



Community means everything.

That's why I'm proud to be here to help life go right and to support Russellville. If there's anything you need, call me.

Lee Nickels, Agent
13760 Highway 43 Ste 6, Russellville, AL 35653
256-332-0052
lee.nickels.wmy5@statefarm.com



PRSR7 STD US POSTAGE
PAID Franklin Free Press
113 Washington Ave. NW
Russellville, AL 35653

FranklinFreePress.net

05.27.20

Gargis, Green convictions upheld

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Two Franklin County men received bad news Friday when the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals denied their appeals and upheld their convictions on manslaughter and other charges.

Shannon Gargis' 40-year prison sentence and Jason Dewayne Green's 20-year sentence were both upheld by the court in opinions released May 22.

Gargis was sentenced in November 2018 to 20 years on manslaughter and another 20 years, to run consecutively, for aggravated child abuse.

A Franklin County jury found Gargis guilty of causing the death of 22-month old Serenity Renfroe, the daughter of Gargis' live-in girlfriend, Hailey Renfroe. The child was found deceased in the residence on March 22, 2016.

The mother testified that when she returned from work that morning, she found her lifeless child at the foot of

their bed, with Gargis asleep in the bed.

Gargis admitted he picked the child up by her neck and "tossed" her onto a loveseat but that he was not responsible for killing her.

Gargis was indicted on capital murder, but the jury found him guilty of manslaughter, a lesser charge.

Gargis' appeal centered on six issues in which he alleged error by the trial court. The Court of Criminal Appeals found there was no error and affirmed the conviction in its entirety. The issues raised on appeal included:

—the court's denial of Gargis' motion to suppress statements he gave to the sheriff's investigator.

—Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing being allowed to tell the jury, on the third day of deliberations, that the state was no longer seeking the death penalty on the capital murder charge.

—the trial judge's charge to the jury, called an Allen charge, read to jurors after they communicated to the

See 'GARGIS, GREEN,' page 7

Tharptown parents, students outraged by dismissal of band director Henderson

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The non-renewal of the employment of the band director/music appreciation teacher at Tharptown High School has some parents and students upset and looking for answers from school administrators.

The Franklin County Board of Education, following the recommendation of Superintendent Greg Hamilton, voted not to renew the teaching contract of Callie Henderson, Tharptown's band director/music teacher, at the board's May 12 meeting.

Several parents contacted the *Franklin Free Press* to voice their concerns about the board's decision. The *FFP* contacted Hamilton asking for an explanation for the non-renewal, but Hamilton declined to discuss the matter.

"Our policy is not to comment on non-renewal of contract employees," Hamilton said.

Henderson had just completed her third year at THS, which means she would have become a tenured teacher had she been hired for the 2020-21 school year.

Ronda Frank, whose son Bailey plays baritone saxophone in the Tharptown band, said she was "floored" when she learned Henderson had been let go.

"I'm always looking at jobs posted on the Franklin County Schools website and I saw her job posted and my heart sank," Frank said. "My son probably won't be in the band if she does not return. He wouldn't



Callie Henderson
See 'HENDERSON,' page 5

ELECT Stratt Byars

Revenue Commissioner



Paid political advertisement by Stratt Byars, 8275 Highway 48, Russellville, AL 35654

Taking care of your family's dental needs

Brett M. Bowen, DDS

Bowen Family Dentistry

243 Underwood Road • Russellville 256.332.4000

RUSSELLVILLE DENTAL CARE

Everyone Deserves To Smile!



Dr. Steve Hammack & Staff **Se Habla Español**

NEW LOCATION!

510 Engle Dr SE
(256) 332.6073

Our team is ready to serve you!

SINGING RIVER DENTISTRY

531 St. Clair St., Russellville
Call 256.332.6888 to schedule your appointment today!

SingingRiverDentistry.com



Hablamos Espanol

FAMILY Pharmacy GROUP

BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama

Family Pharmacy of Russellville

Accepting Tricare and BCBS
Hwy 43 & Underwood Rd
256.332.5545
familypharmacygroup.com

BREAKING NEWS!



Dr. Steve Hammack is Back Open!

Dear Patients,

We hope this letter finds you and your family in good health. Our community has been through a lot the last few months, and all of us are looking forward to resuming our normal habits and routines. While many things have changed, one thing has remained the same: our commitment to your safety.

Infection control has always been a top priority for our practice. Our infection control processes are made so that when you receive care, it's both safe and comfortable. We want to share with you the infection control procedures we follow in our practice to keep our patients and staff safe.

We follow infection control recommendations made by the American Dental Association, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. We follow these activities of these agencies so we remain up-to-date on any new rulings or guidance that may be issued. We do this to make sure our infection control procedures are current and adhere to each agency's recommendations.

You may see some changes at your next appointment. We made these to help protect our patients and staff. For example:

- Our office will communicate with you beforehand to ask some screening questions. You'll be asked those same questions again when you are in the office.
- We have hand sanitizer that we will ask you to use when you enter the office. You will also find some in the reception area and other places in the office for use as needed.
- You may see our waiting room will no longer offer magazines, children's toys, etc., since those items are difficult to clean and disinfect.
- Appointments will be managed to allow for social distancing between patients. That might mean you're offered fewer options for scheduling your appointment.
- We will do our best to allow greater time between patients to reduce waiting times for you. You will be asked to stay in your car when you arrive and we will come out and get you for your appointment.

We appreciate our first responders during these difficult times. For all your hard work, until August 1, 2020, first responders, nurses, doctors and teachers working from home get a FREE cleaning with X-rays. If you have insurance, you'll receive a special extra! This is our THANKYOU for all of your hard work!

To schedule an appointment, please call our office at 256-332-6073 or visit our website at www.russellvilledentalcare.com.

Thank you for being our patient. We value your trust and loyalty and look forward to welcoming back our patients, neighbors and friends.

Sincerely,
Dr. Steve Hammack and the Staff of
Russellville Dental Care



LOCAL • PERSONAL • CARING

Monuments are Designed & Lettered in our local shop. On-site Engraving & Sandblasting Franklin County's Home Owned and Operated Monument Dealer!

Grant & Beverly Atkins
403 East Lawrence Street
Russellville, Alabama

"In Memory of our loved ones..."
brought to you by Atkins Marble and Granite Works
and Franklin Memory Gardens

John Fraklin Bagwell Jr., died on Thursday, May 21. Internment at Bethel Cemetery.

Vernette Barr, 88, of Bear Creek died on Thursday, May 21. Internment at Bear Creek Cemetery.

Delmar N. Hester, 79, of Russellville died on Tuesday, May 19. Internment at Crooked Oak Cemetery.

Brenda Ann Sanchez, 63, of Russellville died on Thursday, May 23. Internment at Phil Campbell City Cemetery.

Howard Terry Winger, 76, died on Wednesday, May 20. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Jeff Elledge's
CREDIT CARS

NO CREDIT - WE FINANCE

06 Chevy HHR
\$1000 Down

08 Chevy Impala SS
\$2000 Down

13 Chevy Impala
\$1800 Down

08 Chevy Trailblazer
\$1000 Down

06 Ford Expedition
\$1500 Down

04 Ford Exp Sport Pu
\$1000 Down

97 Ford F150
\$1000 Down

01 Honda Odyssey
\$800 Down

elledge.jeff@gmail.com

2506 Woodward Ave • Muscle Shoals
256.383.7979 • 256.710.3711



Everyone Deserves
To Smile!

• Medicaid & All
Insurance Plans
Accepted!
510 Engle Dr.,
Russellville
256.332.6073

We Now Carry Jarlin Cabinetry. 1/2-inch Thick Plywood Box Construction, Clear Coated Natural Maple Finish Interior in a Variety of Colors!



Dove White
Shaker

Ebony

Sterling



256.332.8181
HWY 43 • Littleville

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

Send your creative submissions to
franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

Spurgeon overcomes self-doubt, publishes first novel

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Daniel Spurgeon began writing *Vengeance: Beginnings*, the first installment of his fantasy adventure trilogy, in 2007, the young writer was full of creativity and ideas for his story.

What he lacked was confidence.

It took more than 13 years for Spurgeon to convince himself he could get the book published. And that finally happened on May 7, as *Vengeance: Beginnings* was released for sale on BookShop, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple Books and other online retailers. Hardcover copies may be purchased directly from Spurgeon.

Spurgeon self-published the book through BookBaby, the company he decided best suited his needs. Once he saved enough money to move forward, the publisher started the editing process and cover art. The final product is "a good-looking book I'm proud of," Spurgeon said.

Having overcome his own self-doubts, the Russellville resident is now a published author who's almost halfway through with the second installment of his series.

"I've always liked to write. I spent time in school writing one thing after another," Spurgeon said. "*Vengeance* was always a great story but it was about getting over that mentality.

"I never thought it would go anywhere, so I never thought about publishing it. It's definitely a rough road to travel, not just creatively but getting over the mentality that you don't think it will succeed," he added.

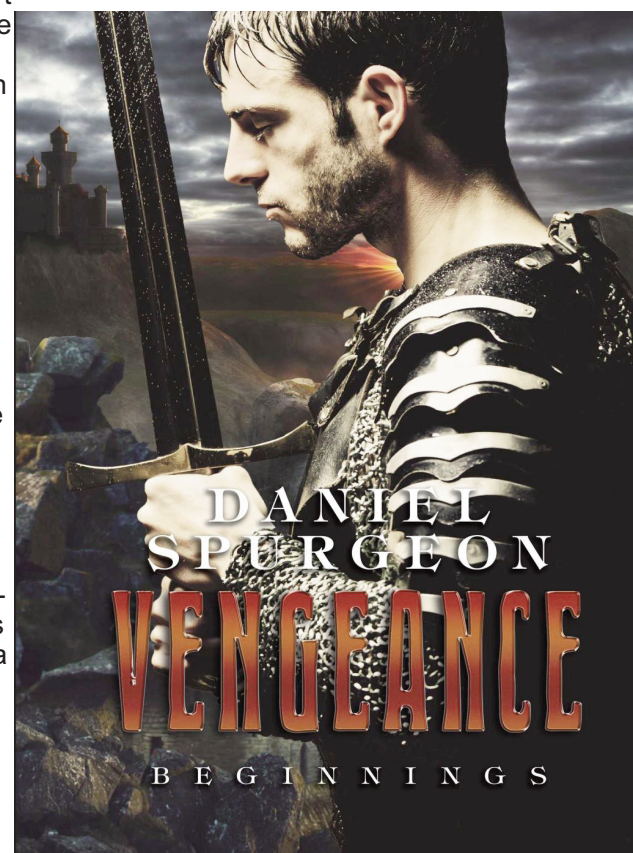
The book takes place in a world called Terath, Spurgeon said.

Vengeance: Beginnings tells the story of protagonist Caysen Tallis, a young boy whose life in Salinthas is suddenly ripped away from him.

Cast into an epic quest to avenge his losses, Caysen flees to a remote town called Palith, and with the help of his king, completes his education and training while overcoming his own fears.

One of Spurgeon's central themes in the book is whether it's possible for a hero to be afraid.

"*Beginnings* is the first book of the trilogy, a fantasy adventure filled with loss, battle, and determination. Caysen and his friends, Nelina and Taran, must learn that to overcome atrocity you must first overcome yourself and that without fear there is no such thing as courage," Spurgeon said in describing his book.



COURTESY PHOTO

After more than 13 years of writing, Spurgeon's book *Vengeance: Beginnings* finally hit the shelves

See 'SPURGEON,' page 4



AL HVAC 91114 • fullerhvac.com



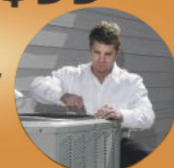
256.774.9019

Keep Your HVAC System Running Efficiently with a Tune-Up Level Right for You!

SILVER LEVEL Complete System
for **\$39** Evaluation

GOLD LEVEL Complete System
for **\$69** Evaluation, Tune-Up,
Professional Cleaning

PLATINUM LEVEL for \$99
Complete System Evaluation,
Tune-Up, Professional Cleaning,
Money-Back Guarantee,
Lifetime Thermostat Warranty



'SPURGEON,' from page 3

Spurgeon is the son of Harold and Phyllis Spurgeon. He attended Phil Campbell High School and later earned his GED. He and his wife Jessica live in Russellville.

Like Caysen, Spurgeon was forced to deal with tragedy in his life and the subsequent feelings of anger following the death of his father.

"It does have a connection to my life. I didn't have the best childhood growing up and definitely had some things to be angry about," Spurgeon said. "When I started writing this story, I based Caysen's actions on what I thought I would do in that situation, but that turned out not to feel right, so Caysen becomes a far different person than I am. But we definitely shared some of the trauma, especially with my dad's death, so there's something to be said about me in that regard," he added.

Without offering specifics, Spurgeon said the book throws the reader a 'mind-blowing' twist. As Caysen battles to overcome his anger, his magic eventually changes from red to white as that represents the change in his mental state.

