seven games of 20-plus points, and she did it in a highly efficient manner, shooting an impressive 57.6 percent from inside the arc and 48.6 percent from the floor overall. She knocked down 20 threes on the year and finished top-four in Franklin County in both free throws made (96) and attempted (157).

Allen's impact as the best defensive player in the county was hard to measure, but she finished the season with 73 steals, 47 deflections and 22 blocks while spearheading Phil Campbell's trademark full-court press. She also shined as a ball-handler and facilitator, posting an assist-to-

### 2019-20 Franklin County Leaderboard Scoring (Points per Game)

Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	17.2
Ansley Tate, senior, Belgreen	15.1
Emma Dempsey, junior, Belgreen	13.9
Gracie Montgomery, sophomore, Tharptown	13.4
Madison Murray, senior, Russellville	12.3
Kallie Allen, senior, Phil Campbell	12.0
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	11.7
Caitlynn Mills, junior, Phil Campbell	11.4
Shaylee Wieting, senior, Tharptown	10.2
Macy Faulkner, junior, Red Bay	10.0

See 'GIRLS,' Page 12

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## 'GIRLS' from page 11

turnover ratio of better than 2-to-1.

Allen, a Wallace-Hanceville signee, finished her prep career with 1,626 points scored. In three seasons at Phil Campbell, she totaled 1,152 points and helped the Lady Bobcats go 73-18 with three trips to the regional tournament and one Final Four appearance.

### Emma Dempsey, Junior Post Player, Belgreen

Already a four-year varsity vet, Dempsey set a new career-high and ranked third in Franklin County this season with an average of 13.9 points per game. She reached double-figures in scoring 20 times in 29 games and topped the 20-point mark on seven occasions, tied for second-most in the county.

The 6'1 Dempsey worked primarily out of the high post, where her solid mid-range jumper and quick first step made her a tough cover for opposing post players. In addition to topping the 400-point mark for the first time in her career [she finished the season with 404], Dempsey also averaged 6.5 rebounds per game and ranked third on the team with 56 assists. She was a major factor defensively as well, recording 75 blocks (2.6 per game) and 30 steals.

Dempsey shot 44 percent from the floor and 69 percent (94-for-137) from the foul line, ranking sixth in Franklin County. She will head into her senior season with 1,396 career points scored.

### Rayleigh Guin, Sophomore Guard, Vina

A first-team All-County pick by the *Free Press* as a freshman, Guin took her game to another level this season and led the county in points per game (17.2), games with 20-plus points (eight), free throws made (150) and free throws attempted (241).

Guin was without a doubt the most indispensable player in Franklin County, doing a little bit (make that a *lot*) of everything for a Vina team that finished 20-9. In addition to threatening the 500-point mark [she finished the season with a career-high 482], Guin also averaged 7.2 assists, 4.6 steals and 4.5 rebounds per game. She recorded triple-doubles at Cherokee on November 19 (25 points, 11 assists and 11 steals in an 81-27 rout) and at Hubbertville on December 2 (18 points, 10 assists and 10 steals in a 61-31 win).

Guin was clutch, hitting the game-winning shot in the final seconds of a 54-53 victory over Belgreen on December 11 and then scoring a career-high 31 points in a 54-53 win over Russellville six days later. The hard-driving, smooth-finishing lefty has already amassed 1,222 points, 505 assists and 399 steals in her varsity career, and she still has two full seasons to go.

### Caitlynn Mills, Junior Guard, Phil Campbell

Along with Allen, Dempsey and Guin, Mills is a first-team selection by the *Free Press* for a second straight year. The 5'8 guard averaged 11.4 points per game this season and finished tied for fourth in Franklin County with 41 threes made, helping the Lady Bobcats reach the regional final and finish 23-7.

Mills tied for the team lead with 17 games scor-



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Vina's Guin earned first-team honors for a second straight season after leading Franklin County in scoring at 17.2 points per game while also averaging 7.2 assists, 4.6 steals and 4.5 rebounds.

ing in double-figures, and she topped the 20-point mark three times. She was every bit as impactful on the defensive side of the ball, ranking second on the team with 43 deflections while averaging 2.5 steals and 3.8 rebounds per game.

Mills' value to the Lady Bobcats was most evident when she wasn't on the floor. She sat out two games in late January due to an injury, and Phil Campbell barely managed to break the 40-point mark in ugly wins over Red Bay and Fayette County. Mills returned to the lineup on January 23 at Belgreen and promptly contributed 26 points, four steals, three threes and 11 made free throws in 12 attempts in a 57-44 win.

