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Karrs giving back to 'hometown heroes'

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Sometimes in tragedy we find our life's purpose. — Robert Brault

Chris and Angie Karr wanted to say 'thank you' to the staff of Russellville Hospital. In typical Southern tradition, they did so Friday with food, as the Phil Campbell couple provided a BBQ lunch for all 110 hospital employees.

"My wife is a (registered nurse) and she spent years as a home health nurse and working in hospitals, so we know what these folks are facing," Chris said. "We wanted to show our appreciation for what they are doing. I don't know if they have had one patient there with COVID-19 or 100, but they're still there regardless doing their jobs."

The Karrs purchased 110 barbecue pork plates from Pilgrim's Place Barbecue, and Pilgrim's owners Rickey and Melinda Smith gave every hospital employee a free dessert after their meal.

While the Karrs didn't want any publicity for their gift

to Russellville Hospital employees, Chris agreed to be interviewed by the *Franklin Free Press* in hopes that the story might plant a seed in someone to support a mission project dear to Chris and Angie's hearts.

After the tragic death of their young son Garrett, Chris and Angie faced unimagin-



COURTESY PHOTO
Melinda Smith, left, co-owner of Pilgrim's Place BBQ, delivers 110 boxed barbecue plates to Russellville Hospital Administrator Christine Stewart Friday.

See 'HEROES' page 5

Safety improvements underway at 243/79 intersection after Kiel contacts ALDOT

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Motorists who drive through the Alabama 243/County Road 79 intersection will see some safety improvements in the near future, thanks to Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) and citizen concerns sent to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT).

A fatal accident on March 31 claimed the life of Milton Alexander, 82, when his vehicle was struck by another car at the intersection.

A sharp curve on 243 just south of the intersection with 79 allows for minimal time for northbound vehicles on 243 to react if another vehicle is crossing 243 on 79.

Many citizens who travel the intersection describe crossing or turning onto 243 off 79 as a leap of faith. While it may look clear, there could be a vehicle coming north seconds later that they had no way of knowing about.

After the *Franklin Free Press* contacted Kiel about citizen concerns at the intersection, Kiel called Dallan

See 'INTERSECTION,' page 5



COURTESY PHOTO

Rep. Jamie Kiel was able to communicate with ALDOT to coordinate safety measures to be put in place at the 243/79 intersection.

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Catherine Newell Moses, 78, formerly of Phil Campbell, died on Monday, April 27th. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

James Eric Montgomery, 47, of Pinson, died on Thursday, April 23rd. A graveside service was held Monday, April 27th with family.

Josephine Gantt Willmarth, 87, of Russellville, died on Saturday, April 26th. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.



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COURTESY PHOTO

Bill Burnett, Johnathan Johnson and John James holding bottles of Queen's Reward Meadery hand sanitizer donated to Keller EMS last week.
*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

Keller Emergency Medical Services's Franklin County employees received a delivery from Tupelo-based Queen's Reward Meadery last week, but it didn't include any of the company's tasty honey-based wine.
Instead, Keller EMS, along with a number of area first responders, received a shipment of Queen's Reward hand sanitizer.
Jeri Carter, who owns Queen's Reward Meadery along with her husband Geoff, said a generous donation from a Louisiana resident allowed her to give 500 bottles of hand sanitizer to north Mississippi and northwest Alabama ambulance drivers, police officers, sheriff's deputies and postal workers.
Morgan said she planned to add the production of mead brandy at Queen's Reward before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. To diversify into brandy, a still

See 'SANITIZER,' page 4

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'SANITIZER,' from page 3

would be required. So the Morgans went ahead and purchased it—not to produce brandy, though.

Instead, Queen's Reward employees are using the still to make hand sanitizer out of a combination of ethanol, glycerin and hydrogen peroxide. Carter explained that a sugar-water combination takes about seven days to ferment and convert to ethanol. After that, with the addition of the other ingredients, it takes less than a day to make a batch of hand sanitizer, including the distillation process in the still.

"All this came about after we thought if we can get a still, we can make hand sanitizer now, and it's something we'll need anyway once we start making brandy," Carter said. "We were able to get the still and since hand sanitizer was in such demand, we felt that would be a way to serve our community with a product people really need right now."