"The colors of the magic are a way to identify what the user is feeling," Spurgeon said. "Red is anger and passion. White shows purity and justice."

Well into writing *Vengeance: Pursuit*, the second installment of the trilogy, Spurgeon is motivated by the feedback he's received from readers of his first book.

"It's an awesome feeling for people to actually start reading it. It's been on my mind for so long. I've told my friends about the story, but it's not the same as reading it," Spurgeon said. "So it's defi-

nitely good to get it out there."

The trilogy is one part of a bigger saga, Spurgeon explained, as there are a total of eight planned titles for the whole series. Four books will take place before the events of the *Vengeance* trilogy, including one that focuses on the antagonist in *Vengeance* to show where things went wrong for him and to offer insight into the villain.

Spurgeon said the eighth book will tie up all of his planned works in the entire universe. All are connected by a singular theme, Spurgeon said, the hierarchy of the worlds.

"Each one has a God for every world of life. The final book will tie all that up," Spurgeon said.

If the *Vengeance* trilogy is successful, could there be a future movie deal for the young author? Spurgeon is prepared for that, if the opportunity arises.

"I'm definitely excited to see where that might go. Since I'm self-published, I wouldn't let it go to the wrong person," Spurgeon said. "More than money, I would want it done right. Too many of my favorite books were turned into movies that were terrible."

Spurgeon's interest in the fantasy genre is nothing new. He grew up watching *Conan* movies, and he's a big *Star Wars* fan.

"I read a lot of books growing up. I particularly like Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle* series. Magic, dragons and that world is definitely something I've always been interested in," Spurgeon said.

Vengeance: Beginnings Kindle edition is available through Amazon.com for \$9.99. Spurgeon has hard copies for \$25 each. He's also marketing the series with posters for \$10, bookmarks for \$5

and he'll sign a hard copy for \$5.

You can reach Spurgeon through his Facebook page or by calling 256-702-8984.

He encourages other aspiring authors to overcome their self-doubt and go for it if they are serious about getting published.

"So many times I thought this would never happen. I wanted to publish the series, but I just didn't see it going anywhere," Spurgeon said. "Getting over the mentality of being a self-defeatist is a real challenge. I never truly gave up on it, though.

The dream was always there and once I really started writing to complete it, and actually moved forward with publishing it, I realized this could actually happen," Spurgeon added.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Alabama Abandoned Motor Vehicle Act, Alabama Code Sections 32-13-1 through 32-13-8, the following motor vehicle will be sold for cash at 10:30 a.m., on July 11th, 2020, at M&N Wrecker & Service Center, 11833 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, AL, 35653. Seller reserves the right to reject any bid and the right to bid.

**2015 Nissan Rogue
VIN# KNMAT2MT7FP549304
License Plate 33AV639**

**2016 Chevrolet Silverado
VIN#1GB4KYC89GF109452**

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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

The *Franklin Free Press* is published weekly by
Pilati Investments, Inc.

Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

Publisher

John Pilati

Executive Editor

Brady Petree

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

Sales Representatives

John Pilati

Content Contributors

John Pilati, Brady Petree, Ree Shannon,
Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton,
Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

Graphic Design

Jason Hill

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.

Copyright Information

Published by Pilati Investments, Inc. Copyright 2018
All materials and content are copyrighted by the Publisher
This publication may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any method, without the express written permission of the Publisher.

My take on this... 2020 seniors will persevere!

Congratulations to the Seniors of 2020.

What about the ending of the graduating class of 2020? It sounds like a story of fiction, but we all know it's not. Someday a biography will be written about the crazy, final two months, of Graduation 2020.

Hurry seniors and start writing a book! The first publishing will probably make the most money.

A world-wide pandemic that resulted in the disappearing of normal life. Nothing about the graduating seniors of 2020 is normal. No final days of school reminiscing. No final class memories to make. No prom to wear the expensive prom dresses, that can't be returned, and will never be worn.

What about graduation day? Will the students be required to stand or sit the recommended six feet apart? There will be no final hugs for the ones who will move away and begin a new life and a new career. I guess it's not all bad. You will be allowed to touch elbows. Anything is better than nothing.

The attendance will be cut drastically. Eight guests per student. The chosen few. There are some disappointed people. The reasons are to keep the families and students as safe as possible. I do hope the hostility is set aside for the seniors. Their world is turned upside down. You can do your part in making a difficult transition as easy as possible. Be kind and considerate. Don't break their hearts more than they deserve. Please don't fuss; but encourage!

At least, a solution was thought of to have a graduation ceremony. No matter, the strict rules that are required to have one, the positive side is



Gail Motes

they are going to get a graduation they deserve. This is made possible because so many are staying at home. Seniors will get to receive their diplomas and awards in person and not through the mail.

I have seen the disappointments in the faces of a few of them. I've seen the tears fall and hearts broken.

This could possibly be the saddest graduation ever, but years later it will be one of the greatest stories that a child can repeat generation after generation.

I believe everything happens for a reason. Put your faith in God. Appreciate all things and stay humble.

This will not be the last change your life will go through. Our world is so different now. We have a "new normal."

None of us know what to expect, but, for the first time ever, seniors will be on the most similar playing field that has ever been. Social distancing applies to all seniors throughout the states. All county schools are more equal than ever. I even believe the graduates of 2020 have more prayers prayed for them than ever before.

Yes, it's challenging for you! Challenges make a person stronger. You will be a graduating class with more unity and strength than the ones before you.

Apply the patience and perseverance that has brought you to this special time in your life. Expect "unknowns" to continue to be a part of your lives. Today, tomorrow, and always.

My prayers go out to each of you. Stay focused. Go forward. Never give up.

Congratulations to all the graduates from the class of 2020!

'HENDERSON,' from page 1

want to work for anyone else because Ms. Henderson was the one who built this program.

"The band went to away games to perform, they took part in competitions. She had the band program moving in the right direction. It's devastating. You couldn't ask for a more devoted teacher, not only to the band program, but to her students. She really cares about her students and that's special to find in a teacher," Frank added.

Henderson's social media account shows several posts where she appealed to the community for help finding a student a used instrument when he or she didn't have one. It was that type of extra effort for her students that stood out for Michele Harris, a Tharptown graduate herself, whose daughter participates in THS Band.

"My daughter was in eighth grade when she started thinking about trying an extracurricular activity to stick with through high school," Harris said. "So in ninth grade she decided to stay with band and work at it through the rest of high school. One of the main factors in her decision was Ms. Callie Henderson.

"Not all kids are into sports, and so many other students found their place in band and you could see it thriving at Tharptown. Seeing them prepare and even compete in band competitions was so rewarding. Seeing the proud look on their faces was wonderful," Harris added.

None of the parents who spoke to the *FFP* were aware of any negatives regarding Henderson or her teaching.

"Ms. Henderson is a true leader and is so good at what she does. As a parent, I don't understand the decision made for her not to return," Harris said. "Tharptown finally gets a band teacher who is amazing and you start to see it taking off but then you hear about this decision. It just doesn't make sense.

"The last three years Ms. Henderson has put her heart and soul into this program, and it's very disappointing that the board will let that be wasted," she added.

The outrage surrounding the board's decision also spread to some students. Josh Lopez, a THS junior who served as 2019 drum major and was selected as drum major for the upcoming school year, said the band's success was a direct result of Henderson's hard work.

"When Ms. Henderson took over the band director position at Tharptown, See 'HENDERSON,' page 8

RHS graduation, honors night to be held on June 18 due to virus

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville High School will hold a combined graduation and Honors Night on Thursday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m., at Golden Tiger Stadium.

Due to social distancing guidelines, each graduating senior will receive 10 tickets to give to family members for admission into the graduation ceremony.

Students will be receiving an email that contains a survey for them to complete where they will list any scholarships they have accepted and their plans after high school. This information will be read at graduation so it is very important for each senior to complete.

All graduating seniors will be required to attend graduation practice on Wednesday, June 17 at 8 a.m., in the stadium.

Students will also pick up their National Honor Society stoles, their honors diploma medallions and the tickets to distribute to family members at graduation practice.

Students will need to pay any outstanding fees at graduation practice as well.

School officials will be emailing and posting on social media an information sheet that contains very important information relating to decorating graduating caps, attire for graduation day and much more.

We will also place a copy of these flyers in a box outside the main office door if you would like to pick up a hard copy. These are now available to pick-up.

"We are terribly sorry for any inconvenience to our graduates and their families and I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times," said RHS Principal Jason Goodwin.

Shoals Primary Care, LLC

Internal Medicine • Family & General Practice

Dr. Faizullah Syed is Welcoming New Patients



Baylee Corsbie CRNP, Faizullah Syed M.D.,
Misty Maxwell CRNP, Kelli Robertson CRNP

MOST INSURANCE ACCEPTED • MEDICARE PATIENTS WELCOME

Admitting Privileges at Helen Keller Hospital

Monday-Thursday • 8am - 5pm | Friday • 8am-Noon

Walk-ins are Welcome



SHOALS
PRIMARY CARE

342 Cox Boulevard
Sheffield
256-383-4473
shoalsprimarycarellc.com



Bowling Family Medical Clinic

"We Welcome Walk-Ins!"

- Minor Injury Treatment
- In-Office Minor Procedures
- Routine Checkups
- X-Ray On Site
- No Appointment Needed
- Flu Shots




Mon. - Thurs. 8 - 6
 Friday 8-12 • Sunday 1-5

Se Habla Español!
 1369-A George Wallace Hwy
 Littleville
 256-333-4118

Shoals Primary Care in Sheffield Welcomes

**Jodilyn
Jelsema, MD**
Primary Care



MOST INSURANCE ACCEPTED • MEDICARE PATIENTS WELCOME

**Dr. Jelsema is
Welcoming New Patients
Call Today 256-386-4473**



342 Cox Boulevard
Sheffield
256-383-4473
shoalsprimarycarellc.com

309/12-1

Please be patient as we observe social distancing standards. Curbside waiting room. We will come get you when your appointment is ready

EyeCare Professionals

Dr. Wayne Stevens Dr. Martha Morrow Dr. David Britton

We have reopened!
Mon.-Fri.
8a.m.-5p.m.

eyecareprofessionalspc.com
15255 Hwy 43 • Russellville • 256.332.5440

M&N

TOWING & SERVICE CENTER
11833 Hwy 43 South • Russellville, AL 35653
256.332.7279

What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

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.

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 May meetings. If you have any questions, please contact Grant Atkins.

Divorced? Separated? We can help. Divorce Care is a weekly seminar/support group that will help you heal from the hurt. It's a warm, caring environment led by people who understand what you are going through. Learn practical information and gain hope for your future. Come join us at First Baptist Church, Colbert Heights, every Wednesday night from March 15 through June 7 from 6-8 p.m. Church is located at 6000 Woodmont Drive, Tuscumbia, AL 35674. For more information, call 256-383-8016 or go online to www.firstcolbertheights.com.

Upcoming 11th graders, the deadline to apply for the Franklin County Junior Leadership Program has been extended to Friday, June 5th at 4 p.m. Applications including emailed recommendation forms should be received or postmarked by June 5th. Applications are available at the Chamber office, by requesting by phone (256)-332-1760 or email at info@franklincountychamber.org.

The family of Sid and Dore Hawkins invites you to the annual family reunion, Saturday, June 6th 10 a.m. at the Spruce Pine Community Center. Please bring your favorite covered dish and we look forward to seeing you!

Everyone is welcome to worship services at Duncan Creek Baptist Church, 3925 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville. Service times are Sunday School at 10 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m. and Bible Study at 5 p.m. Pastor is Bro. Joe Thorn.

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.



**Where Everybody
Knows Your Name...**

FREE Local Delivery
FREE Curbside Assistance
Mail Order Delivery*

*Within the state of Alabama

(256)331-1919
14001 Hwy 43,
Suite 13
Franklin Shopping Ctr

**RUSSELLVILLE
DRUGS**
FREE Local Delivery!

'GARGIS, GREEN,' from page 1

court they were deadlocked.

—the court allowing the state's rebuttal witness, a forensic physician, to remain in the courtroom to hear the defense expert witness' testimony.

—the admissibility of alleged drug consumption by Gargis and the court's refusal to allow testimony from Hailey Renfroe professing her love to Gargis after he was arrested.

The appeals court reviewed the 3,100-page transcript and denied each of Gargis' issues on appeal.

In the case of the *State of Alabama vs. Jason Dewayne Green*, Green was indicted on murder, alleging he caused or contributed to the death of his girlfriend, Shay Nicole Ledlow. Throughout the proceedings, Green maintained that Ledlow shot herself, and he was not responsible for her death.

Green originally pled guilty to the reduced charge of manslaughter but later asserted that his plea was based on misinformation from his attorney about the amount of good time he would receive toward his sentence. He was sentenced to 19 years at that time.

Franklin County Circuit Judge Terry Dempsey granted Green's petition and allowed a new trial to be held.

