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Gross answering the call to help others through mask-making campaign

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When a virus that began as a problem only in a foreign land became the center of a national pandemic in the United States, Randi Gross took the warnings from health care professionals seriously.

Gross, who lives in the Fox Trap community, felt a calling to help others, but wasn't sure how to do that, given the risks she faced.

"When it comes to this COVID-19, I have a bullseye on my back for health and age reasons," Gross said. "More and more, I heard how those who needed masks couldn't find them. So I found a web site with a pattern for masks. I downloaded the pattern and made myself a mask right away."

Gross, a volunteer with Franklin County resident Rick Neighbors' campaign for United States Representative, Congressional District Four in Alabama, shared the idea with Lisa Ward, Neighbors' campaign chairman, and

they quickly realized how large the need was for protective masks.

"Rick wanted to shift our priorities from campaigning to just calling on people to see if we could help them. There was an overwhelming need for masks, so it just grew from there," Gross said.

The effort quickly grew from Gross' first mask to a network of 17 volunteers who committed to sew masks for others.

"We're trying to distribute them as needed and when

See 'GROSS' Page 7



Welborn, employees using team effort to keep Yogi's Citgo customers safe

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Stores like Yogi's Citgo in Russellville aren't just convenient—they're essential.

That's why owner Mark "Yogi" Welborn is keeping Yogi's Citgo on Waterloo Road open 24 hours during the COVID-19 health crisis. Welborn and his employees know their customers depend on them for gasoline, fresh cooked deli foods and snacks.

And Welborn and his staff have made it a total team effort to keep Yogi's Citgo sterile and safe for customers, from the gas pumps to the cooler doors.

"We started taking extra safeguards about a month ago when we set up a station by our pumps with a solution of bleach, peroxide and 70 percent alcohol and sanitary wipes," Welborn said. "They're for use by our customers to wipe the gas dispensers and their hands."

Welborn and his nine employees use bleach water to douse all outside areas by the gas pumps daily and the pumps and dispensers are sprayed several times each day.

The same diligence is used inside the store, with employees spraying and wiping door handles on the coolers, shelves, the credit card machine at the registers and anywhere else that people contact. There's even hand sanitizer for customer use at the registers.

And a sign on the front door asks customers who have had high




PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Sonya Broadway cleans the front counter at Yogi's Citgo with a sanitizing solution.

See 'YOGIS,' page 9

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Arnell Johnson Bratcher, 75, of Tucumbia died on Monday, April 13th. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Wanda J. Mathheus, 71, of Russellville died on Friday, April 17th. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Tammy Lynn Townsend, 54, of Russellville died on Wednesday, April 15th. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.



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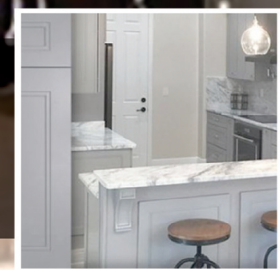
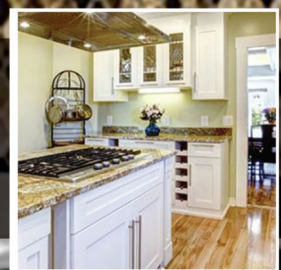
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Stancil gives updates regarding property delinquency deadlines

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The annual tax sale for properties that have delinquencies on ad valorem taxes has been set for Friday, June 5, 2020, at 10 a.m., Franklin County Revenue Commissioner Veronica Stancil announced recently.

The list of delinquent properties will be published on May 6, 2020, in a local newspaper. Stancil said the last day to pay the taxes before penalties increase is Friday, April 24.

"I know many people are struggling right now and I hate the tax sale for this reason," Stancil said. "But it's the law and I'm required to do it. We currently have 275 delinquent real property accounts. I'm hopeful with the stimulus checks arriving, the number of outstanding accounts will decrease substantially."

As of last Monday, April 13, Stancil's office has completed a total of 1,300 transactions by phone, mail and online, since the courthouse closed to the public last month.

"My staff is doing a great job behind the scenes and I appreciate each one of them," Stancil said.

Delinquent taxes may be paid over the phone by calling 256-332-8831 or 256-332-8841. Phone payments may be made with a credit or debit card.

Another option for paying delinquent taxes is to mail payments to the Franklin County Revenue Commissioner, P.O. Box 248, Russellville, AL, 35653. Mail payments may include a money order or certified check.