Heading into her senior season, Mills has 763 points scored and 102 threes made at the varsity level. With Allen moving on, the Lady Bobcats will look to Mills to lead the way as they try and reach Hanceville for a fourth straight season.

### Second-Team All-County

#### Madison Murray, Senior Guard, Russellville

Murray closed out her career on a high note, scoring double-figure points in 18 of Russellville's final 19 games. She averaged 12.3 points per game on the season, good for sixth in Franklin County, and also ranked second in the county in both free throws made (117) and attempted (176), shooting a solid 67 percent from the line.

Murray averaged 3.9 rebounds per game and led the Lady Golden Tigers in threes made (26), assists (1.9 per game), deflections (2.8 per game) and steals (1.7 per game). She finished her career with more than 1,000 points scored at the varsity level.

#### Autumn Bragwell, Senior Guard, Belgreen

A prolific shooter and explosive scorer, Bragwell finished second in Franklin County with 56 threes made and tied for fourth with six games of 20-plus

### 2019-20 Franklin County Leaderboard Games With 20-Plus Points

Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	8 (high of 31)
Kallie Allen, senior, Phil Campbell	7 (high of 30)
Emma Dempsey, junior, Belgreen	7 (high of 27)
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	6 (high of 29)
Gracie Montgomery, sophomore, THS	6 (high of 24)
Ansley Tate, senior, Belgreen	5 (high of 32)
Caitlynn Mills, junior, Phil Campbell	3 (high of 26)

# 'GIRLS' from page 12

points. She averaged a career-high 11.7 points per game and shot 70 percent (56-for-80) from the foul line, good for fourth in the county.

Capable of doing damage from beyond the arc and inside it [she shot a solid 46 percent from two-point range], Bragwell demonstrated her scoring punch with an impressive three-game stretch in mid-November. In wins over Tharptown, Marion County and Winfield, the senior sharpshooter buried 16 threes and went 12-for-14 from the line while averaging 26.0 points per game.

An underrated defender, Bragwell led Belgreen this season with 54 steals (1.9 per game) and also averaged 2.9 rebounds and 1.8 assists.

## **Gracie Montgomery, Sophomore Guard, Tharptown**

The Lady Wildcats surged to 18 wins this year, and the driving force behind that success was a breakout season from Montgomery, who finished fourth in Franklin County in points per game (13.4), tied for fourth in games with 20-plus points (six), sixth in threes made (39) and second in free-throw percentage (.733).

Tharptown turned the corner in January, going 11-3, and Montgomery was the catalyst, averaging 14.6 points per game during the month and topping the 20-point mark four times. She finished the season averaging 3.9 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 2.6 steals per game.

## **Katie Thomas, Junior Forward, Phil Campbell**

Thomas demonstrated her toughness this season, battling through nagging injuries to put up 8.0 points and 4.9 rebounds per game for a Phil Campbell team that won a third straight county championship and a third straight area title on its way to finishing 23-7 and reaching the Elite Eight.

The 5'10 Thomas was extremely versatile, knocking down 31 threes at a team-best 37-percent clip while also drawing the nightly assignment of defending the opponent's top post threat on the other end of the floor. She shot a team-high 63 percent (67-for-106) from the foul line and also chipped in with 40 assists and 31 steals.

Thomas finished the season strong, bumping her scoring average up to 11.7 points over the team's final nine games.



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Montgomery (above) averaged 13.4 points per game in her breakout season, helping the Lady Wildcats win 18 games. Below, left to right: Katie Thomas averaged 8.0 points and 4.9 rebounds per game for Phil Campbell; Craig Thomas led the Lady Bobcats to 23 wins and a third straight regional berth; Bragwell led Belgreen in steals (54) and threes made (56) while averaging 11.7 points per game.

## **Olivia Taylor, Junior Forward, Phil Campbell**

After starting the season 8-5, the Lady Bobcats flipped a switch and went 11-1 in January, and Taylor's emergence was a major factor. The 5'9 forward led Phil Campbell in scoring five times in January and finished the month averaging 9.5 points per game.

For the season, Taylor averaged a career-high 7.0 points and 4.5 rebounds per game while shooting a solid 45 percent from the floor. She also made her presence felt on the defensive end, totaling 35 steals, 26 deflections and 17 blocked

shots (six of which came in a regional semifinal win over New Hope).

## **Coach of the Year Craig Thomas, Phil Campbell**

Thomas would argue that he doesn't deserve this award. These were his comments at the post-game press conference following Phil Campbell's loss to Lauderdale County in the Northwest Regional final in Hanceville:

"We're proud we got here, but we wanna do better," Thomas said. "We'll have to work harder in the offseason, and I've gotta do a better job coaching. I let some things get away a little bit this year, and then all of a sudden you get down here and you try to fix it in three days, and it just doesn't work. That's on me."