At that trial, Green was convicted by a jury of manslaughter, possession of marijuana second degree and possession of drug paraphernalia in January 2019.

Dempsey imposed the maximum sentence, 20 years, on the manslaughter conviction and one year each on the drug possession convictions, all to run concurrent.

Green appealed his conviction, raising four primary issues:

—the court's instruction to the jury on the charge of reckless manslaughter as a lesser included offense of intentional murder.

—that the evidence was insufficient to sustain a conviction for reckless manslaughter.

—that a 20-year sentence was grossly disproportionate and constituted cruel and unusual punishment.

—that it was error not to sentence Green under Alabama's presumptive sentencing standards.

The appeals court denied each of Green's issues. As to the 20-year sentence being "grossly disproportionate to the crime," the court held that Green

did not raise this issue in the trial court either at sentencing or in a post trial motion, so it was not preserved for appeal.

"Moreover, even if this issue had been preserved, after reviewing the record, we conclude that Green's sentence—which is within the statutory range of punishment for reckless manslaughter, is not grossly disproportionate to his crime and does not constitute cruel and unusual punishment." (Page 27 of Green appeal).

Both defendants may ask the Court of Criminal Appeals for a rehearing, and in the event that is denied, they may appeal to the Alabama Supreme Court.

Rushing said he was pleased to see the convictions affirmed on appeal.

"In both cases, the Court of Criminal Appeals unanimously upheld the jury's verdict and the defendants will continue to serve their sentences in prison," Rushing said.

"Both cases were heard by jurors of Franklin County citizens who decided each defendant was guilty and we are pleased to see that the jury verdicts will stand," he added.



**UNCONTESTED
DIVORCE \$199**
plus Filing Fee

256.331.0800

Law Office • Rebecca Green Thomason
501 North Jackson Ave., Ste. 1, Russellville.



ZT X 42

22 HP KOHLER®
42 IN. DECK

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE

\$3,659



KIEL EQUIPMENT

14696 Hwy 43 | Russellville, Alabama | www.kielequipment.com

'HENDERSON,' from page 5

we previously had a band director who didn't do very much," Lopez said. "What Ms. Henderson did was make us into an award-winning group that competed in competitions and earned '1' (excellence) ratings.

"We went to the MPA (state-level Music Performance Assessment) and got '3s' our first year, but last year we earned '2s.' We were so excited because that was a major thing for us. We wanted to prove so bad we were actually moving forward and we did," Lopez added.

Lopez said Henderson's influence went beyond the band program and into her music appreciation classroom.

"She made us all see the brighter side of music and how it affects life. She's a great role model and a great leader. Her music appreciation students feel the same way. She does a phenomenal job and she's one of the best teachers I've ever had," he added.

Lopez hopes Hamilton and the board will reconsider their decision. He believes speaking out was necessary because Henderson was so loyal to her students and they now want to reciprocate that loyalty to her.

"It's heartbreaking what happened and we're going to try and do something to change it. If they hire a new band director, our program will continue, but it won't be the same as it was before," Lopez said.

Lopez said Henderson took an underfunded band program and made it a success by building positive relationships with her students.

"There were several times she had to buy things out of her pocket because the band program just didn't have the money. And there's a new rule that extracurricular activities can only do two fund raisers a year, so it's hard to raise funds," Lopez said.

Henderson is a graduate of the University of North Alabama. During her time as THS band director, she helped organize the Band Booster Program, which raises funds for the program.

Franklin County principals make recommendations to Hamilton about non-tenured personnel after each school year and that recommendation is a large factor in the superintendent's recommendation. Tharptown High School Principal Ann Scott was contacted by the FFP and asked why Henderson was not re-hired. Scott also declined to comment on the matter but did say she had not been contacted by anyone about the decision not to re-hire Henderson.

A petition started on the website www.change.org, asking Hamilton and the board to reconsider their decision not to rehire Henderson had garnered 450 signatures as of May 23.

The petition reads, in part: "With little support and next to no funding (Henderson) took a group of kids and gave them something to be proud of. With only three years of instruction, she built an award winning program and inspired children to excellence. Beyond that, she treated these children as if they were her own, encouraging them to be their true selves and find their own voices...Her contract was not renewed this year and the community is devastated. Please help us draw attention to this injustice and let your voice be heard. THS does not want or need a new band director."

Other personnel moves approved by the board on May 12 included:

- Resignation of Kaitlin Harris, Tharptown Elementary teacher.
- Employment of Amber Pharr, Red Bay High School math teacher, Areanna Orozco, THS math teacher, Brandon Kirk, Band Director/Music Teacher RBHS and Chelsey Pounds, Phil Campbell High School English teacher.
- Employment in Supplement of Nichole Ertle, Junior Varsity Cheer Sponsor, THS.
- Non-Renewal of Contract of Belgreen bus drivers Megan Skidmore and Dallas Gilliland, Lorie Robbins, temporary elementary special education aide at Red Bay Elementary, Brooke Williams, temporary elementary teacher at Tharptown, Jimmy Johnson III, remedial interventionist with Band Director/Music Duties at Vina High School and Mary Elizabeth Moore, teacher at Vina.



Dr. Kelly's Urgent Care

Walk-In visits or Telehealth visits by phone or Facetime. We are available to screen and test for COVID-19.

**Mon.-Fri. 8-6, Sat. 8-3, Sun. 1-5
13150 Hwy. 43, Suite 10, Russellville
256-331-2092.**

*Serving your family for more than 30 years.
Family Practice, Pediatrics, Newborn Care.*

Village at Oliver Place


Apartments & Townhomes

Water included starting at:

2 BR \$440 • 3 BR: \$512



205.993.5005. • Pike Avenue • Phil Campbell

TDD (Hearing impaired) 800.548.2546 

43 Wash N Spin



Laundromat/Lavanderia

**31 Vincent Dr.
Just off Hwy 43
across from
Russellville
Fire Department**

**Open 7
days a week
6:00 a.m. -
10:30 p.m.**



Kevin G. Kelly, M.D.

Serving your family for over 30 years

FAMILY PRACTICE
Pediatrics
Newborn Care
256-331-25901

Urgent Care

Walk-in Clinic

We are still here!

- Entrance located on right side closest to Fred's
- Please excuse our growing pains.

No Appointment Needed

**13150 Hwy. 43 Suite 10
Russellville, AL
(intersection of Hwy. 24 and Hwy. 43)**

256-331-2092



Dear Residents of Franklin County:

We all love calling Franklin County home because of its community and civic minded residents who are concerned about this wonderful community as much as we are. Many residents often ask what can I do to make a difference? In 2020, you can make a difference and shape Franklin County's future by joining other Franklin County residents and filling out the 2020 Census.

Our community will benefit the most when the Census counts everyone. When you respond to the Census, you help Franklin County get its fair share of the more than \$675 billion per year in federal funds spent on schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other vital programs. Some of the most recognizable programs in Franklin County are: School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, SNAP, Afterschool Care, School Nurses, Computers and Chromebooks, Early Childhood Education, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Public Housing, Roads and Bridges, just to name a few! The 2020 Census will also affect redistricting in the State of Alabama Legislature and will determine the number of seats Alabama gets in the U.S. House of Representatives on the national level.

Filling out the 2020 Census only takes a few minutes but the impact will shape the future of Franklin County. The 2020 Census form is very simple; you can fill it out online, by phone or mail. For more information concerning the 2020 Census visit, www.mycensus.gov or call 1-844-330-2020.

Yours respectfully,

Franklin County Commission

Judge Barry Moore, Chairman

District 1- Commissioner Chris Wallace District 2-

Commissioner Jason Miller District 3- Commissioner Rayburn

Massey District 4- Commissioner David Hester

Town of Hodges

Mayor Joyce Sadd

District 1- Councilman Tim Atkinson

District 2 – Councilwoman Zelma Nichols

District 3 – Councilwoman Lisa Keller

District 4 – Councilwoman Ashley Pharr

District 5- Councilman Jeremy McGraw

Town of Phil Campbell

Mayor Steve Bell

Place 1- Councilman Mike McQuary Place 2- Councilman Danny Brown Place 3- Councilman Eddie Barton Place 4- Councilwoman Lynn Landers Place 5- Councilman Jim Cartee

Franklin County Schools

Greg Hamilton, Superintendent

Russellville City Schools

Heath Grimes, Superintendent

City of Red Bay

Mayor Charlene Fancher

Place 1- Councilman Mike Kennedy

Place 2- Councilman Jarod Massey

Place 3- Councilman Herbert Trulove

Place 4- Councilman Jason Vinson

Place 5- Councilman Brad Bolton

City of Russellville

Mayor David Reed Grissom

District 1- Councilman David Palmer

District 2- Councilman William Nale

District 3- Councilman Gary Cummings

District 4- Councilman Arthur Elliott

District 5- Councilman Jamie Harris

Town of Vina

Mayor D W Franklin

Place 1- Councilwoman Renea Chandler

Place 2- Councilman Jeff McAlister Place 3- Councilman

Dewayne Raper Place 4- Councilwoman Lula Abston

Place 5- Councilwoman Denieta Cantrell





Classifieds

256.332.0255

BUSINESS • LOST & FOUND • GARAGE SALES • PETS • APPLIANCES • HELP WANTED • SERVICES • APPLIANCES • CLOTHING • FURNITURE

**YARD SALES/
ESTATE SALES**

Multi-family yard sale. Friday, May 29th, 7 a.m.-3 p.m., and Saturday, May 30th, 7 a.m.- 1p.m. 55 Marshall Drive, off Underwood Road, Russellville. **NO EARLY SALES.** Lots of clothes and home goods!

FURNITURE

AUTO
Golf Cart For Sale.

\$400. Includes tarp and charger. Call 256-332-1341. (6)

**LOOKING TO BUY/
HELP WANTED**

The management of WMTY television on Highway 24 West in Russellville is needing a load of gravel delivered to the station. Please call Bro. Pete at 256-331-0806. (2)

Need Someone to do dirt work for a garden.

Also need someone for roofing repairs. Please call 256-668-9391.

FOR SALE

Wrought Iron Mailbox post. Standard type, \$42.95. Standard deluxe \$55. Well built, look good, and will last. Will deliver to Tharptown and Russellville for free. Other areas \$7 fee. No texts. Call (256)-577-1632. (2)

**HOUSES/
APARTMENTS/
PROPERTY
FOR RENT/SALE**

Open House. Saturday, May 16th. 12 p.m.-4 p.m. 231 Duncan Drive, Russellville. For more information, call 731-

**TWO HOUSES
AND THREE
ACRES OF LAND
FOR SALE. 4.5
MILES EAST OF
RUSSELLVILLE.
\$199,900.
PLEASE CALL
256-762-6393 OR
256-762-9751.**

335-9995.

Two Bedroom House for Rent. 1302 N. Washington Ave., Russellville. \$395/mo. \$395/deposit. Must have first month's rent and deposit up front. Call 256-810-3998 or 256-460-5016. (6)

Franklin Free Press Classified Rates: FREE, Deadline Monday at Noon; Real Estate-Homes, acreage, lots for sale or rent. \$25 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 40 words per ad; Vehicles, Boats, RVs, Motorcycles for sale. \$15 for six consecutive

weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Pets For Sale only \$10 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Free of Charge: Lost & Found, Giveaways, and Items Under \$100 (Private Parties Only). 15-word limit; Commercial Classified Rates: \$25 for Businesses, 15 words or

less for six weeks. Ads exceeding word limit add \$10 per additional 15 words. The number in

parentheses represents the number of times the ad has appeared. Call us at 256-332-0255 to

place, cancel or renew your ad. Payment is required in advance of publication for ads.

Dial-A-Deal

Call 24/7 to post items you have for sale, trade, or want to buy. Also, you may listen to items that have been called in. There is **NO CHARGE** for advertising your noncommercial items.

Dial-A-Deal comes on at 12:00 noon Monday thru Friday on WFMH 95.5 FM.

"The Dial-A-Deal phone number is really nifty; just remember 256-331-51 50."

AMERICAN REALTY, LLC.

Buy a turnkey business today. Become your own boss! Call me about this great opportunity in Russellville!

Enrique Aguilar
Realtor/Sales Associate
256-740-2356

Compre su propio negocio! Buena oportunidad!

A good neighbor has your back.

Rhett Bradford, Agent
201 Washington Avenue NW
Russellville, AL 35653
Bus: 256-332-0540
www.insuredbyrhett.com
Monday-Friday 8:30-5:00
After Hours & Saturdays
By Appointment

Life's a combination of good days and bad. I have your back for both. And who has my back? The company more people have trusted for 90 years. **CALL ME TODAY.**

State Farm
Bloomington, IL

1606040

MedExpress Red Bay

CARING FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY INFANTS TO ADULTS

WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED. WALK-INS WELCOME!

Open Monday - Friday | 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

221 HOSPITAL ROAD | RED BAY | 256.356.8907

Blackburn, Dempsey named to AHSAA softball all-star team

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

The high school softball season might have come to an end sooner than players and coaches had anticipated, but that didn't stop a few local players from putting up eye-popping performances on the diamond.