Franklin County residents who have purchased a new car from a dealer may obtain a tag and registration over the telephone if they have a title application from the dealer. Tag renewals may be done by calling 256-332-8832 or 256-356-9805 for the Red Bay office.

Stancil said all March and April tag renewals have been extended until May 15, 2020.

For tag renewals by mail, the \$2 mail fee will be waived while the courthouse is closed. Tag renewals should be mailed to Franklin County Revenue Commissioner, P.O. Box 248, Russellville, AL, 35653.

County junior leadership program now accepting applications

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Although Franklin County students are not going to school every day, school remains in session through virtual classrooms and lessons sent home with students.

And Franklin County sophomores, in both the county and the Russellville City Schools systems, now have the opportunity to apply for the Franklin County Junior Leadership Program, sponsored by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.

The Junior Leadership Program provides leadership and community service opportunities for high school juniors. Some of the annual activities include participating in Job Shadowing Day, a State Government Day that includes a field trip to Montgomery and taking part in volunteer efforts at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival.

Rising juniors interested in applying should call the chamber at 256-332-1760 to request an application, or email their request to info@franklincountychamber.org.

The application deadline is May 14, 2020, at 4 p.m.

For daily updates on news, visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!



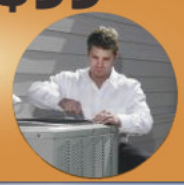
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My take on this... love in quarantine

can honestly say that my grandchildren and I live a simple life. I am so blessed to have two very grounded and remarkable grandchildren.

Everything that is going on in the world at this time hasn't caused an "earth-shattering explosion" in theirs. Most of that has a lot to do with experiencing "earth-shattering" moments during their lifetime. Abrupt changes are good learning experiences for life. A change simply means to become something different, and believe me what is happening now is definitely something different.

There is something else that I think helps a child to adapt to having to be quarantined at home. What kind of home environment do they live in? Oh yes my friend, do they even enjoy being at home?

That is another way I am so blessed. My grandchildren love being home. It is a safe-haven from the storm. We can hurt, but we can also heal within these walls. We can talk and not be humiliated. We may not always be heard. We know we are loved, even when mistakes are made.

We laugh with each other, but not at each other. When we do sometimes hurt each other's feelings, we always apologize. We give each other space when needed and we respect each other's space.

When either of them have something to share with me, I listen. I do that because I want them to know they are more important to me than a book I



Gail Motes

am reading, a show on TV, Facebook, or a phone call. Besides that, they don't always want to share with me so it means a lot to me when they do, and I don't want to miss a thing.

The other night, I told them to pick out a movie they both liked and we were going to sit down, eat popcorn and watch a movie together. No phones or tablets or any electrical gadgets were allowed in the room and that included me. My phone was left in another room also. So we sat and watched *Popeye* with Robin Williams. So, for two hours we enjoyed each other's company.

It was an amazing moment. I thanked them for the time they gave me. That will be a moment in time that we will never forget.

I hope that some of you will use this time to reconnect and others use this time to begin to connect.

I do take this COVID-19 more seriously than my grandchildren but I'm older and more vulnerable which I'm reminded of quite often but always followed by a smile.

The main reason I say my grandchildren and I live a simple life is because it has not required a lot of change within our home.

Before I close, please know I pray often for all of you who sacrifice your health and lives for my family and others. I have friends and family in the nursing field, in nursing homes, truck drivers, solid waste, water department, all first responders, and the list goes on and on.

Remember to continue praying and please don't stop praying after this has passed.

As always, until later...

Two Unexpected Visitors

Ann Hill

Submitted to the FFP

Two unexpected visitors
Dropped by for Easter this year.
One was called the corona virus.
The other was the virus of fear.
Even though with eyes we can't see them,
They both made their presence known.
They are known to be very contagious
Around the world this duo has gone.
They attempted to stop Easter services.
But the faithful stood up with a shout.
Being aware of the enemy's devices,
They proceeded to kick them both out.
True believers wouldn't let fear take over,
So, respecting the ordinance at hand,
They gathered in ways unconventional,
By the thousands all over this land.
Through the internet, radio and parking lots,
The Word sounded out loud and clear.
Others opted for a telephone conference.
Through technology they chose to draw near.
The enemy had evil intentions,
But God is still in control.
The message of Christ's resurrection
Was preached to reach one more lost soul
So, let's work, and let's pray, and keep watch-
ing.
Who knows what new virus may lurk.
The Word says the night is coming—
The night when no man can work.

