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06.10.20

Russellville council accepts bid for downtown drainage improvements

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A much-needed drainage improvement project at the intersection of Washington Avenue North and Lauderdale Street will soon begin, after the Russellville City Council approved a bid for the project at the council's June 1 meeting.

Once completed, the project should greatly reduce flooding issues affecting that area of downtown, and particularly Russellville First Baptist Church.

The council accepted the lowest responsible bid of \$110,699.95 from Eady Contracting, Inc., for the project, which will also include drainage improvements on Green Avenue between High Street NW and West Hoover Street.

City councilman David Palmer said officials considered extending the work done by the contractor who recently completed the Transportation Alternatives Program, or

TAP, in the same area.

That program is administered through the Alabama Department of Transportation and provides grant monies for projects including sidewalk improvements.

"We talked about extending some of the work with the contractor to help mitigate some of the flooding issues affecting First Baptist Church," Palmer said. "We've been hit the last two years with some of the most intense rainfall events I've seen in my lifetime."

The TAP contractor, though, was obligated on some other projects and never got the chance to do the improvements, so the project was let to bid by the city.

First Baptist Church has dealt with flooding issues where water runoff has entered the building and caused damage.

"The further we looked into the situation, and learned more about the hydrology and hydraulics that contribute to the runoff in and around the church, we found out with

See 'DRAINAGE,' page 8

Electric board completes work ahead of RHS addition/renovation

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Electric Board took the first steps of a capital project at Russellville High School when REB employees upgraded the school's electrical system to provide sufficient capacity for the new addition.

Electric Board workers finished their work last month. According to REB Manager Charles Canida, the board wanted to have its work done in advance of construction beginning on the project.

"We upgraded the electrical system to give them enough capacity for their new addition," Canida said.

"We wanted to be out of their way before construction started. With the work now complete, they shouldn't need us until they get the addition built. When they're ready for us to make them hot, we'll do that, check all the electrical and help any way we can.

"We've got them in good shape. We didn't want to be working on top of the contractor so that's why we came in now," he added.

Last year, Russellville City Schools Board of Education approved the capital project, which will include a new addition in front of the existing building and a remodeling of and additions to the Career and Technical Education Building. The addition is expected to be 14,400 square feet, to be used for classrooms, laboratories and administrative offices, along with the renovation and additions to the Career and Technical Education Building.

The project has yet to be let to bid, though, something RCS Superintendent Heath Grimes expects to happen within a month. Although there is no firm timetable for the capital improvements, Grimes said the goal is for construction to begin this fall.


"We very much appreciate the work done by the Russellville Electric Board. Their efforts ahead of construction will help the project move along more smoothly. And the job they did with the underground lines looks great," Grimes said.

REB workers trenched a part of the land between Waterloo Road and the existing Russellville High School

See 'RENOVATION' page 5

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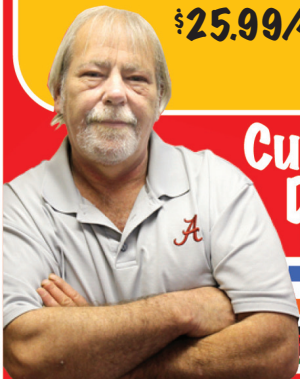
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Christino Norberto Avelino, 62, of Russellville died on Tuesday, June 2nd. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

Anastacia Bonilla, 64, of Russellville, died on Thursday, June 4th. Interment at Colbert Memorial Gardens.

Delano Lawrence, 85, of Russellville, died on Sunday, June 7th. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Jagger Mills, 18, of Russellville, died on Sunday, June 7th. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Roy Glenn Sutton, 63, of Spruce Pine, died on Monday, June 1st. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

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Jam on Sloss Lake cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

For the first time in 11 years, there will be no Jam on Sloss Lake event to celebrate the Fourth of July in Russellville.

The Russellville City Council voted Monday to cancel this year's event after Mayor David Grissom and Councilman Gary Cummings consulted with Dr. Karen Landers of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

With the event coming up in four weeks, Grissom said the council had to make a tough decision.

"It's getting close and we needed to make calls on bands and entertainment, and the car show folks (Cotton Flats Cruisers) needed to know whether to invite people to come out," Grissom said. "After talking with Dr. Landers, she recommended we cancel it. Even though it's an outdoor event, with social distancing it would be a problem with that many people in that small a space.

"After speaking with her, we felt this was the best decision. It's turned into a huge event for the City of Russellville and we hope to come back bigger and better next year," Grissom added.

Organizing each year's Jam on Sloss Lake has been Cummings' responsibility since it began. And the event has grown exponentially, having attracted more than 20,000 people for the free concert and fireworks show in years where the weather was good on Independence Day.

Headliners at past Jams on Sloss Lake included Darryl Worley, Joe Diffie, John Anderson and Shenandoah featuring Marty Raybon.