Last week the AHSAA announced that Belgreen's Emma Dempsey and Red Bay's Lila Blackburn were both named to the north region roster for the state softball all-star team.

It is the second of such honor for Dempsey who, just months ago was named to her respective region's basketball all-star team as well.

"I'm just thankful that God blessed me with the opportunity and ability to be named to those teams and I'm honored that I was named alongside all of the great athletes across the state in both sports," Dempsey said.

Across 13 games this season, Dempsey batted an astounding .393 with ten doubles, seven runs scored, and an OPS of .880.

Dempsey says she found out from her first-year head coach Susie Tverberg that she made the all-star team. As she didn't get the chance to try and lead Belgreen to a state title in her junior year, Dempsey is optimistic that the Bulldogs will be right back in the hunt for a blue map despite losing some key players after this year.

"I want to make it to state. It's the same mindset that we have every single year but we are losing a lot this year. We have a lot of younger players that can fill those spots easily if they work hard," Dempsey said. "I think we will be back at it again next year trying for a state championship and I'm excited to get back on the field and try for it again."

Tverberg says that while she hasn't been the coach of the Bulldogs for a full season yet, the amount she has been able to work with Dempsey has proven to her just how talented of a player she is.

"Emma is a competitor. Her work ethic is amazing and she works out on her own in the weight room and on the field and that hard work shows on the field. She really wants to play softball at the next level and she's committed to getting there," Tverberg said. "This is one of those honors that just validates all of her hard work to her and proves to her that all of this work is paying off."

Looking ahead to next season, Tverberg understandably has high hopes for Dempsey and believes that the best is yet to come from the soon-to-be senior. "I'm excited to see what she does next year. I honestly think the sky's the limit for her and that she has a lot of potential to do some great things," Tverberg said. "As a senior we tell them that this is their time to shine and go after what you want and I think Emma has her head on straight and she's ready to step up and go after a state championship."

See 'ALL-STAR,' page 14

Twirling to the top

After wowing audiences at Golden Tiger Stadium for the past two years, Russellville senior Emma Reed is taking her talents to the college level



COURTESY PHOTO

Reed will attend Northeast Mississippi Community College where she will be a key part of the Tiger Band as a featured twirler.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - After years of performing on Friday nights for hundreds of devoted Golden Tiger football fans, Russellville senior Emma Reed had better get used to performing on Saturdays from now on.

Reed recently accepted a scholarship to attend Northeast Mississippi Community College to become a member of the Tiger Band as a featured twirler.

As she started twirling four years ago with Heather Davis and Studio X-Treme, Reed wasn't sure if she could envision herself being a twirler in college, much less a featured twirler.

But as she honed her skills by becoming a member of the Russellville Marching Hundred as a majorette the past two years, that vision soon came into clear focus and she realized she just

might have what it takes to twirl at the next level.

Reed says that had it not been for the help she received from Davis, she might not have had the opportunity to become a featured twirler in college.

"Heather had another student that is a featured twirler at Northeast Mississippi and so she had a connection to the college. And then she graduated and a spot became available for a featured twirler and I ended up trying out for it," Reed said. "I never planned on trying out at the collegiate level when I started out. But Heather really helped me along the way and I honestly would not be where I am today without Heather and everything she's done for me."

According to Reed, there is a distinct difference between being a twirler and being a featured twirler. While a twirler still does a majority of things that a featured twirler might do, the featured

See 'TWIRLING' page 12

'TWIRLING,' from page 11

twirlers have their own individualized routines, making it much more difficult and allows for the featured twirlers to stand out.

From performing on Friday nights at playoff games to spending her weekends at private competitions, Reed has her fair share of notable memories to look back on once she leaves Russellville High School.

However, the thing she says she will cherish the most, wasn't the twirling itself.

"The memories that have been made since I have been doing this is something that I wouldn't give up for anything. I have had so much fun over the years that it has really had a big impact on my life," Reed said. "The friends I have made over the years is something that I will cherish forever and that was probably the best part over the years."

Normally, for something like a featured twirling position on a collegiate band, a tryout would tend to be held in person. Of course that's in a normal setting. With the Covid-19 pandemic ongoing, Reed didn't have the chance to perform in person but had to do her routine and try out in a rather unconditional way.

"My tryout was supposed to be the first weekend in April but when the virus hit, that obviously threw things out of the way so I had to do my tryout online instead of in front of people in person," Reed said.

While it may seem like deviating from the normal way of doing things would be challenging, Reed says that it was actually the opposite.

"It was a less stressful situation honestly because I was able to do my routine at the studio that I take lessons at and it's the place that I am more comfortable at," Reed said. "Heather was there and I was just in a better and calmer mindset because I was in a place that I was familiar with and have done my routines before. Not having people right in front of you judging you definitely made it less stressful for me so I was very appreciative of that."

It took a few weeks to get her results back but once she did, Reed's dreams were finally realized in the form that she had been named the feature twirler with her future college.

While at RHS, Reed was a member of the rocketry team, annual staff, and FBLA.

Once at NEMCC, Reed plans to study aerospace engineering.

See 'TWIRLING,' Page 13

George Evans, MD

Offering general medical care services for the entire family



256.383.4473 Ext. 2021

340 Cox Blvd • Sheffield, AL

RUSSELLVILLE PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

ATTENTION:

SPRING SPORTS UPDATE

DUE TO THE CURRENT COVID-19 SITUATION AND THE GOVERNOR'S SAFER AT HOME ORDER WE ALONG WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES HAVE DECIDED TO CANCEL OUR SPRING SOCCER LEAGUE AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE. WE ARE DEEPLY SADDENED TO HAVE TO MAKE THIS CALL, BUT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR CITIZENS IS TOP PRIORITY. WITH OUR COUNTY'S NUMBERS RISING DAILY WE BELIEVE THIS IS THE RIGHT DECISION.



SOCCER & SOFTBALL ROLLOVER INFORMATION

SOCCER - SINCE GAMES HAVE ALREADY BEEN PLAYED, ALL PLAYERS THAT ARE CURRENTLY SIGNED UP WILL ROLL OVER TO OUR FALL SOCCER LEAGUE. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ANYTHING, WE WILL ROLL EVERYONE OVER AND CONTACT YOU WHEN THE NEW SEASON STARTS IN SEPTEMBER.

SOFTBALL - ALL PLAYERS THAT ARE CURRENTLY SIGNED UP HAVE THE OPTION TO ROLL OVER TO NEXT YEAR'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE OR RECEIVE A REFUND. IF YOU WANT TO ROLL OVER TO NEXT YEAR'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE THERE IS NOTHING YOU NEED TO DO. IF YOU WANT A REFUND YOU MUST E-MAIL PARK AND REC OFFICE BY JUNE 1. THAT INFORMATION IS ON NEXT GRAPHIC.

SOFTBALL REFUND INFORMATION

SOFTBALL REFUND - REFUNDS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE HANDED OUT ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 12 PM - 4 PM AT BISHOP CENTER.

IN ORDER TO RECEIVE YOUR REFUND YOU **MUST E-MAIL CARRIE BEFORE JUNE 1**. IN YOUR E-MAIL PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME, CHILD'S NAME, AGE DIVISION AND NAME OF WHOEVER WILL BE PICKING UP REFUND. MAKE SURE WHOEVER PICKS UP REFUND HAS ID - WE WILL NOT RELEASE REFUND WITHOUT PROPER ID.

E-MAIL: CARRIE.DOVER@RCS.K12.AL.US

MISSION MEDICAL

Se Habla Espanol



Melanie Malone CRNP and Jean Stowe CRNP

During this uncertain time, be certain we are here to care for you. We now offer telehealth visits when needed.

Monday-Friday 8-5

Call for an appointment
(256) 398-7212 • 14001 Hwy 43
Franklin Shopping Center • Russellville, AL

'TWIRLING,' from page 12

When she was younger, Reed never imagined she would be a twirler. It wasn't until her sister got involved that she says she took up twirling and the rest is history.

"I never really was a 'girly-girl' or anything when I was younger so I never really pictured myself as someone who would be interested in that kind of stuff," Reed said. "My younger sister began twirling back in 2016 after my father passed away and then I took an interest in it and it ended up working out."

As her younger sister begins to take the same path that she did years ago, Reed says while she still holds the title of being the best twirler in the family, she knows she has some friendly competition coming up soon.

"My sister is going to try out here in a couple of weeks and I'm hopeful she'll make it but for right now I'm the majorette in the family and I get to say I'm the best for a little bit longer," Reed said.



Pest Solutions

Pest & Mosquito Control
256-332-4008

We're here for your essential needs, like gas, fresh-cooked food and snacks and drinks!

Open 24 hours!
Fast, Friendly Service
from Folks You Know



13518 Highway 43
Russellville
Call ahead for Deli Orders at
256-398-8448

Legacy CHEVRON

"Going fishing?"

Phil Campbell Chevron now has live bait (tuffies & shiners), crickets & worms! We carry artificial bait, minnow buckets, coolers, life jackets and we sell BCDA permits.

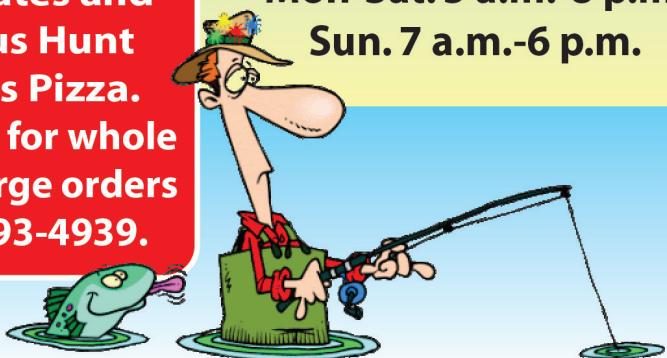


Phil Campbell

Byron Fretwell, Manager

Temporary Hours:
Mon-Sat. 5 a.m.-8 p.m.
Sun. 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

Our Deli is OPEN!
Enjoy our daily lunch plates and delicious Hunt Brothers Pizza. Call ahead for whole pizza or large orders at 205-993-4939.



Welcoming ~~Accepting~~ New Patients



Justin Coan, CRNP

Justin is a native of North Alabama and has over 23 years of direct patient care experience in the fields of Internal Medicine and Family Practice with special expertise in kidney health. Justin has been with Medical Associates of the Shoals for over eight years and works in constant collaboration with the physician partners.

Justin is welcoming new patients and would be honored to care for you and for those you love.



MedShoals.com
Like us... Share us... Call us...



Call 256-383-4447
to schedule an appointment

1120 South Jackson Hwy, Suite 300, Sheffield, AL 35660

'ALL-STAR,' from page 11

Just 20 minutes down the road from Belgreen, Red Bay junior Lila Blackburn was tearing up the diamond and had the Red Bay Lady Tigers in good position to make a playoff run before the season was cancelled.

Blackburn, who has committed to Copiah Lincoln Community College in Mississippi to play softball, says that she was honored to not only have been named to the all-star team, but to have been named alongside a county rival.

"I was very happy when I got the news that I had been selected to the team. It's such a great honor to be on there with all of the other great players in the state," Blackburn said. "I've known Emma for a long time and for her to be on the team with me is a pretty cool thing."

Having played softball her entire life, Blackburn says she has had one thing on her mind since she began her high school career: to win a state championship.

"I'm hoping to make it to state this year. I personally am going to work on some things like my pitching because I want to get to and win the state championship," Blackburn said. "We will have a really strong team next year and have a lot of talented girls coming back so I'm hoping we can do it."

Shane Nichols, who is not originally from Alabama, will be entering his third season as the head coach of the Red Bay softball program next season. Nichols says that when he was alerted that Blackburn was named to the all-star team, there was some surprise on his part.

"At first I was not surprised because Lila comes in everyday and does what she needs to do and she does it extremely well so I wasn't surprised at all that it was her that was selected," Nichols said. "However I was a little bit surprised later on when I figured out that this wasn't just a 2A thing, but rather 1A-7A so you're taking all of the best players from across all classifications and that just makes it that much more impressive."

Nichols says that his expectations for Blackburn as she heads into her senior season won't change from the previous year because in Blackburn's case, you know what kind of special talent you're getting.

"Lils is going to work. You never have to worry about putting more pressure on her or anything like that. You know she's going to give you everything she's got," Nichols said. "She's not a very vocal person so she lets her actions do the talking and so she has the ability to change an entire game with just one play and that just speaks to how special of a player she truly is and I expect that she will carry that over to next year and do big things for us."

In the battle against COVID-19, City Councilman Gary Cummings reminds you to B-SAFE!

- B • BE** smart to
- S • STOP** the spread of COVID-19.
- A • Be ADAMANT** with hand washing and social distancing.
- F • FACEMASK.** Use one when out in a public setting.
- E • EVALUATE** your surroundings and be vigilant that people around you are using these precautions.