Queen's Reward hand sanitizer is sold in eight-ounce bottles for \$8, but you'll have a difficult time ordering any right now. Carter said she plans to start shipping hand sanitizer eventually, but every batch now made in the meadery is pre-sold to the City of Tupelo (to be distributed free to the public), local businesses or through private donations from people who want to provide the hand sanitizer to first responders.

"That's how it got started. This past Friday, we gave away hand sanitizer to the public. I've had EMTs and hospitals reach out prepared to purchase more, as well as local business owners to meet the needs of essential businesses," Carter

said.

The Carters are prioritizing distribution of their product in Tupelo, to help their hometown, but when several bottles were delivered to Keller EMS, it was a welcome sight, explains Keller EMS Franklin County Supervisor John James.

"We are very appreciative to Queen's Reward Meadery and everyone who has been and continues to be so gracious to not only Keller EMS but all first responders, health care providers and others who are on the front lines during this time," James said.

The Carters opened Queen's Reward Meadery two years ago. The meadery includes a tasting room for visitors to sample mead, which is a wine made with honey.

Though tours and the tasting room are currently closed due to Coronavirus restrictions, Queen's Reward does sell red berry slush drinks made with mead, and 'meadaritas,' made with the company's Pucker Up lemon flavored mead. The drinks are still available through curbside service.

As Tupelo residents drive through the pickup line to get their hand sanitizer, Queen's Reward employees are collecting donations that are used to pay for the next batch of sanitizer to be given away. It's a way of 'paying it forward,' Carter explained.

Queen's Reward Meadery is located at 1719 McCullough Blvd., in Tupelo. For more information about the company, visit the Queen's Reward Meadery Facebook page, or call them at 662-823-6323.

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

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'HEROES,' from page 1

able grief. But their faith inspired the couple to start a mission project in their son's memory.

The Garrett Karr Memorial Medical Clinic, once complete, will provide free medical care to the residents of Cedros, Honduras. Cedros is a town of approximately 25,000 located in central Honduras. The only option for medical care for Cedros residents is a government clinic about seven miles outside of town.

"A lot of people there don't make more than \$2 a week, and if they don't have the money to pay (at the government clinic), they don't get treated," Chris said.

The Karrs, along with family and friends, have held fund raisers for the clinic ranging from singing telegrams for Valentine's Day to seasonal wreaths to 50/50 drawings. There is still more money to be raised, but they are within \$2,500 of being able to start construction on the clinic.

The land where the clinic will be located was donated by William Borden's Christ Outreach Ministries. But the Karrs are not affiliated with any organization when it comes to constructing, staffing and operating the clinic.

"We will be supervising construction. It will take about \$1,200 a month to fully staff the clinic, which is unreal that a doctor would want \$700 a month for his services," Karr said. "These people have nothing, so this is a tremendous need."

To make a donation toward construction of the Garrett Karr Memorial Medical Clinic, visit the "Garrett Karr Memorial Clinic-Honduras" Facebook page, or contact Angie at 256-412-9068.

They are close to being able to break ground and take a major step toward improving the lives of Cedros' residents, and every donation helps.

But Friday's lunch wasn't about the Honduras clinic. It was about the heroic work of health care employees right here at home, Karr said.

"We just wanted to do something nice and buy their lunch. But if someone reads this and is inspired to help with the project to build the clinic, that would be a blessing," Chris said.

'INTERSECTION' from page 1

Ogle, maintenance supervisor with ALDOT, to see what steps could be taken to increase visibility there.

"Once I found out how dangerous the intersection was from residents who live nearby, I asked ALDOT to assess the situation and decide what needed to be done," Kiel said.

Last week, in response to Kiel's request and numerous emails from residents to ALDOT Operations Engineer Mark Dale, ALDOT officials arranged for a contractor to cut trees back at 243/79. Additionally, they contacted several churches and businesses who had signs at the intersection to move them in order to increase visibility.

Kiel said flashing signs to the north and south of 79 on 243 have been ordered and will be installed once they are delivered.

Another plan from ALDOT calls for sign triangles to be cleared on all four corners of the 243/79 intersection, Kiel said.

A sight triangle area at an intersection involves a triangular area abutting the intersection that is free of obstructions. Sight triangles are designed to improve visibility for motorists attempting to cross or turn at an intersection.

The property at all four corners of 243/79 where sight triangles are needed is owned by Franklin County Schools as 16th Section land. Every school system in Alabama owns 16th Section land, Kiel explained.