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Correction Policy

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

Letters to the editor

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

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Northwest-Shoals extends Patriot Proud scholarship deadline

Submitted to the FFP

In a typical year, it might be too late for incoming fall 2020 freshmen at Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) to apply for scholarships, but this is no typical year. With the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting the lives of everyone and especially high school seniors, NW-SCC is extending the deadline to apply for the Patriot Proud scholarship until June 1, 2020.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has altered everyone's plans this year, and we want to help future students by extending our deadline for the Patriot Proud scholarship," said NW-SCC Assistant Dean Crystal Reed. "We want our area students to know that even if their college plans have changed, we are here to support them."

The Patriot Proud scholarship is available to all students. However, if applicants have faced hardships due to the pandemic, that will be taken into consideration.

To apply for the Patriot Proud scholarship, visit <https://www.nwsc.edu/current-students/financial-aid/patriot-proud-scholarship-application>. To apply

for admission, visit <https://www.nwsc.edu/about-nw-scc/college-departments/student-services/admissions/apply-online>.

To qualify for the Patriot Proud scholarship, students must complete the 2020-2021 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) The FAFSA can be submitted online at www.fafsa.gov, and the NW-SCC school code is 005697.

For more information on NW-SCC scholarships or financial aid, please contact Student Financial Services at 256-331-5364 (and leave a voice-mail) or email financialaid@nwsc.edu.

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What's Happening

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

Ronnie McDowell returns to Russellville to celebrate his 70th birthday with a special show at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, May 16 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.

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

TOPS 0155 Russellville is now meeting at the Russellville Hospital Education Room at 4:30 p.m. every Monday. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more info.

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts has announced that its next production, *Cheating Cheaters*, that was to be performed April 23-26, 2020, will be postponed until June. They apologize for any inconvenience, but hope everyone stays well and they look forward to seeing everyone in June.

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

Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on left. For more information, please call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840 for more information.

New Life Ministries invites you to join them for Sunday School at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and for worship services on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a fellowship lunch after morning services. You and your family are invited to come worship and fellowship with the Lord of Hosts and his children. New Life Ministries is located on Hwy. 24 west toward Red Bay, behind Tompkins Feed.

It's mowing season and time to remove old flowers from the Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Highway 724 in Newburg. Please do so by the end of May. Donations are needed for the upkeep of this historic cemetery and may be mailed to: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Fund, 941 Highway 87, Russellville, AL, 35654.

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

The American Legion Post 64 in Russellville will postpone its April and May meetings. If you have any questions, please contact Grant Atkins.

Fifth Thursday Food Giveaway - 2 p.m. April 30, 2020 - Russellville First United Methodist Church - downtown corner of Madison and Washington Ave. Groceries will be given out while supplies last. All social distancing measures will be followed. Bring your ID and follow instructions given by staff.

Don't forget to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!



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'GROSS,' from page 1

someone calls and wants one, we get it to them as fast as we can," Gross said. "I've actually lost count of how many I've made. This is something that anyone who can sew a straight seam can make."

Within days, volunteers were driving across north Alabama dropping off masks to anyone who needed them, including health care workers, fire departments, etc., from Hamilton to Scottsboro.

Calling on his decades of experience in the textile industry, Neighbors has worked to find donations of materials needed to make the masks.

Gross was surprised at how quickly the project grew. In fact, she was initially a bit overwhelmed.

"I went through a stage that first week when they kept reporting all these deaths and new cases and I kind of hit panic mode," Gross said. "I was down in basement sewing when I shouldn't have been. I should have taken a break."

"But the need is so overwhelming. I had to stop and remind myself I can't save the whole world. I can't even

save Franklin County. So I took a day, got my head on straight, and started again. Once I calmed down, I got organized and worked with Lisa to get others involved and get the supplies we needed. And it grew from there," she added.

Gross encourages anyone who needs a mask or wants to get involved in the effort to contact her at 256-332-8230 or 256-460-0872. Prospective volunteers or those needing masks can also visit www.neighbors4congress.com and click on "contact us."

Neighbors, who asked his volunteers to shift from campaigning to checking on and helping their neighbors during the COVID-19 crisis, appreciates the efforts of Gross and other volunteers for answering the call.