**Let's all
B-SAFE
together!**

Pilgrim's

NOW HIRING

Pilgrim's offers Competitive
Wages starting at \$12.80/hr.

Benefits include: Medical, Dental, Vision, Vacation,
Holidays, 401K and Opportunities for Advancement!

**Join the Great Team Members at
Pilgrim's by applying online at
www.pilgrimsusa.com, in person at
our plant located at 2045 Hwy. 244
in Russellville, or at the
Sheffield Career Center.**

Pilgrim's is an Equal Opportunity Employer, M/F/V/D.

**Your Opportunity for a Better
Future Begins at Pilgrim's!**

Now OPEN **FRANKLIN DISCOUNT DRUGS**
In Phil Campbell! 205-993-4554

**Free Local Delivery!
Convenient Drive-Thru!
Most Insurance
Accepted!**

**Mon.-Fri. 9-6
3145 Hwy 237
Phil Campbell**

**Next to Phil Campbell
High School**

Owner/Pharmacist
Wes Mayfield

BUSINESS DIRECTORY



Advertise with us! Call 256.668.2708 or 256.332.0255

franklinfreepress.net

MOWING

Salvador's
LAWN SERVICE

(256) 810-2351

Free
Estimates
Licensed

MOWING • TRIMMING
MULCHING • CLEANING LEAVES
HEDGING & SHRUBS • EDGING

MASSAGE

REWARD YOURSELF OR
SOMEONE YOU
LOVE

256.332.4220

Angel Harris
Licensed Massage Therapist LMT #1495

Reiki Practitioner II

Gift Cards Available
Creative Image Salon

7129 Hwy 43 • Spruce Pine

LANDSCAPING

K&S TREE SERVICE
253 Laurelwood Dr. Russellville, Alabama

Trimming
Topping • Removal

Bucket Work
Stump Grinding

KARL RAGAN 256.332.9064

PEST CONTROL



**PREDATOR
PEST CONTROL**

"The Insect Predator"

Eddie Deaton
(256) 627-1996

50 Years Combined Experience

Toll Free 1-888-832-5405

(662) 862-5631

(662) 840-4055

HOUSING

256-332-1561
73 Flippen St

UNITS NOW AVAILABLE

Russellville
Housing Authority
Incorporated

"The standard for fixed-income
living in Russellville."



DISTRICT ATTORNEY



JOEY RUSHING
Franklin County District Attorney
256.332.8870 • 256.710.4713
(daytime) (after hours)

PERSONAL TRAINER

Personal Touch Fitness

Personal Training & Rehab



Weight Training - Abdominal Routine
Cardio and Flexibility Exercises
Nutritional Counseling

256-668-2844

Rickey Smith
Fitness Specialist

PUBLIC SERVICE

BUCKLE UP! It Could Save Your Life!

franklinsheriff.org
(256) 332-8811

Compliments of
**Shannon
Oliver**
SHERIFF



PETS

PAWS-N-PURRS

Daycare, Boarding & Grooming



1140 Ronnie McDowell Ave
Behind Pizza Hut

256-398-8112



SWAP SHOP

Call 24/7 to post items you have for sale,
trade, or want to buy. Also, you may
listen to items that have been called
in. There is NO CHARGE for
advertising your
noncommercial items.
Dial-A-Deal comes on
at 12:00 noon Monday
thru Friday on WFMH 95.5 FM.
"The Dial-A-Deal phone number
is really nifty; just remember
256-331-51 50."



THERE ARE
OTHER WAYS

TO GET
OUR INK!

MAILBOX • SMARTPHONE • TABLET • COMPUTER • RADIO



FRANKLINFREEPRESS.NET

Green's **DEPENDABLE HARDWARE**

15220A Hwy 43 • Russellville • *Behind McDonald's* • 256.331.0123

*Russellville's
Oldest
Retailer*

*Your
Dependable
Service Center*

*Carrying the
tradition for
over 70 years.*

Hardware

Plumbing

Electrical

Hand & Power Tools

Lawn & Garden

Grills

Pool Supplies

We Test Water

Paint



Outdoor Power

Equipment

Small Engine

Parts & Service

With Pickup & Delivery

Services

UPS Drop Off

Wish.com Local Pick-up

Keys Copied



Hometown Folks • Hometown Service

Graduation 2020



THE FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

*would like to
congratulate the
graduates of the
six area schools
that make up our readership*



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS
YOUR HOMETOWN, "GOOD NEWS" NEWSPAPER!

Russellville High School will hold a combined Graduation/Honors Night
Thursday, June 18th at 7:30 p.m., at Golden Tiger Stadium.



***Congratulations, Class of 2020!
We are proud of you!***

From left: Gary Cummings, Jamie Harris, Mayor David Grissom,
Arthur Elliott, William Nale and David Palmer.

If we may be of service, please call 256.332.6060

Perseverance, resiliency define Class of 2020

To the RHS Graduating Class of 2020:

I want to begin this letter to you by saying how tremendously proud I am of each one of you. Graduating from high school is a major accomplishment, but doing so under the circumstances you have faced this school year is something you should also be very proud of. Hold your heads high and take pride in what you have accomplished thus far, whether it was in the classroom, on a field, on a stage, through an award or scholarship, or through lessons you have learned.

When we began this school year back in August of 2019, we decided on two hash tags that would define our year: #MakeADifference and #NoMatterWhat.

Obviously we had no idea at the time that these mantras would basically become the theme for your class, because you have truly had to navigate this year #NoMatterWhat. No matter how hard it was to end the school year unexpectedly in March.

No matter how disappointing it was to miss your Senior Prom or other senior activities. No matter how difficult it's been to complete virtual assignments. No matter how sad it's made you to social distance from your friends.

No matter how much you've missed your classmates, teachers, and routines. And no matter how upended and surreal these past two and a half months have been. No matter how disappointed you were to not have a physical graduation when it was originally planned. You have persevered through all of this #NoMatterWhat, and I am amazed at your resiliency.

Even though this has been a tough year, I hope you will take these lessons you have all had the opportunity to learn and apply them to your life and character moving forward.

Learning to push through the hard times, shoulder the disappointments, adapt to new circumstances and environments, and take responsibility for your own learning are all things that will serve you well in the future. This experience can be a positive one if you allow these things to better you as a person.

I also hope you will take the other lessons you have learned during your time at RCS and use them to shape you as well.

The leadership and teamwork qualities you received from being a student athlete; the time management you learned from your academic work; the responsibility you gained by being part of one of our fine arts programs; the knowledge and friendship-building skills you learned by being involved in extracurricular activities; and the pride and confidence we hope you all feel after being part of this school system.

Your life is what you make it, not what happens to you. And I have all the confidence in the world that the RHS Class of 2020 will forge paths that lead to bright futures and great accomplishments.

Congratulations, Class of 2020! I hope you always know how GREAT it is to be a Golden Tiger!

Heath Grimes
Superintendent
Russellville City Schools

**Don't forget to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!
Contact us at 256-332-0255 or franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.**



Congratulations Maggie!
◆ We are proud of you!
Love, Your Family



*We are so
proud of you
Samuel!
We love you!*

Jeremiah 29:11



**Congratulations,
Samuel Franklin!**

**Love, Dad, Mom,
Nate and Joseph**





Congratulations to the Russellville High School Class of 2020!



Russellville City School Board of Education. Front row from left: Judy Pounders, Greg Trapp, Superintendent Heath Grimes. Back row from left: Bret Gist, Jerry Groce, Greg Batchelor.

If we may be of service to you your family, please visit us at 1945 Waterloo Road in Russellville or call 256-331-2000.

www.rcs.k12.al.us

RUSSELLVILLE Class of 2020

Kassandra Abarca
 Monica Acosta
 Ellie Akers
 Jacob Alfaro
 Billy Alonzo
 Maria Alonzo Jose
 Cecilia Andres
 Colby Andres Juan
 Austin Ashley
 Priscila Bahena
 Samuel Bahena
 Yaneli Bahena Garcia
 David Baltazar
 Gregoria Baltazar
 Tyler Barnes
 Daylin Barrios
 Tristen Bickerstaff
 Jacob Bishop
 Cameron Bonn
 Sydney Bowling
 Brianna Brazzell
 Charles Bridges
 Carley Briles
 Katelyn Burns
 Amelia Camacho
 Andres Campos
 Maria Castro-Baltazar
 Jose Chajal Castro
 Alivia Clemmons
 Simon Colburn

Mario Cruz
 Matthew Darracott
 Jacob Davis
 Johana De La Sancha-Santana
 Alondra Delgado
 Diana Delgado-Hernandez
 Jennifer Diaz Ramos
 Freddy Diego-Domingo
 Virginia Domingo-Francisco
 Angel Duran
 Lakely Durham
 Jasmine Figueroa
 Keslee Fisher
 Jacob Fite
 Amy Flores
 Albaro Francisco
 Maura Francisco Pascual
 Cecilia Francisco-Juan
 Samuel Franklin
 Sarah Franks
 Molly Fuentes
 Jose Gaspar-Montejo
 Levi Gist
 Alexis Glass
 Ana Gomez
 Brian Gonzalez
 America Gutierrez Najera
 Danna Gutierrez-Romero
 Mila Hall
 Jaxon Hallmark

Haylee Hamilton
 Deshayla Hammoc
 Brandon Hampton
 Haley Hasha
 Benjamin Herche
 Jessica Hernandez-Pascual
 Uriel Hernandez-Perez
 Amanda Herring
 Zoila Hill
 Kaydee Holland
 Spencer Holland
 Trenton Hollimon
 Ethan Horton
 Samantha Houston
 Ethan Howard
 Justin Howard
 James Hubbard
 Naydelin Huerta Momentey
 Briana Huerta-Ramirez
 Isaac Ibarra
 Gilbert Iturbide-Garcia
 Shawn James
 Patricia Jimenez Luna
 Silvia Jimenez-Salgado
 Johnathan Jimenez-Vargas
 Delia Jose Miguel
 Harley Kinard
 Madyson King
 Autumn Logan
 Julio Lopez-Andres
 Oscar Martinez Tomas
 Samuel Matias-Francisco
 Andrea Mazate-Cruz
 William McDermitt
 Lucia Medina
 Sydney Medley
 Franklin Mejia Garcia
 Joselin Mercado Corona
 Luis Miguel Francisco

Catarina Miguel Juan
 Jagger Mills
 Abby Montgomery
 Keren Montiel
 Melvin Moreno
 Maxim Moussad
 John Murray
 Madison Murray
 Tanner Murray
 Ryan Nelson
 Charlie Nava-Felix
 Aldo Nava-Gomez
 Makala O'Neal
 Lesly Ornelas
 Johnathan Pace
 Silvia Pascual-Francisco
 Veronica Pascual-Martin
 Haylee Patterson
 Edvin Pereira-Delgado
 Amie Perez
 Lina Perez
 Salvador Perez
 Osvaldo Perez Rojas
 Gisel Perez-Balverde
 Pedro Pineda
 Maggie Pinkard
 Ashton Poe
 Noah Ponders
 River Ponders
 Christina Presley
 Joshua Price
 Isiah Pruitt
 Amara Qualls
 Edward Ramirez
 Maria Rangel
 Perla Rayo-Nunez
 Emma Reed
 Laisha Rivera
 Natalia Rivera

Christian Rodriguez-Jimenez
 William Rogers
 Daimar Santa Maria Diaz
 Anahi Serna
 Anthony Serna
 Ashton Shipley
 Krista Sikes
 Sydney Smith
 Gabriela Soto Palencia
 James Stalker
 Phillip Steele
 Morgan Strickland
 Alexis Taylor
 Rachel Tena-Bernabe
 Mario Tomas Mejia
 Brooklyn Tompkin
 Caroline Touchstone
 Priscilla Tristan
 Nathaniel Trussell
 Macey Vandiver
 Joel Vargas
 Yesenia Vargas
 Kimberly Vela
 Devan Velasco-Guzman
 Bergie Villarreal
 Alejandro Wallace
 Allic Wallace
 Julianna Wallace
 Raksha Webster
 Kaitlin Weeks
 Hayden Wells
 Matthew Williams
 Megan Williams
 Maggie Willingham
 Zachary Willis
 Anna Woods
 Chandler Wyatt
 Jared Yancey
 Ismael Zavala-Marquez

**Congratulations,
2020 Graduates!**
 You make us proud to
 call Russellville home!

David Reed
Grissom
MAYOR

**Congratulations,
Graduates! You're
the CLASS of 2020!**

From our family
 to yours, Best of
 Luck in the
 future!
**Jamie & Mindy
 Harris & Family**

**JAMIE
 HARRIS**
 Russellville
 City Council,
 District 5

Pd.Pol.Adv.by Jamie Harris - 837 Herring Cross Roads - Russellville, AL 35654

Pounders eyes health care field once education complete

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As valedictorian of the Russellville High School Class of 2020, school is obviously a priority for Gracie Pounders.