"Gary has done an excellent job every year with the planning. And our local utility boards always support it both monetarily and other ways," Grissom said. "We certainly appreciate their help. It's a good event for the city and county, but we had to make a decision and we felt like with the amount of planning that would have to be done, it would be difficult to go forward this year."

Grissom said city officials were considering hosting a fireworks show at a later date, possibly around Labor Day or Veterans Day. The State of Alabama must issue a permit in advance of any fireworks display and Grissom said it would have been difficult to get a permit approved in time for a Fourth of July event.

City council approves street department hires, other moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved the hiring of two new employees in the Street Department at the council's June 1 meeting.

Marvin L. McKinney, Jr., was hired as an Equipment Operator II and Wesley Tanner Marshall as Equipment Operator III.

The council also approved a request from Street Department Manager Shannon Wilson to amend the job description for the Laborer position so as not to require a Commercial Drivers License at the time of hiring. Instead, the person hired will have six months to obtain his or her CDL. If they do not do so, they will be terminated at that time.

In other agenda items the council:

—declared a vacancy for the Sergeant position with the Russellville Police Department and voted to promote from with the Classified Service.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Russellville City Council will be Monday, June 15, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.



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WES receives federal grants

Submitted to the FFP

West Elementary School is excited to announce they have received two different grants from the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Development that will benefit both their Pre-K and Kindergarten classes.

WES Principal Deanna Hollimon said she recently received word that one of the grant packages WES is receiving will allow for two additional Pre-K classrooms, which will bring the total number of Pre-K classrooms up to five.

Hollimon said all five of these classrooms will be in the Russellville City Schools Early Childhood Center, located in the former Mars Hill Preschool building that RCS purchased in February of this year.

"Renovations to the building are starting soon to make sure each classroom meets the specific standards laid out in the grants," Hollimon. "Alabama's First Class Pre-K program is number one in the nation for a reason. They have very high standards for the curriculum, teachers, and learning environments, and we are excited to be expanding our Pre-K program by two more classes this coming school year and meeting all these standards."

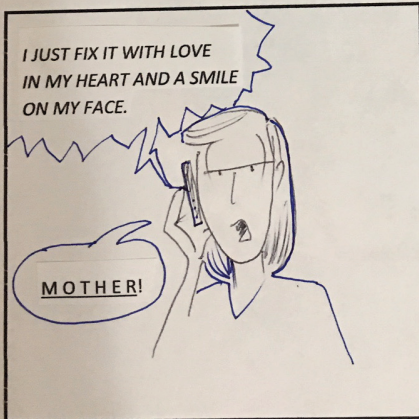
Hollimon said moving the Pre-K classrooms to the new RCS Early Childhood Center will free up more space on the kindergarten hallway where they will have 11 total kindergarten classrooms this year, which is where the next grant package comes in.

Hollimon said WES also received a 2020-2021 KELLOGG Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach To Early Learning Grant from the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Learning in the amount of \$110,000. This grant allows all 11 kindergarten teachers at WES to receive \$10,000 for implementing developmentally appropriate kindergarten strategies in their classrooms that will deal heavily with social and emotional learning as well as oral language development.

"Our Pre-K classrooms that follow the Alabama's First Class Pre-K curriculum are already implementing this type of learning where there's a heavy focus on social and emotional learning and purposeful play," Hollimon said. "There have been studies to show this approach to learning for this age group (Pre-K and Kindergarten) is much more beneficial. It sort of gets us back to what kindergarten used to be—more playtime with more ways to turn

OUR HOUSE

BY Ree Shannon



See 'GRANTS,' Page 5

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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

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My take on this... make the most of the abilities God gave you and enjoy them!

Hello everyone!

I hope all of you are doing good. It has been a productive two weeks for me. I've had the opportunity to be outside and clean flower beds that were overcome by leaves. I'm talking about two years of accumulated leaves.

As I was outside, I began to realize that this was the first time I had been healthy enough to be outside for any length of time.

One year was spent walking in pain until it was diagnosed. I was in need of a new hip. As I hobbled into the Bone and Joint Clinic, my doctor entered my room and told me it was pretty bad and I would need a total hip replacement surgery.

Next comes the question of, "let me know when you are ready to have it done". To which I replied, "yesterday or today!" I'm sure that's a common response he has heard many times.

Anyway, surgery was set up and I had never been so excited about being put to sleep, knowing they would be treating my hip like a carpenter building a house. Time to get out the hammer, saw, and possibly a crowbar.

That summer was wonderful. Pain-free and being told not to bend a certain way or my joint could pop out of the socket. Well, wasn't that nice!

I was able to walk around and look at the overgrown flower beds, but that was the extent of it.

When winter came, there was lots of time to



Gail Motes

assess the mess, but unable to do anything about it.