"Thank you Randi Gross for spearheading and sewing masks for District Four neighbors," Neighbors said in a social media post. "This is an amazing thing that others can help do. If any neighbors see and want to help our campaign to check on neighbors, let us know."

Commission approves interest quote on loan for garbage truck purchase

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved an interest quote on a \$375,000 loan for the purchase of two International one-armed garbage trucks at a short meeting Monday morning.

Commissioners approved the low bid of 2.28% from Valley State Bank for the loan.

In a cost saving move for county residents, commissioners also voted to waive the vehicle tag registration mail fee of \$2 and the \$2 penalty on late payments for garbage pickup until further notice.

In other moves, the commission:

—declared a police Interceptor vehicle surplus property and authorized the posting on govdeals.com.

—hired Brooke Harbin as a part-time/temporary clerk in the Franklin County Sheriff's Office.

—voted to accept bids for interest on a \$600,000 loan for the purchase of four Kenworth dump trucks by the Franklin County Highway Department. The loan will be for six years with an annual payment made at the end of each year. Additionally, commissioners approved an extension of the maturity date on the current dump truck loan through July 31, 2020, to allow for the sale of the old dump trucks.

—approved the installation of tempered glass in the following courthouse offices as a safety measure due to the COVID-19 pandemic: Revenue Commissioner's Office, Circuit Clerk's Office, Probate Office and the Red Bay Revenue Commissioner's Satellite Office. The cost of the project will be \$9,975.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net.

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*Unity in our Community--
Neighbors Helping Neighbors!*

The Franklin County 2020 Census Committee would like for you as a good neighbor to reach out and check on your neighbors by calling, face timing, emailing or sending them a text message. In addition, ask them if they have filled out their 2020 Census form. Don't forget your family and friends too!



'YOGIS,' from page 1

temperatures or been exposed to COVID-19 to not come into the store. Welborn also is keeping the front doors open to prevent the need for constant contact opening and closing them.

Newspaper racks. Packs of gum. Potato chip bags. They are all misted with the cleaning solution to kill germs and lower the risk of customers or employees contracting the virus.

Three weeks ago, Welborn closed the dining area inside the store and fountain drink sales were suspended. Deli employees are still preparing food each day, but every item is placed in a foil container to minimize contact. No tongs. No touching, and hopefully, no COVID-19.

"I feel a moral obligation as someone servicing the public to keep our customers and my employees as safe as possible," Welborn said. "We're taking every precaution known and researching regularly for more ways to keep everyone safe.

"Rick (Jackson) taped off six-foot marks on the floor in case we have a line of customers. We don't allow more than 10 people in the store, including employees, at one time," Welborn said.

Other safeguards used by Yogi's employees including daily temperature checks, and the use of face-masks and gloves.

"This is not just me. Tonya (Pfeifer) and all our employees are working together to keep everyone safe. We bleach the floors twice a shift, and spray everything in the store as often as possible," Welborn said.

Welborn also promised every employee 40 hours of pay for two months, regardless of economic condition, and added \$1 per hour hazard pay to their checks. That gave his employees some security to know they would continue to have an income during the COVID-19 crisis.

"We want our customers to be safe as well as all our employees," Pfeifer, Yogi's store manager, said. "Many of them come in here multiple times a day and we want to do everything to help them stay safe. It's really important to Yogi and to our employees."

Welborn is also lending a helping hand to his customers by giving away \$100 worth of gas each week for 10 weeks. Customers simply fill out an entry form and there's no purchase necessary to enter. Five weekly winners of \$20 gas cards are drawn.

Welborn said he has no plans to stray from Yogi's remaining open 24 hours a day.

"A lot of our customers stop by before or after they go to work third shift. People know when it's late that Yogi's is open and I don't want to change that," Welborn said.



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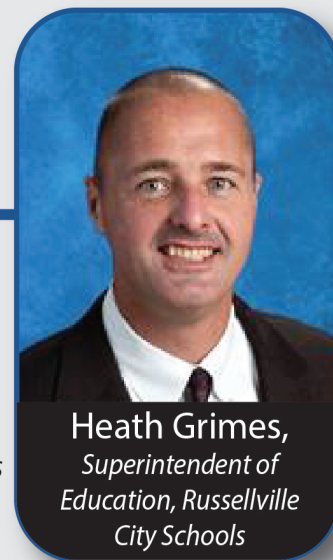
Why?