So when she overslept the morning of Monday, March 16th, that was definitely an aberration.

Pounders felt bad about being absent. And when Pounders realized she'd overslept on what would be her final day on campus as a Russellville High School student, she felt even worse.

"That day was an optional day to go to school. I planned on going, but I overslept," Pounders said. "When I got on the phone with some of my friends, we realized it was over. We'd never go back to school as seniors again.

"We waited so many years for special events like the Tiger Walk, Field Day, the prom, etc. While those things seem little at a time when so much else is going on, you realize those things are gone and that's sad. But I've had great teachers who have been so supportive of me and involved in everything I've done at Russellville, so that will be a lasting memory," she added.

Pounders, the daughter of Jeff and Paula Pounders, will attend Auburn University this fall to pursue a degree in biomedical studies. While she hasn't decided on a specific career choice, Pounders said she will work in the medical field and she's leaning toward becoming a pediatrician. And having her senior year uprooted by the COVID-19 pandemic served as a reminder of how important health care employees are in our

country.
"No matter what's going on you will always need a doctor or a nurse. Those jobs have to be there ready to work regardless of how our world changes," Pounders said.

"Auburn had the degree plan I was most interested in, and they have an osteopathic medicine school in the City of Auburn. I love the campus and community there and it was best for me academically to focus on what I want to do in the future," Pounders added.

Pounders will leave a legacy at RHS that goes beyond just her academic success. She was part of the Russellville City Schools Youth Leadership Academy, Co-President of the National Honor Society and Secretary of the RHS Chemistry Club. Pounders was a RHS cheerleader her freshman and junior year, but decided not to try out as a senior.

"I really wanted to focus on academics and working to get the ACT score I needed to get a scholarship at Auburn," Pounders said.

That decision paid off, as she scored a lofty 33 on the ACT.

Pounders received both an academic and lead-



Gracie Pounders

ership scholarship from Auburn University, a Russellville City Schools Educational Foundation scholarship and she's in line for additional scholarships to be announced later this summer. Away from school, her interests include baking, reading and she loves the outdoors.

While some classes came easy for her, others were more challenging, and Pounders loves a good challenge.

"I think AP (Advanced Placement) chemistry was both my favorite class and my most challenging class. I like a challenge and Mrs. (Nicole) Watts challenged us," Pounders said. "She's also over the Chemistry Club, where we did a service project this year to build a hygiene closet for students to get items if they need them. It's located in a secretive place, so nobody has to be embarrassed about getting what they need. It will be an ongoing project for the Chemistry Club," she added.

With a mom who's a teacher at Russellville Elementary School, Gracie had a valuable resource at home to help her succeed in school.

"I definitely learned a lot from my mom. She's always willing to help me correct my essays, fill out scholarship applications and support me in everything I do, especially academics," Pounders said.

One positive side effect from Alabama's stay-at-home order has been the opportunity for Pounders to spend more time at home in recent weeks before she leaves to attend college more than four hours away.

"I've been nervous about (going to Auburn) but

See 'POUNDERS,' page 22

Ethan, Your quiet, gentle spirit and your tender, loving heart bring us joy.

Congratulations!

We love you!

Jeremiah 29:11

Love Dad, Momma, T.J., Brooklyne & Colin

2020

Ethan Dwight Horton



'POUNDERS,' from page 21

I'm thankful I got to spend this extra time at home before I move. It's going to be a big change moving away from home and living by yourself but I feel like I'm ready for it," Pounders said.

After she completes her education, Pounders hopes to return to northwest Alabama, and Franklin County in particular, if she has that opportunity.

"I think coming back to this area is important to me. I love being with my family and the people I care about. I'm a little bit of a homebody even though I'm moving four hours away," Pounders said.

If she were giving advice to this year's eighth-grade class at Russellville Middle School, as they prepare to embark upon their high school journeys, Pounders' message would be simple and straightforward.

"Do your homework. Be nice and respectful to your teachers and be involved in as much as you can because the time will go by very fast," Pounders said.

As she prepares to continue her education with students from around the country, and the world, Pounders is confident her Russellville City Schools education has her in a good position.

"I feel very prepared going into college. Russellville High School offers plenty of classes, both career tech courses if you're not interested in college, and dual enrollment and advanced placement classes if you're going to college," Pounders said.

"I've had amazing teachers who care about me and how well I do in their classes, and they care about our future. My education at Russellville has definitely helped me prepare for the next step. And I want to thank my parents, as well as my teachers, for helping me get where I am today. I can never say 'thank you' enough," she added.

Finally, Pounders and her friends have found a little humorous irony in their unusual final semester of school.

"One thing we've had a running joke about is how in our AP history class we write a historical essay at the end of the year. One day, our kids will be writing essays about COVID-19 when they take AP history," Pounders said.

Visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

Abby Brooke Montgomery

Russellville High School Class of 2020. Congratulations! We love you so much and are so very proud of you!

You continue to amaze us. Keep your eyes on the Lord and Him close to your heart.



Love, Daddy, Momma and Family



We hope your dreams take you
To the corners of your smiles,
To the highest of your hopes,
To the windows of
your opportunities
And to the most
special places
Your heart has
ever known.



Amanda Herring

From:
Your loving family
We're so proud of you



Bedford, Rogers, Bowling
& McReynolds, P.C.

303 N. Jackson
Russellville
256.332.2880

Congratulations.

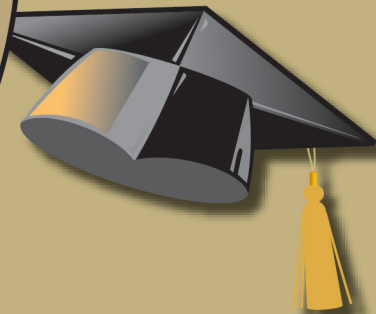
No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers

Congratulations
to the
Class of 2020!



from
David
Palmer

Russellville City
Council District One



CONGRATS GRADS!



ALL ABOUT USM

Student Account¹

Open Account Online >> Today



\$25 bonus with eStatement enrollment³

Free Internet & mobile banking⁴ | Refunds up to 5 fees per year⁵

ATM fee refunds up to 20 bucks⁶

Email alerts when balance is low | And more



cbsbank.com | 877-332-1710

Connect with us!



1. Must deposit \$25 to open account. No requirement to maintain a minimum balance. Overdraft/Returned item fees may apply. All About U Student Account will convert to Star Account at age 25. 2. Wireless carrier data usage rates may apply. Customers must be enrolled in CB&S Bank's Internet Banking to use the Mobile Banking App and enrolled in Bill Pay to use the App's Bill Pay Feature. Apple and the Apple logo are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Android, Google Play, and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google Inc. 3. Limited time offer. One \$25 bonus per account. To receive the bonus, your account must remain open for 30 days, the account must not be overdrawn within the first 30 days, and you must be enrolled in eStatements. If qualifications are met, the \$25 bonus will be paid on the 30th calendar day after account opening. If this is not a business day, the bonus will be paid on the next business day. The value of the bonus will be reported as interest income for IRS purposes, and the customer is responsible for any taxes. 4. Charges and fees may apply from your cellular service provider. Contact your service provider for information. 5. Maximum of 5 fees refunded per calendar year by request. Only valid on All About U account. 6. CB&S Bank does not charge a fee for ATM withdrawals and refunds up to \$20 in other banks' ATM usage fees per statement cycle upon customer request. Only valid on All About U account.

Unprecedented year brings unprecedented achievements for Class of 2020

Dear Senior Class of 2020,

Congratulations! You have reached a significant milestone in your lives. None of us envisioned the last two months of your senior year would end like they did. There are many special events and traditions you missed as a result of this unprecedented health crisis. It saddens me to know you were not able to experience and enjoy them.

Please know the health crisis DID NOT minimize all you have accomplished over the last 12 years. It brings me great joy to realize your many accomplishments and the lasting impact you will have on your schools. When I think about the Class of 2020, I'm reminded of a quote from Howard Schultz: *In times of adversity and change, we really discover who we are and what we're made of.*

I wish you all the best in the next chapter of your lives.

The word *unprecedented* will forever be linked to 2020. May the Franklin County Schools' Class of 2020 accomplish *unprecedented* achievements throughout the rest of your lives.

Best Wishes,

Greg Hamilton
Superintendent of Education,
Franklin County Schools

Class of 2020 poised to dream big after 'historic' school year

By Jamie Kiel
State Representative, House District 18

Calling 2020 memorable is an understatement! Being a member of the class of 2020 will be unforgettable. The Covid-19 pandemic did to you what it did to our nation: life was put on hold. You missed proms, sporting events, classes (I'm not sure that "missed" is the correct term here), friends and teachers. Life stopped.

Or did it? You've learned a lot over the last two months. Lessons that can't be taught in the classroom. Lessons about caring for others by social distancing and staying at home. Lessons about the importance of a support group, whether that is the family you are born with, or the family that chose you. Lessons about who you really are away from school and routine.

You've learned to adapt. Your future success will depend largely on your ability to adapt. Change is hard. Forced change is harder. Sometimes you get to choose to change. Sometimes Corona virus forces it. School became different for you compared to anyone else in modern history. Online classes, Zoom, Google Classroom, and packets of work.

Some of you became self-starters and worked without someone making you do it. You problem solved and worked through difficult AP exams and end of year tests. Some of you discovered that you could complete your academics while making an income. Your willingness to adapt and change in life will often determine how happy you are with your circumstances.

So where do you go from here?

It's your choice. Make choices...or have them made for you. Choose to change...or be changed. I know that trying to look in to the future 10 or 20 years is next to impossible. But trust me, it is not as far out of sight as you think! You've blinked and high school is over. Blink again, and you'll be living your life. Dream BIG! Be a GAME CHANGER! Help others and be successful, whatever that looks like in your eyes. Whatever happens, know that the lessons you've learned this year will serve you well from now on.

Congratulations to you for bravely making it through this trying year. You have a lot to look forward to. Don't let these current circumstances change you. Be the change.

Jamie Kiel is a member of the Alabama State House of Representatives and a 1993 graduate of Russellville High School.

Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

And don't forget to check us out online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

Congratulations on Your Graduation!



**SHANNON
OLIVER
SHERIFF**

"Go confidently in direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined"

~ Henry David Thoreau

Congratulations to the Class of 2020



Barry Moore & Family



Competitive spirit drives Dempsey to be the best

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press



Katie Dempsey

For Belgreen valedictorian Katie Dempsey, being at the top of her class once her high school career came to a close had long been a dream of hers.

But it wasn't until she entered her freshman year that she really put her foot on the gas and hit the books harder than before.

"I always wanted to be the valedictorian. When I went into the 9th grade, I knew that the grades really started counting and so I started trying to make as high as I possibly could on everything," Dempsey said. "I just knew that this is what I wanted and I wanted to work hard for it. I just really wanted to get ahead of everything and make sure it didn't come down to the wire. I wanted to make sure that there was no doubt that I was the valedictorian."

Katie, who is the daughter of Terry and Kristi Dempsey, has been a key part of the Belgreen softball and basketball teams over her years as a Bulldog. Academics are similar to sports in the sense that as students get older, the more competitive they become.

Dempsey applied her competitive spirit and determination to be the very best that she uses in athletics and uses it in the classroom.

"In sports and in the classroom I was just never okay with other people being better than I was. I wanted to work harder and harder until I felt like I was the best I could be," Dempsey said. "Like in basketball, I mainly just started playing because my sisters and friends played but I still wasn't okay with not playing as much as I wanted to and it just didn't sit well with me. So I started working hard and practicing harder to try and get better. It's just something I feel like I have to do."

After she graduates, Dempsey will attend the University of North Alabama

to pursue a nursing degree, something that runs in her family.

"My mom used to be a nurse and now she's a nursing director and so I always knew I wanted to do something in the healthcare field," Dempsey said. "After I talked about it with my parents, they really were just pushing me to pursue my dreams and to become a nurse and they have been so supportive of me and I'm just thankful for their support."

Dempsey says she plans to attend graduate school once she completes her nursing degree at UNA. In graduate school, she plans to pursue becoming a nurse anesthetist or a nurse practitioner.

According to Dempsey, she has accumulated numerous scholarships from UNA including a leadership scholarship, housing scholarship, and even an honors college scholarship. It is because of these scholarships that Dempsey will be going to UNA on a full-ride.

As Dempsey and her friends were taking pictures for their senior prom, they got word that school may be suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, there was speculation that they might be out of school for a maximum of two to three weeks.

The length of the suspension proved to be much longer as state superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey announced that schools would not return to session for the remainder of the school year in mid-March.

Dempsey says that there was still hope that they were going to be able to return to school to finish out her senior year, but that hope quickly evaporated. Instead of letting her emotions get the best of her, Dempsey decided not to dwell on the situation.

"It was crazy because everything just happened so quickly. Our softball season was cancelled and we had just went to the playoffs the past few years and the thought of not being able to play in that was tough to deal with," Dempsey said. "But I know everything happens for a reason and that there is nothing I can do about it. We just have to deal with what we are given and the rest will work itself out."