Thomas may not have gotten as much out of the Lady Bobcats as he feels he should have, but their accomplishments this season were noteworthy nonetheless. They exceeded the 20-win mark for the third straight season and the fourth time in six years under Thomas, bouncing back from an 0-3 start to finish 23-7. Along the way they beat high-caliber opponents like Belgreen (three times), Mars Hill, Belmont (MS), Phillips and Lexington.

Phil Campbell won its third consecutive county championship and extended its win streak over county opponents to 25 in a row. The Lady Bobcats reached Hanceville for a third straight season, coming up one win shy of earning a second trip to the Final Four. They are 73-18 over the past three years, an impressive average of 24 wins per season.

Still, despite the impending departure of Wallace-Hanceville signee Kallie Allen, Thomas is bound and determined to see Phil Campbell continue its climb toward the summit of girls basketball.

"That's the goal," said Thomas, who is now 126-51 in his six seasons as the Lady Bobcats' head coach. "Lauderdale County...they've been there the last 25 years, it seems like. I don't even know. We hope to get in that same situation. We want people to dread playing Phil Campbell girls basketball. I feel like we're starting toward that. We're

See 'GIRLS,' Page 14



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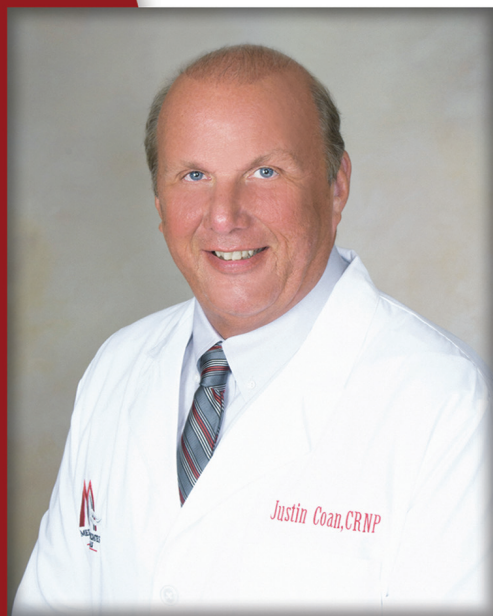


## Justin Coan, CRNP

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## 'GIRLS' from page 13

getting there. We've got some good players coming through who are gonna continue to push us."

### All-Defensive Team

#### Shaylee Wieting, Senior Guard, Tharptown

Wieting enjoyed her best offensive season, averaging a career-high 10.2 points per game and knocking down 27 threes, but her most impactful contributions continued to come on the defensive end. She averaged a team-high 3.7 steals per game while creating havoc on the perimeter with her tireless effort and ball pressure.

### 2019-20 Franklin County Leaderboard Three-pointers Made

Kaitlyn King, senior, Vina	70
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	56
Kaitlyn Athey, freshman, Vina	42
Macy Faulkner, junior, Red Bay	41
Caitlynn Mills, junior, Phil Campbell	41
Gracie Montgomery, sophomore, Tharptown	39
Gracie Dempsey, senior, Belgreen	32
Katie Thomas, junior, Phil Campbell	31
Shaylee Wieting, senior, Tharptown	27
Madison Murray, senior, Russellville	26

### Gracie Dempsey, Senior Guard, Belgreen

Head coach Chad Green is a staunch proponent of man-to-man D, and Dempsey consistently drew the assignment of guarding the opposing team's top perimeter threat. Tough-minded, athletic and fundamentally sound, Dempsey was up to the task. She finished the season with 41 steals and was also a solid contributor on offense, averaging 7.9 points per game, knocking down 32 threes at a 34-percent clip, shooting 68 percent (59-for-87) from the foul line and ranking second on the team with 63 assists (2.2 per game).

### Katie Dempsey, Senior Forward, Belgreen

Dempsey expanded her offensive profile as a senior, making a career-high 19 threes and also leading the team with 78 assists (2.7 per game) while averaging 5.3 points per game. She continued to shine brightest, however, as a tough-as-nails, disruptive defender (33 steals) and an active rebounder (5.5 boards per game).