United States[®] Census 2020

Why is the Census important to me or my family?

The Census affects the amount of funding that Franklin County receives and how the community plans for the future along with representation in government. The data from the 2020 Census will be used for:

- Public services and funding for schools, hospitals and fire departments.
- Planning for businesses, new homes and improvement in neighborhoods.
- Determine how many seats Alabama is all located in the House of Representatives.



Heath Grimes,
Superintendent of
Education, Russellville
City Schools

How is Census data used for educational growth and development in the Franklin County Schools/Russellville City Schools?

Any program that is attached to the "Federal Programs" division of our school is effected by the Census data. This means money for our Title 1, or low-income students and for state reading programs.

Title 2, Class-size reduction units. Title 3, English Language Learner Funding, Title 4, is affected which provides supplemental educational resources ranging from drug awareness education, technology, and access to AP programs. Federal funds also effect our Child Nutrition or lunch programs, career and technical or vocational programs funds, Native American education, and Special Education Programs.

Please list the programs in the Franklin County Schools / Russellville City Schools that rely on federal funds to operate?

Title 1 funds for Russellville City is well over a million dollars as well as special education funding. These funds provide additional teachers, programs, and resources throughout the school. A reduction in these funds would likely mean a reduction of teachers employed in the system and fewer educational programs and resources such as computers and computer programs such as Imagine Learning. Imagine Learning is a districtwide educational software program that provides educational support k-12 in Math, English, Reading, and Spanish.

If residents of Franklin County do not fill out their Census 2020 form how will this impact educational growth in the Franklin County Schools/Russellville City Schools ?

It would mean less teachers, less computers and technology, and a loss of numerous other resources. Knowing how difficult the job is now with all the different challenges we face in the area, it would obviously seriously impede our educational growth.

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A lasting legacy

With several members of the dominant RHS girls tennis program set to graduate, Dollar reflects on the season and looks towards the future



COURTESY PHOTO

Vargas, Holland, Strickland and Woods (pictured left to right) have had a major impact on the RHS girls tennis program over the years. Holland, Strickland, and Woods have all made the state tournament the previous four seasons.

*Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press*

It wasn't the ending to the season that Russellville girls tennis coach Charlotte Dollar and her team had hoped for. Especially since this was the final season for multiple prominent members of the RHS tennis program.

However, what the team was able to accomplish in such a short time period, before the season was cut short on March 12th, was very impressive nonetheless.

Dollar coached Russellville to a perfect 6-0 sectional record with impressive wins along the way. The girls would win five of the six matches by a score of nine sets to zero with the only exclusion being an eight set to one victory over Deshler.

Even though the season was cut short and there will always be the feeling of "what-if", Dollar has no doubts that had the season unfolded normally, the Lady Golden Tigers would have been right back where they belonged in the state tournament.

"We had been to the state tournament the past few years and we had no doubt that had we been able to try and get there again. We would have been right back there competing for state yet again," Dollar said. "It's unfortunate that we didn't get that chance and we believe we would have

been state contenders again, but we're still proud of what we were able to accomplish in such a short time this season."

Dollar is losing a key core of her team after this season, including multiple players who will go on to play tennis at the next level. Seniors Ellyse Strickland and Anna Woods have signed letters of intent to play tennis at Central Alabama Community College once they graduate from RHS. They'll join fellow seniors Kaydee Holland and Yesenia Vargas in leaving the RHS girls tennis program after this year.

While that is quite a bit of talent to lose in just one year, Dollar says that the seniors on this years squad have been instrumental in the development of their younger counterparts, giving the program hope for future seasons.

"Anna, Ellyse, and Kaydee have been huge in helping get these younger girls to where we want them to be in their development. They help out after practices and just do all of the extra things without being asked to and it's things like that that will have the most impact down the road," Dollar said.

Other members of the RHS girls tennis team this season that will be looking to continue the run of excellence from years past include 8th grader

See 'LEGACY' page 14

Ritter and staff extending a helping hand to RHS players during difficult times

*Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press*

Some coaches might use this down time while there are no sports being played to come up with gameplans for next season, devise workout schedules for players, do other typical coaching activities.

That's not the case for Russellville's John Ritter. Ritter, who will be entering his third season at the helm of the RHS football program this fall, is spending his days reaching out to his players through different avenues.

The purpose behind this?