To get to the point where you are the valedictorian of your class, there are undoubtedly going to be a few teachers along the way who help you realize your full potential and for Dempsey, there are a couple that come to her mind quickly.

"All of my teachers were always encouraging and just pushing me to be my best. But Susie Tverberg this year was so positive and so caring. If there was anything she could do for us, she did it. She was just such a big help to me and everyone else she comes in contact with," Dempsey said.

"Her daughter goes to UNA and so when she found out I wanted to go there she got all of this information for me and brought it to me. But all of my teachers have had a major impact on me and I appreciate each of them," she added.

Congratulations, Graduates!

Wherever you're headed this fall, sport your colors with collegiate tags available at the Franklin County Revenue Commissioner's Office.

Come See Us!

Many other schools available!



Veronica Stancil
Franklin County
Revenue Commissioner

BELGREEN Class of 2020

- Dylan R. Adkins
- Toni Jean Arnett
- Kailey Brooke Borden
- Sydney Lynn Borden
- Autumn Daye Bragwell
- Brock Britton
- Diamond Sierra Burcham
- Hannah Shaybelle Cox
- Abigail Jolene Davis
- William Jackson Davis III
- Amber Grace Dempsey
- Anna Kate Dempsey
- Gage Lee Erwin
- Jacob Nathaniel Fleming
- Jacob Ray Gere
- Lakota Cheyenne Hovater
- Bryant Edward Hubbert
- Jaelyn Montana Johnson

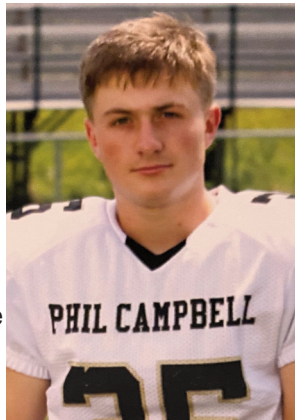
- Alexis Dawn Keenum
- Tori Anette Kellum
- Sarah Grace Kimbrough
- Jose Gustavo Lara-Cruz
- Christian Jeffery Lopez Jimenez
- Andrea Yorleny Morataya Navas
- Katelyn Dawn Nix
- David Isaiah Plott
- Daniel Allen Puckett Jr.
- Hugo Zuriel Sagastume
- Ricky Darwin III Scoggins
- Meg Caroline Sornberger
- Sykes, Holden Kyle
- Ansley Nolena Tate
- Taylor David Welch
- Claire Elyse Wiginton
- Bailey Francesca Elizabeth Wood

High school a perfect time to 'get involved' Williams says

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

You can learn a lot about the type of student Ben Williams is by the way he's spending his time since school ended on March 14, 2020, due to the COVID-19 virus.

Williams, the Phil Campbell High School valedictorian, has been working for his father's business, Leisure Creations, doing autoCAD drawings. As he prepares to move to Tuscaloosa to pursue a degree in Electrical Engineering at the University of Alabama, Williams said autoCAD is a commercial computer-aided design and software application. And the experience will help him better prepare for his chosen career.



Ben Williams

So much for an early summer break.

"It was disappointing for sure when school ended and we missed out on things like the prom," Williams said. "But I moved past it. I'm pretty sure we'll still have some type of graduation. I don't think all those parents will be okay with not having anything. They won't let that happen. But for me, it didn't really weigh me down much at all," he added.

Williams, who received the prestigious Bryant-Jordan Scholar Athlete Scholarship earlier this spring, is the son of Chris and Angela Williams of Phil Campbell. He also received a Presidential Scholarship from UA, which will cover all his tuition. And Williams' ACT score of 35 was one point below the maximum score. That placed him in the top 99th percentile of the more than two million students who took the ACT this year.

But Williams' time at PCHS will be defined more than just by his academic success. He was a three-sport athlete who was voted team captain by his football and basketball team. He also received the academic award for both

See 'Williams,' page 27

Congratulations, Eli!

We know you will accomplish great things and we look forward to seeing your success!



Pawpaw & Mawmaw, Sam and Kaeli

Eli,
Congratulations son! We are all so very proud of you. Continue to dream big and work hard. Remember to take time and enjoy the journey!

Love, Mama, Daddy,
Alex, Chase, Bryton,
Katelyn, & Aaron

Eli Jackson

Phil Campbell High School • Salutatorian



'WILLIAMS,' from page 26

sports. Williams served as Junior Civitan President, National Honor Society President and Student Council President, all while maintaining academic excellence.

When Williams considers what advice he'd give to this year's eighth-grade class as they move into high school, it would be to jump right into as many activities as they feel comfortable doing.

"Get involved in as many things as you can. There's plenty of time in high school to do a variety of activities, whether it's school organizations or athletics, and you'll never find yourself in trouble because you've always got things to do," Williams said. "I learned a lot of lessons from sports and all the organizations I worked with. They are great learning tools."

He also attributes his academic success to disciplined study habits, something he believes can be developed in high school.

"I have always studied hard for tests. But that's not to say I don't have a little bit of natural ability, but studying hard is a big deal, even if someone is naturally smart," Williams said. "You're not going to do well on tests if you don't prepare for them. And that's a big thing going into college. You definitely have to study in college, a whole lot more than high school," he added.

As he prepares for the University of Alabama, it's a reality to Williams that he will leave his hometown behind, not just for the next four years, but likely beyond school.

"I probably won't immediately be able to come back to Franklin County because there aren't many electrical engineering jobs in this area," Williams said. "I hope to eventually open a business here and specialize in something to do with my field and to come back. "But after college, I'll definitely have to go somewhere, maybe Huntsville or some larger area, to get a job in my field," he added.

Williams was drawn to the University of Alabama in part due to the reputation of its engineering department, and in part due to its proximity to home. It didn't hurt that his dad and uncle also attended UA and Williams has always been a big fan of the Crimson Tide.

Williams will be among some familiar faces in Tuscaloosa this fall. Phil Campbell Salutatorian Eli Jackson will also attend UA, along with several other classmates, and Williams' brother Noah is already a student there.

"It will definitely be a huge difference from Phil Campbell. But I love Phil Campbell. This is my home. It's a great place and I love the people here," Williams said. "I get along with people pretty well so I don't see that being a problem at Alabama, and it's great that some of my friends are going there with me."

PHIL CAMPBELL Class of 2020

Eric Allen
Kallie Allen
Gabrielle Baker
Brandon Baker
Marisela Batz
TJ Beam
Luke Butler
Eli Campbell
Kary Carabez
Chloe Carpenter
Samuel Carreto
Francisco Casasola
Taylor Cochran
Sarah Cotham
Alexis Cothrum
Lexi Crittenden
Easton Cummings
Cassidy Dixon
Matthew Dunn
Amber Ergle
Jazmyn Ergle
Karlee Faust
Dakota Fisher
Katie Foster
Rilan Garrison
Star Gentry

Emily Glaviano
Seth Hall
Lexie Harbin
Jake Hardy
Kaci Harris
Caitlin Hedge
Chloe Hill
Nathan Hill
Colton Hughes
Abigail Hunderman
Crystal Jackson
Elijah Jackson
Jacalia Jetton
Julian Jimenez
Colby Kirby
Mayra Lopez
Keith Martin
Ashton McAfee
Trenton McCulloch
Ellen McGee
Ethan Miller
Austin Motes
Trenton Motes
Imer Ordonez
Alexis Patterson
Azariah Patterson

Madysen Peoples
Cypress Quinn
Juliana Reeves
Emily Riner
Samuel Rippee
Hunter Saint
Dakota Sartin
Seth Sewart
Shian Sillett
Khloie Simpson
Katelee Smith
Kaleb Solis
Jonathan Spear
Devan Stewart
Emily Swinney
Joseph Thompson
Nicole Thompson
Austin Tompkins
Courtney Tompkins
Madison Vickery
Kayla Waldrep
Tyler Weeks
Benjamin Williams
Caleb Willis
Mysteri Winstead

Visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

We're proud of how you represent Franklin County!
From the Staff of the Franklin County
Chamber of Commerce

If we may be of service to you in
the future, please come see us at
103 Jackson Avenue North in Russellville
(Mon.-Fri. 9-4:30), or call us at
256-332-1760.

www.franklincountychamber.org



Bear Creek Lakes • Red Bay Museum • Cypress Cove Farm Bird Trail
Dismals • Rock Bridge Canyon Equestrian Park • Roxy Theatre
King Drive-In • Bay Tree Council of Performing Arts

Learning 'never seemed like a chore' RBHS valedictorian says

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press



Kanen Robbins

When his senior year at Red Bay High School ended abruptly on March 16 there would be many things Kanen Robbins missed out on. Gone were the final months of school with his classmates. Gone were those final days on campus working with teachers and administrators who he'd forged so many positive relationships with. Gone was traditional graduation, and as Red Bay's Valedictorian, it

seemed Robbins' Valedictorian speech might never be delivered. That loss, though, wasn't one Robbins would lose any sleep over. "It's fine with me, actually," Robbins said of not delivering a Valedictorian address. "I'm not one who likes speaking in front of a big crowd anyway."

As it turned out, Red Bay's graduation was held last week in the football stadium, and Robbins was able to deliver his Valedictorian address.

Robbins, the son of Josh and Lorie Robbins, lives across the state line in Golden, Miss. When you spend a few minutes talking with Robbins, you find him to be a humble, soft-spoken young man who's very down to earth. It's no surprise he wasn't looking forward to a graduation speech.

Robbins will attend Itawamba Community College this fall, where he plans to earn an Associate's Degree before transferring to a four-year university to pursue a degree in Engineering. While Mississippi State leads the list of likely schools, Robbins said he's not made that decision yet.

When asked about what advice he'd give this year's 8th grade class at Red Bay as they prepare to enter high school, Robbins' advice is to stay motivated by choosing electives in subjects that appeal to you.

"Definitely find something you enjoy doing and learning about and try to take as many courses in that as you can," Robbins said. "I went to the Career Tech Center the last two years to take drafting courses. I was just trying to get ready for college and maybe get a head start."

See 'ROBBINS,' page 29

RED BAY Class of 2020

- Haylee Beth Aldridge
- Jordan Clay Allison
- Shelby Lynn Anderson
- Nancy Sylvia Barksdale
- Savannah Grace Bates
- Mattee Anita Berry
- Bailey Madison Bolton
- Kaleb Ray Bragwell
- Nathan Alan Cain
- Logan Brock Childers
- Codey Edwyne Cleveland
- Engli Esmeralda Morales Figueroa
- Elena A Freeland
- Makenna Olivia Gober
- Arden Elijah Hamilton
- Tanner Brant Hamilton
- Adam Dylan Hester
- Skyler Brock Hester
- Olivia Maria Hill
- Kyler Tayt Holland
- Glenan Colyn Humphries
- Reagan Humphries
- Myah Michelle Jackson

- Colbie Levi King
- Christian Jewell Martin
- Zoe Layne Massey
- Lydia Desiree Miller
- Briley Kade Mills
- LaShawna Faye Newell
- Ethan Lane Pierce
- Madison Nicole Pounds
- Jake Karly Pounds
- Levi Eric Raper
- Kanen Joshua Robbins
- Emmie Alaine Scott
- Caleb Mark Seeley
- Brooke Ivy Shotts
- Anna Belle Spencer
- Victoria Strickland
- Ikeyia Destinie Terry
- William Enrique Santos Valdes
- Dakota James Vinson
- Elizabeth Jade Walker
- Victoria Wallace
- Mason Scott Webster



Bailey Bolton
Red Bay High School
Salutatorian



Ashley McBrayer
University of North Alabama
Bachelors of Business Administration
in Marketing/Sales



Daniel Lindsay
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Bachelor of Science in Chemistry
Distinguished Honors



Brooklyn Bolton
Mississippi State University
Bachelor of Business Administration
Magna Cum Laude



COMMUNITY SPIRIT BANK

communityspirit.bank



'ROBBINS,' from page 28

"Doing well in school definitely takes some effort. Maybe it was a little easier for me because of how much I enjoy learning—it never seemed like a chore," Robbins added.

In addition to working at Big Star in Red Bay, Robbins was active in several school programs. He particularly enjoyed Big Brothers/Big Sisters, where he was paired with middle school students as a mentor.

Junior Leadership was another program Robbins said was an important part of his high school experience.

"I really enjoyed the activities we did and being able to help other people out. It gives you an opportunity to serve your community," Robbins said. We saw how much of a difference we could make if we worked as a team to get things done."

As he reflects on his Red Bay High School days, Robbins said several teachers come to mind when he thinks about those who have made positive impacts in his life. But there are two who stood out, he explained.

"Mrs. (Shay) Pounds and Mr. (Jarod) Massey both really pushed me to do my best, encouraged me and other students. If I had to pick one or two, that's who it would be, but I really had a lot of teachers who really cared and made a difference for me and other students," Robbins said.