Franklin County Superintendent of Education Greg Hamilton agreed to give ALDOT an easement onto the property at all four corners to allow excavating and clearing of the sight triangles, but it may be a bit more complicated than that.

Approximately a quarter acre at each corner is what the plan is for the sight triangles, with excavation being the main cost of the project. There is an issue as to whether the school system must sell 16th Section land or easements thereon, or if school officials may grant an easement without the system being compensated. Kiel is prepared for the safety enhancements to move forward either way.

"I told them I would get a grant to pay for the land if that became an issue with allowing these improvements to be made," Kiel said. "We will not let the cost of the property hold us up from moving forward."

In addition to these safety enhancements, Kiel said there must be adequate speed enforcement on 243 from law enforcement in order for any improvements to have a positive effect.

"They will get it as flat as they can at the intersection, get the trees cleared as much as they can and get the signage up but there must be speed enforcement," Kiel said. "ALDOT (official) clocked a truck doing 82 miles per hour last week on 243. Speed enforcement is a key part of this, and it must be a combination of the sheriff's department and ALEA state troopers."

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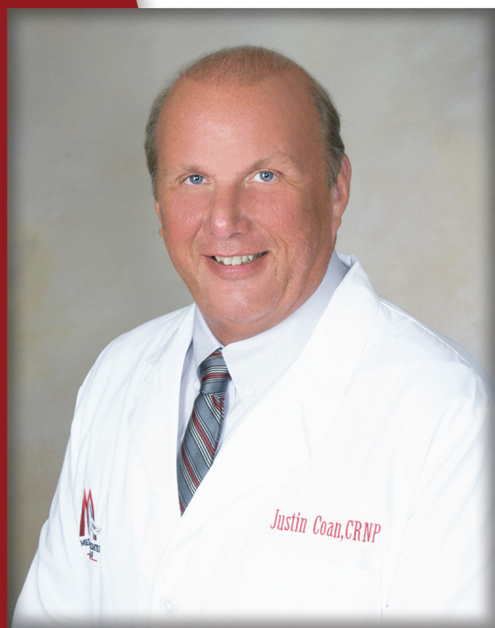


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 The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts has announced that its next production, Cheating Cheaters, that was to be performed April 23-26, 2020, will be postponed until June. They apologize for any inconvenience, but hope everyone stays well and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

 Faith Mission Outreach will have a food giveaway on May 7th at their downtown location. The giveaway will be from 2-5 P.M.

 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 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.

 There will be NO Homecoming Services or Meal Sunday, May 3, at Cherry Hill Baptist Church, Highway 244 east of Russellville. If you wish to make a donation for cemetery upkeep this mowing season, please mail your donation to Ronnie Bobo, 4925 Hwy. 83, Russellville, AL, 35654. Church services will resume May 10 with worship only at 10 a.m.

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Residents with P.O. boxes may answer Census by telephone

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

You're probably heard by now how important answering the 2020 Census is. Not only does the Census directly translate into dollars into Alabama and Franklin County, it's also the law.

But the *Franklin Free Press* has been contacted recently by two local residents who haven't received Census forms through the mail. While each resident wants to answer the Census, they didn't understand why they didn't receive the form like most other Franklin County residents did.

The answer is because the residents get their mail at a P.O. Box. According to www.census.gov, Census forms are not mailed to post office boxes.

Because the Census is tied to every physical address, the Census forms are not mailed to post office boxes.

But residents who receive mail that way still must answer the Census.

The easiest way is to respond by phone. The number to call to answer the Census questions in English is 1-844-330-2020.

The number for Spanish language Census response is 1-844-468-2020.

You can also answer the Census online by logging onto www.2020mycensus.gov.

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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.

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

How is Census data used for educational growth and development in the Franklin County Schools/Russellville City Schools? We will use the Census data to make plans for projects and academic program offerings. We will also use the data to project needed space for upcoming class sizes and extra teachers. The 2020 Census data will impact how much federal funds our school system receives such as Special Education, Early Childhood programs, Afterschool programs, and classroom technology as well as food assistance through our child nutrition and health programs. These are vital programs for our students in Franklin County Schools.



Greg Hamilton,
Superintendent,
Franklin County
Schools

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

Federal programs and grants bring in millions of dollars for our schools to enable us to give help to our students. Reading intervention program, reading intervention aides, special education aides, math intervention programs, math intervention aides, technology devices and educational software, computer lab aides, EL programs, free breakfast and lunches, SNAP food program for families, school nurses, teacher training, classroom technology, and much more would not be possible without this money.