It's not to make sure players are following workout routines or anything to do with sports. Rather it has everything to do with Ritter and his staff showing their players that they are one big family and offering help to those players that need it.

"We've got about 105 kids in our program that will be next year's varsity team. They're my kids, they're my coaches kids, and we want them to know and feel that," Ritter said. "We're very hard on our kids but we love our kids. Even if we don't get to see them everyday like we're used to, we love them and we want to let them know we are here for them."

Ritter has reached out to his players using Zoom, Snapchat, text messaging, and phone calls and has attempted to talk to each player multiple times per week.

Some of the things Ritter and his staff have been doing over the past few weeks in addition to staying in touch with his players is delivering lunches and food to players that need it while also offering any other assistance the players might need during their time off due to the ongoing pandemic.

During uncertain times like these, Ritter says that football takes a backseat and making sure his players have everything they need.

"It's a lot bigger than football. While football is important to me and to Russellville as a whole, this is bigger. Making sure our kids have something to eat or making sure they have what they need in order to function everyday at home is way bigger than any football game," Ritter said.

In terms of how the current situation would affect the Golden Tigers spring football plans, Ritter says he isn't worried about the affects and actually sees a potential benefit from the cancellation of spring football.

"I think this is somewhat of a blessing in disguise. With not being able to compete in the spring, hopefully our guys will roll up in here whenever we can and they'll be hungry to go out and get to play football again," Ritter said.

See 'HELPING,' page 13



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'HELPING,' from page 11

While Ritter and his staff will have a plethora of experienced talent returning on the defensive side of the ball, the offensive side still has a few things to be ironed out before the fall.

"This fall we'll have 65 guys returning for us. Out of those, we will have everybody defensively back. We do have some work to do on the offensive line and at quarterback but defensively we'll be fine," Ritter said. "During all of this we're doing ZOOM meetings trying to stay on top of things and hopefully when we start back in May or June or whenever we will be ready."

Of course, Ritter hasn't been alone in his efforts to reach out to his players. His staff has done an extraordinary job in helping out according to Ritter.

"I'm blessed with the staff I have. I work with some truly great men. I think we have the best coaching staff in America and it's the best staff I've ever worked with," Ritter said. "I've got coaches that don't live in Russellville but they're still checking in from wherever they live and that just speaks to how tremendous those guys are and how lucky we are to have them with us."

Accountability is key to the Russellville football program and Ritter is attempting to convey that mindset through his players as he checks in on them.

"As an adult it's one of our responsibilities to check on our kids. It doesn't matter who the kid is, we have got to check on them. Even when things aren't good and things seem bad we have to help one another and make sure we can all survive on a daily basis and we want our kids to understand that on and off the field," Ritter said.

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'LEGACY,' from page 11

Peyton Parrish, junior Roxanna Velez-Serna, and sophomores Natalie Busler, Madeline Cooper, Leah Rushing, Gracie Smith and Avary Miller.

As the season was cut short and emotions were running high, Dollar wanted to remind her players and especially her seniors of one crucial thing to remember.

"It's a tough situation, no doubt. And it's something that we of course haven't been through or had to experience. There's a lot of adversity out there right now and I wanted them to know that they can make it through this," Dollar said. "They've already been through so much adversity in life to get to where they are whether it be through tennis or elsewhere and this is just another bump in the road. I just wanted to let them know that they will be better people when all of this is over."

Often times when a team is as dominant as the RHS girls tennis program has been in recent years, there's often a person behind the scenes that has eased the head coaches job and has been hugely beneficial to the team. That person for Dollar and her team has been Leann Strickland. Dollar says that Strickland was a critical part of the team as a volunteer coach for the team.

"LeAnn was amazing for us. Being a volunteer coach and going out of her way to help out and make sure some of the things we needed done actually got done was a huge help to not only me but the entire team and I can't express how thankful I am of her help over the years," Dollar said.

Of course, as this isn't a typical year for much of anything, especially sports, Dollar is hoping to reward her seniors with one last thing once the COVID-19 pandemic has run its course.

"We want to have one last get together. Something to celebrate and appreciate our seniors because these girls have worked to get to where they are and they deserve to have something like that," Dollar said. "Some of these girls have been a part of this program for six years and they have put in a ton of work and I just want them to be able to have some sort of closure. If they are able to have closure with their careers somehow, maybe that will help them with what they are currently going through."

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