Robbins also credits his parents for helping shape his work ethic.

"My parents always want me to try my best. I've never minded hard work. I like the opportunity to work hard and get things done, and they taught me a lot of that," Robbins said.

When he's away from school and work, Robbins loves spending time in the outdoors, including hunting and fishing.

"I like being outside mostly and I live in a great area for that. Whether it's hunting, fishing or taking care of the garden, anything like that I enjoy," Robbins said.

After he completes his education, Robbins plans to stay in the general area of northeast Mississippi/northwest Alabama, and the small town life continues to appeal to him.

"I like living in a rural setting in a small town. I really like knowing people and how other people care about you and your family. You're not just one of a huge crowd," Robbins said.

Bottoms adds THS valedictorian to long list of achievements

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

Take a long look at Tharptown valedictorian Annslee Bottoms' resume and you won't have a difficult time finding something to be amazed by.

From being chosen as class president all four years of high school, to spending her summers working for the federal government in Washington D.C., and a plethora of extraordinary work in between, it's no wonder Bottoms has her sights set on achieving some pretty lofty goals.

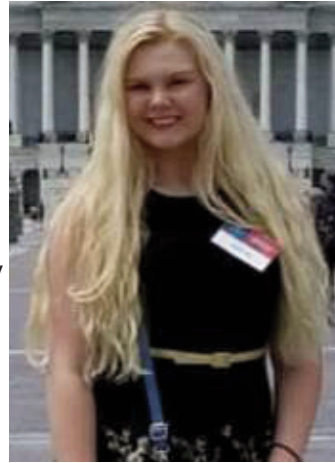
Bottoms, the daughter of Keith and Cinda Gilbert, says dreaming big and doing the best she possibly can has always been an important part of her academic philosophy.

"My whole academic career I have always been very competitive, whether it has been the sports I've joined or even in my grades. I just always wanted to do my best because if I did my best I hoped that I would end up in the best possible place," Bottoms said.

The extent of Bottoms' persistence for academic excellence is something that was not only felt by herself, but her classmates also benefited.

After she made sure her studies were up to par, Bottoms would then reach out to her peers seeing if they needed help with schoolwork and oftentimes, she would end up tutoring the students she sat beside in class.

"Even though academics might be considered a competition, there is still that feeling there that you want to help your friends and classmates do well and succeed," Bottoms said. "If you're doing well in something, I feel responsible to try and help others do well also. So I would tutor my classmates as well as some of the younger students in an effort to help them do



Annslee Bottoms

See 'BOTTOMS,' page 30

*Congratulations
to the Class of
2020 from*



*May All of
Your Dreams
Come True!*

'BOTTOMS,' from page 29

their best and hopefully achieve things that they want to do.” Bottoms and her classmates, like a majority of the students around the country, were not able to finish their senior year in typical fashion due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than allowing the thought of not having a normal ending to her senior year to get her down, Bottoms elected to apply a strategy she uses in the classroom to deal with the situation.

“How I try to handle every situation whether it’s in class or elsewhere is that it’s not about the situation itself, but how you decide to handle the situation. I just logically thought that there is nothing I can do about it and I just have to move on and do the best I can,” Bottoms said. “It’s hard for my classmates and I to not be able to see each other but we have tried to be there for each other and lift each other up because that’s what we all need right now.”

Of course, Bottoms has been keeping up with her grades like any good student would. While it seemed as though she was in a good position to be named the valedictorian of her class, she still was not 100 percent sure. So when the list came out and she saw her name at the top, she was relieved, but also made sure to remain very grounded about her achievement.

“It was always something that I kept track of and anticipated but you don’t know for sure and I told myself you need to stay humble,” Bottoms said. “It was a pleasant surprise for sure but again it was about how do I stay humble with this and use it to uplift my peers along with me.”

While she was accepted to Georgetown University in Washington D.C., which is a private institution, the money aspect just did not work out for Bottoms to become a Hoya in the fall. However, she does plan to apply again to Georgetown down the road.

As for her immediate plans after graduation, Bottoms will attend the University of North Alabama on a full scholarship.

While she admits she is undecided as to what her specific plan of study will be,, Bottoms has a pretty good idea about what she wants to do once she makes her decision on her degree.

“Right now I am undecided but I know I want to do something with STEM policy,” Bottoms said.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), is a growing part of the U.S. workforce and Bottoms is on track to become a key part of it.

Bottoms’ qualifications to become a part of the STEM workforce are overflowing. As a member of the Tharptown rocketry team that made it to the national tournament in Washington D.C. during its first year competing, that would surely be enough to get one interested in something like STEM policy. That wasn’t the only factor that played a part in swaying Bottoms’ decision.

The other factor?

Spending her summers working for the Department of Homeland Security in D.C. was the icing on the cake for Bottoms’ decision on what she wanted to study in college.

“I work in an IT office with the Department of Homeland Security but I am also a people-person, so I talked with my boss and that is what he helped me lean towards because I still love dealing with cutting-edge technology but I also love to deal with people,” Bottoms said. “It’s basically understanding the laws about STEM and translating those between the people dealing with the technology and the people dealing with the business side of things.”

In addition to being an key part of the THS rocketry team, Bottoms also served in Future Business Leaders of America where she was elected and served as her district’s vice president her junior year. Add to those extracurricular activities the fact that Bottoms sports a perfect GPA of 4.0 and an ACT score of 30 and it is no wonder why she is on the fast-track to success at such a young age.

Even in Bottoms’ case where it seems as though academic excellence comes naturally, she is quick to admit that she has had a few teachers along the way who have helped her get to where she is today. However there is one teacher that comes to her mind right off the bat.

“Marsha Inmon. That’s the teacher that has helped me so much. It didn’t even start in the classroom. In the eighth grade she was starting up a robotics team and I started off as a programmer and early on she saw how eager I was to take that extra step and she would always help me out and really took me under her wing,” Bottoms said. “She has honestly been like a second mom to me. Whether it’s a personal or school issue, she has always been there for me and it has helped me so much.”

Bottoms also credits fellow teachers Bart Moss, Marc Tracy, and Ashley Burton for helping her along the way.

As for the next generation of students that will one day walk across the stage and become Tharptown alumni, Bottoms has a message of determination for them.

“Be resilient. It’s not about the situation you are in but it’s about how you handle it. If you learn to handle things in the best way you can with whatever it is you’re given, you can succeed,” Bottoms said.

THARPTOWN Class of 2020

Ruben Alexander Alfaro
Mynor Fernando Avalos
Urias Otoniel Bahena
Adam Miguel Banderas
Skylar Dakota Bates
Michelle Ivette Estrada Betancourt
Adriana Denise Borden
Anna Faye Borden
Annslee Brooke Bottoms
Merissa Joanne Brazell
Caitlin Nicole Carruth
Stefanie Chavez Castillo
Destiny Starr Nicole Chaney
Eden Gabrielle Cooper
Zion Amariah Cooper
Brooke Leigh Daily
Michael Anthony Dalrymple
Makayla Sensociety Delk
Olivia Brooke Ergle
Eric Lucas Espinoza
Savana Morgan Franks
Addisyn Elizabeth Frederick
Edwin Santiago Aragon Garcia
Austin Bailey Gibson
Elijah Braxton Goines
Yovani Agustin Perez Gomez
Nathan Jackson Hallmark

Christy Lynn Harper
Bailey Ryan Hood
Joshua Britton Kennamore
Logan Tanner King
Gunner John Lane
Hayden Blaze Liming
Edward David Lopez
Emily Dawn Love
Jesus Lozano
Ty Nathaniel Martin
Breanna Faith Mears
Davina Dawn Minzey
Destiny Mojica
Mallie Grace Morgan
Huner Chase O’Connor
Ethan Brock Pennington
Isis Adaly Promoter Ramirez
Ali Brooke Sanchez
Jennifer Nicole Swims
Domingo Tomas-Ajualip
Kylee Olivia Uptain
Alyson Danielle Vandiver
Jaidy Guadalupe Reza Vela
Alexis Elizabeth Vess
Chadwick Anthony Watson
Shaylee Ann Wieting



Visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net/

Puckett credits Upward Bound program for academic success

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When she begins full-time this fall at Northwest-Shoals Community College, Vina High School senior Jayla Puckett won't have to worry about adapting to college-level classes.

As part of NW-SCC's Upward Bound program, Puckett has taken college classes each summer since her freshman year of high school. And she's done quite well, as Puckett will carry a 4.0 grade point average with her as she begins pursuit of an Associate Degree in Nursing that, upon completion, will allow her to take the examination for licensure as a Registered Nurse.

Puckett, the daughter of Eddie and Jennifer Puckett of Vina, was named Valedictorian of the Vina Class of 2020.

While she gives a lot of credit to her parents, aunt (Kim Puckett) and grandmother (Joy Puckett) in helping her develop good study habits, Puckett said the Upward Bound program really helped prepare her for the next level of her education.

Upward Bound helps prepare high school students for college entrance by allowing them to take college courses and succeed in their pre-college performance.

The program has certain income requirements and serves families where neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The program is funded by the United States Department of Education.

The administrators of Upward Bound couldn't find a better example of their program's success than Puckett. And she appreciates how Upward Bound helped lay the groundwork for her education at the next level.



Jayla Puckett

"It's the best program I've ever been in," Puckett said of Upward Bound. "You get course credit at Northwest-Shoals. For the Nursing Program, I've already got Spanish, Math 100 and I'm taking Biology this summer.

"You study quite a bit in Upward Bound. It's only a month long each summer, so you study continuously. I think it will definitely help me in the fall," she added.

Puckett plans to become a RN, and she prefers to find a job in an ICU, or Intensive Care Unit. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the final semester of her high school career upside down, it's also solidified Puckett's career choice.

"I really appreciate everything nurses are doing right now. But what turned me toward nursing was that I was really sick when I was younger," Puckett said. "It got really bad and I ended up at Children's Hospital (in Birmingham). I really liked the way the nurses helped people there and I decided that's what I want to do as well," she added.

A lifelong Vina resident, Puckett wants to travel the world, but only on vacation. She's a country girl who includes fishing among her hobbies, so Puckett has no plans to move away from northwest Alabama after graduation.

"My senior class has 21 students. Vina is a school where the teachers know everyone, and they are willing to help anyone who needs it," Puckett said. "There's not a lot of diversity of different people, though, so there are some pros and cons of a small town and school.

"I most definitely want to get out and see places, but I'm not wanting to move away. I've always lived in the country and this is where I plan on staying," she added. "I'm really into Asian culture, just not now during this pandemic. But I want to travel to South Korea and Japan someday."

Puckett was active in many student organizations at Vina. In addition to Upward Bound, she was President of Future Business Leaders of America, a member of Junior Civitan, Beta Club, the Vina drama program, Senior Yearbook Editor and she made and edited the Senior Slide Show. On top of that, Puckett holds a job at the Red Bay McDonald's.

She was the first Vina High School recipient of the Smith Family Scholarship, and Puckett received a NaphCare Scholarship, a Valedictorian Scholarship to NW-SCC and a Franklin County Cattleman's Scholarship.

Puckett said there's a sharp contrast between her personality at school compared to how she acts away from school.

"I was really quiet at school and didn't talk much. When I get out and get to know people at work or outside of school, I'm a completely different person," Puckett said. "I'm loud and crazy like everyone else. We had a girl move from Red Bay School to Vina who worked with me. On the first day of school, she asked me was I okay since I was being so quiet and I told her that's just how I am at school."

Puckett said there are a number of teachers who had a positive impact on her, but at the top of her list is Sarah Jane Hattaway, her English teacher.

"She took the place of a great English teacher (Jessica Hamilton) and we wondered what would happen," Puckett said. "Mrs. Hattaway introduced us to drama and started the drama program. She sponsors Beta Club and she had a baby recently. All this going on in her life but she still manages to do so much for her students and I admire that," Puckett added.

Green's DEPENDABLE HARDWARE

15220A Hwy 43 • Russellville
Behind McDonald's • 256.331.0123

Congratulations, Graduates!



VINA Class of 2020

- Harlee Brewer
- Austin Brown
- Brady Collum
- Lexie Collum
- Kelsey Frei
- Austin Horton
- Nash Humphries
- Baylee Hutcheson
- Kade James
- Hannah Johnson
- Sarah Johnson

- Kaitlyn King
- Jackson Landers
- Braden Moomaw
- Tristan Moomaw
- Jessie Newell
- Scott Presley
- Jayla Puckett
- Greta Raper
- River Steele
- Kayla Thompson
- Shannon Upton

Franklin County Board of Education Class of 2020



Greg Hamilton
Superintendent



Terry Welborn
Chairperson



Shannon Oliver
Vice-Chairperson



**Kacey Hester
Johnston**
Board Member



Ralton Baker
Board Member



Pat Cochran
Board Member

If we may be of assistance to your or your family,
please visit or call us at the Board of Education office:

500 Coffee Avenue East, Russellville
256-332-1360.

franklin.k12.al.us