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?

The 2020 Census will have a huge impact on the amount of federal educational dollars that we DO NOT receive in order to fund the many programs that we currently do. If we receive less monetary amounts from the federal government for our school district, there will have to be major cuts across the board in educational programs and aides that we are currently able to provide. I am urging everyone to fill out the Census 2020 and be counted to help our schools and communities.



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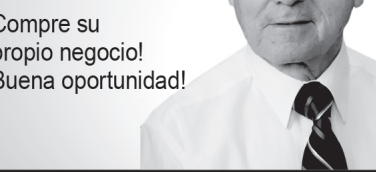
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STREET DEPARTMENT

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THE CITY OF RUSSELLVILLE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.

All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, political affiliation, disability, or any other non-merit factor. The city of Russellville encourages applications for positions in all protective service departments from women in an attempt to increase their representation in protective service departments.

Applications may be obtained at the Russellville City Hall, Office of the Mayor, 304 North Jackson Avenue. Applications must be returned no later than May 13, 2020 by U.S. Mail to:

The Russellville Civil Service Board
P. O. Box 308
Russellville, AL 35653

The average pay for this position is \$22,048.00 – \$33,989.83

The appointees will be required to successfully complete a physical examination including drug and alcohol.

JOB POSTING

GENERAL NOTICE ANNOUNCEMENT
CITY OF RUSSELLVILLE
STREET DEPARTMENT

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR II

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: Drives and operates equipment to accomplish a full range of assignments and tasks. Operates heavy equipment on job sites, such as, but not limited to: back hoe, bobcat, loader and knuckle booms.

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All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, political affiliation, disability, or any other non-merit factor.

Applications may be picked up at Russellville City Hall in the Office of the Mayor, 304 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, Alabama. Applications must be returned no later than MAY 13, 2020 by U.S. Mail to:

The Russellville Civil Service Board
P. O. Box 308
Russellville, AL 35653

The average pay for this position is \$27,643.20 - \$42,615.55.

The successful candidate will be required to successfully complete a complete physical examination including drug screening prior to employment.

Ramirez to continue athletic, academic career at MUW

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

Briana Ramirez has known for years that she wanted to play volleyball at the next level. While she knew she certainly had the talent to play collegiate ball, it was just a matter of seeing which schools came calling for her to join them.

After going through her final season and waiting for the right opportunity to fall into her lap, the Russellville High School senior had some clarity on where she would continue her academic and athletic career.

Ramirez had received offers from Blue Mountain College in Mississippi, as well as an offer to play soccer at Faulkner University in Montgomery. Ultimately Ramirez chose the Mississippi University for Women as the place she would call home for the next four years.

A multi-sport athlete at RHS, Ramirez has long known what sport she wanted to play at the next level.

"I had played volleyball and soccer throughout school but I have always leaned towards volleyball even though I grew up around soccer," Ramirez said. "When I got the call from the coach at Mississippi University for Women I was so excited. Volleyball has been a big part of my life and I have met a lot of great people playing here in school and with a club in Florence and I was just excited I'm going to have the opportunity to continue playing."

Most student-athletes that have the opportunity to continue their careers at the next level often take whichever offer has the most money attached to it. After all, college can be quite expensive. However, that was not the case for Ramirez as when she committed to MUW there was no scholarship attached.

The reasoning for foregoing a scholarship at another school? Ramirez says it all came down to academics in the end.

"I had other offers including one to play soccer at Faulkner (University), but those other schools didn't have what I wanted in terms of my degree and that's why I chose the Mississippi University for Women," Ramirez said. "I knew I wanted to play volleyball in college but I also wanted to pursue a nursing degree as well and only one offer that I received had everything I wanted so ultimately it was an easy choice."

Ramirez has been playing volleyball since she entered Russellville Middle School in the 7th grade and in addition has also played soccer for the Golden Tigers since her freshman year. Ramirez was also a part of the Spanish club and HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America) while at Russellville and is currently attempting to get her CNA license.