### 2019-20 Franklin County Leaderboard Free Throw Percentage (Minimum 30 Attempts)

Macy Faulkner, junior, Red Bay	.753 (70-for-93)
Gracie Montgomery, sophomore, Tharptown	.733 (55-for-75)
Autumn Logan, senior, Russellville	.706 (48-for-68)
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	.700 (56-for-80)
Kaitlyn King, senior, Vina	.697 (23-for-33)
Emma Dempsey, junior, Belgreen	.686 (94-for-137)
Gracie Dempsey, senior, Belgreen	.678 (59-for-87)
Madison Murray, senior, Russellville	.665 (117-for-176)
Ansley Tate, senior, Belgreen	.638 (90-for-141)
Katie Thomas, junior, Phil Campbell	.632 (67-for-106)

### Lexi Glass, Senior Post Player, Russellville

The aptly named 5'11 senior dominated the glass at times, averaging a team-best 8.4 rebounds (including 6.1 defensive boards) per game. Glass also made an impact as a rim-protector, averaging 1.1 blocks per game.

### Brooke Daily, Senior Forward, Tharptown

Daily deserves mention here for her hard-nosed work on the glass. She pulled down a season-high 21 rebounds (to go along with 14 points) in a loss at Tanner on November 22 and also had 15-rebound efforts against Colbert Heights on November 19 and Brilliant on January 2. She finished the season averaging a team-high 7.6 rebounds per game to go along with 8.6 points.

### 2019-20 Franklin County Leaderboard Highest Single-Game Scoring Totals

Ansley Tate, senior, Belgreen	32	vs. Phil Campbell on Jan. 16
Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	31	vs. Russellville on Dec. 17
Kallie Allen, senior, Phil Campbell	30	vs. West Limestone on Dec. 27
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	29	vs. Tharptown on Nov. 14
Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	29	at Phillips on Dec. 5
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	28	vs. Marion County on Nov. 16
Autumn Bragwell, senior, Belgreen	28	vs. Brilliant on Dec. 6
Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	28	at Hackleburg on Jan. 7
Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	28	vs. Brilliant on Jan. 27
Kallie Allen, senior, Phil Campbell	27	vs. Belgreen on Dec. 13
Emma Dempsey, junior, Belgreen	27	vs. Carbon Hill on Dec. 27
Brooke Daily, senior, Tharptown	26	vs. Cherokee on Jan. 28
Rayleigh Guin, sophomore, Vina	26	vs. Belgreen on Feb. 6
Caitlynn Mills, junior, Phil Campbell	26	at Belgreen on Jan. 23

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# 'DOMINANCE' from page 11

that also includes post player Sara Scott (8.1 points per game as a sophomore) and dangerous perimeter threat Kaitlyn Athey (8.2 points per game with 42 made threes as a freshman this season).

Guin, who has already scored more than 1,200 points at the varsity level while twice earning first-team All-County honors from the *Free Press*, should keep Vina right on track to chase the 20-win mark again. Even if they don't manage to knock Phil Campbell from its perch atop Franklin County, the Lady Red Devils appear primed to contend for an even bigger prize—an area championship. Graduation is due to hit Phillips and Belgreen hard in May, and Vina looks to be in good position to take advantage.

Tharptown is going to lose several key seniors as well, so the task of preventing a major drop-off from this season's 18-win breakthrough falls to top scorer Gracie Montgomery. Montgomery broke out in a big way as a sophomore, averaging 13.4 points, 3.9 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 2.6 steals per game while knocking down 39 threes and shooting 73 percent (55-for-75) from the foul line, good for second-best in the county. She'll have to be even better next season, but talented young post player Jaiden Gaston will be back to help carry the load.

There is definitely a new dynasty in girls basketball in Franklin County, but Phil Campbell has a long way to go to reach the level of dominance Red Bay sustained for nearly two decades. Still, three straight county titles is a good place to start.

"Three in a row. Our girls are excited about it," head coach Craig Thomas said back in January after his team won three games in four days to secure its county three-peat. "I told them we'll get them a T-shirt. You always love to be the best team in the county. People talk about the best team all the time. It's always good to be in the conversation when people talk about Franklin County."

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### Rowe Gallagher Junior Pitcher, Russellville

Gallagher continued his hot start to the season last Saturday at Hartselle, pitching a shutout to lead the Golden Tigers past James Clemens 4-0. The junior right-hander struck out five, walked only one and held the Jets to five hits in seven innings, throwing 58 of his 87 pitches for strikes.

Earlier last week, Gallagher started against Deshler and pitched three solid innings in a 3-2 win. Through Sunday, he was 1-0 on the season with one save and a 0.54 ERA. In 13 innings, he had allowed only one earned run on 10 hits while striking out 13 and walking one.



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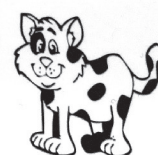
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