Giving credit to her coaches for helping her find her love for volleyball, Ramirez says that without

See 'RAMIREZ,' page 13

A perfect start

After his first season at the helm of RHS boys tennis, Phillips encouraged by results from his talented squad



COURTESY PHOTO

Before their season was stopped short, the Golden Tiger boys tennis team was on the verge of potentially making a state playoff push, with singles wins over schools such as Hoover and Pell City.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

For first year Russellville boys varsity tennis coach Ben Phillips, getting accustomed to the quiet way the sport is played is something that took some getting used to. In fact, it was something that his counterpart, RHS girls varsity tennis coach Charlotte Dollar had to help him work on according to Phillips.

"I am a very passionate human being and with tennis you can't always be loud and passionate the way you might want to and coach Dollar has had to reel me in a couple of times when I got a little too passionate while coaching," Phillips said.

Once Phillips picked up on the formalities that came with coaching tennis, things began to fall perfectly into place for the first-year head coach.

Although the season was shortened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the team had experience numerous rainouts, what the Golden Tigers were able to do in a short timeframe was quite the way to break in their new head coach.

The Golden Tigers won all of their region games as well as participating in high-caliber tournaments with multiple state title contending schools. Senior star Ethan Howard, who is committed to playing tennis at Gadsden State Community College, managed to beat larger schools Hoover (7A) and Pell City (6A) in a singles tournament earlier in the season.

Other members of the varsity team include: Kiah Derrick, Anthony Ruiz, Edwin Pereira, Tino Soto,

Samuel Franklin, Albaro Francisco, and Joel Vargas.

Phillips credits the entire squad's work ethic when it comes to their success on and off the tennis court.

"During the summer I would drive by the tennis courts and see them practicing even when we all couldn't officially meet. When practice would let out at five, they would be asking who was going to stick around and play some more," Phillips said. "These guys just put in a ton of work on the court and in the classroom and they are such good kids and we were able to see the potential that this group had from what little we got to actually play."

From the moment Phillips took over the boys' tennis program, there was one recurring idea that continuously popped up from his players when asked what they wanted to accomplish: make it to state.

"When I got here the guys constantly talked about going to state. In my opinion there is a lot of things that go in to state and so we started taking things week by week and handling things that we can handle right now," Phillips said. "My personal expectations and I know it was these guys' expectations, was to make it to state and leave their mark."

When the season was cut short in mid-March, Phillips believes that his team was hitting their stride and might have had big things in store for the rest of the season had they been allowed to continue.

See 'START' page 14

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'RAMIREZ,' from page 11

her coaches, she is unsure of whether her passion for the sport would be where it is today.

"All of the coaches I have had have all had a big impact on me. When I started out playing, Coach (Charlotte) Dollar was my coach and she helped me get into volleyball and into playing club volleyball in Florence and that's really when I started to love it," Ramirez said.

"Coach Glover has helped me so much too and was really the coach who helped me contact schools and helped me get to the next level so they have both helped me out in a

big way."

When Ramirez told her family that she was going to be able to continue playing volleyball for at least four more years, she says they were just as excited as she was.

"They were so excited. This is something that they have wanted for me just as much as I wanted this for myself. They just want to see me be successful in life and they know how much I enjoy volleyball and how much this means to me," Ramirez said. "They were just so happy for me and they are extremely excited I get to continue do what I love."

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'START,' from page 11

"From our top couple of guys all the way down the roster, they all were just really clicking. I think we would have done really well at sectionals and I think we would have won some matches down at state," Phillips said. "Now of course there are a lot of "what-ifs" tied to that but our guys were really rolling at the time the season ended and I feel strongly we would have made a deep push at state."

Due to the shortened season, Phillips' seniors won't be able to chase that elusive state tournament berth.

While he understands that the current situation is a bleak one, Phillips hopes that his seniors take this experience and find a way to spin it into a positive one.

"It's unfortunate. I hate to use that word but it is what it is. For those guys that have worked so hard over the years and to have it ripped away it's just terrible," Phillips said. "As a coach you try to let them know that this is a big thing, but don't let this define you. This is a talented, smart group of guys and they're going to do something awesome with their lives and this is just a roadblock that they will cross over and be better on the other side."

As Phillips reflects on his first season as head coach, he says he could not think of a better situation for himself to be placed in.

"I've said this time and time again and I will continue to say it, I am very fortunate that Coach Ritter called me and offered me this job. Coach Dollar has answered every question I've had and has really helped me out along the way," Phillips said. "I could not have started coaching with a better group of kids. Their parents did a fantastic job raising them and it shows. I was blessed to be put in the situation I was placed in here at Russellville."



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Letters to the Editor

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