Then this summer rolls around and 'tah-dah', I'm like a bird out of a cage. It had been very time consuming and well-worth every second of it. My flower beds are looking good and I'm walking and bending and sweating and smiling. This is one happy woman!

I'm one who has always appreciated the many blessings God gives me every day of my life and with this big blessing, I had received, I was thanking God every time I took a step.

This has been a great summer so far. I have my life back. Well, you know what I mean. I'm back digging in the dirt and being outside and seeing the rewards of my labor. I hope you are accomplishing some of your goals and staying surgery-free.

I still have two more flower beds to clean, so I think I will go now and enjoy myself.

If God is keeping you healthy, you owe it to God and yourself to use your abilities in some way. It doesn't have to be flowers.

I'm sure you have family and friends that would love hearing from you. You can even cook me a meal, that would be a good way to put those abilities to use.

Remember, those little blessings can mean a lot. Here's hoping you make use of your todays and tomorrows.

Have a good week and as always, until later...

Email us at franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

'RENOVATION,' from page 1

so as to allow a boring contractor to come in and bore the underground casing to run the utility lines below ground, Canida explained.

"We didn't want to tear the road up. It cost a little extra to bore underground, but that way we can run our line through the casing and nothing will be upset," he added.

A concrete pad was constructed just off Waterloo Road as part of the REB's work. That pad will house a pad mount transformer, similar to the green transformers located behind the football stadium near the tennis courts, Canida said.

Last October, the RCS board and the Russellville City Council both approved a memorandum of understanding that calls for the city to borrow more than \$15.5 million for the school's capital project. As a municipal school system, RCS cannot enter the bond market on its own. It must do so through the city council.

The agreement provides that the city will consolidate the school's obligation on the new bond as well as what remains owed on a 2016 bond. The total amount projected to be paid from Russellville City Schools back to the City of Russellville is just over \$24 million, which includes \$15,545,000 principal, \$7,832,095 interest and \$688,329 on the Series 2016 bond warrants.

A proposed debt service schedule calls for RCS to pay \$671,897 toward its debt service this year, with amounts increasing to more than \$857,690 in 2031. The debt service would be satisfied by Russellville City Schools in 2049, according to the agreement.

'GRANTS,' from page 4

play into learning opportunities. It's getting us back to true Early Childhood education, and that's something I'm very excited about."

Hollimon said since this type of curriculum is already being used in Pre-K, it will be great to have it translate over to the kindergarten classes.

"It's going to give our youngest students, especially the ones involved in our Pre-K program first, a solid foundation in which to build on later on in school," she said.

Hollimon added a bulk of the grant money allotted to each kindergarten teacher will go towards the purchase of new resources to support this curriculum. The money is also being used for professional development for the teachers and for Hollimon.

"We've already been learning a lot on topics that will be so useful once school resumes in the fall," Hollimon said. "There will be a focus on helping our young students learn to deal with their emotions in the proper way and to handle problems with conscious discipline. We'll be purchasing items that lead to purposeful play, which strengthens their imagination and their social skills. It's just very exciting to know this is going to be available to our students."

Another exciting addition unrelated to the grants will be the implementation of before-school and after-school care for Pre-K students attending the RCS Early Childhood Center.

RCS Superintendent Heath Grimes said they are offering this service for the convenience of parents who work and need a safe, structured environment for their Pre-K aged children outside of the regular Pre-K hours of 7:30 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.

AM Extended Hours will be offered from 6:30-7:30 a.m. for \$15/week; PM Extended Hours will be offered from 2:30-5:30 p.m. for \$45/week; or parents can choose Combo Care, which includes both AM and PM Extended Care Hours, for \$50/week.

"We know there are many in the community who want their child to get the best start possible to their education by enrolling them in Pre-K at Russellville," Grimes said. "But we also know that many parents work, and since bussing services cannot be provided to Pre-K aged students, and the traditional After School program can't be offered either, this seems like a good option for those parents who need help making sure their child is in a safe environment until they are off work."

Hollimon said she knows many parents who could benefit from this service.

"This could be the difference in some people being able to send their child to Pre-K or not having a way to make it work," Hollimon said. "We can't stress enough how important it is for a student to have a solid educational foundation. We have so many parents who tell us how glad they are that their child was able to attend Pre-K and how much it helped moving into kindergarten and beyond. With the option for before and aftercare, this will make Pre-K a viable option for some families who previously didn't think it would work out because of limited options for childcare outside of school hours."

Hollimon said with the additional classrooms added, parents can still sign their child(ren) up for Pre-K and Kindergarten. Enrollment packets are located in the foyer (inside the first set of doors) of the RCS Central Office on Waterloo Road 24 hours a day. Packets can be returned inside the Central Office starting June 8.

For questions, parents/guardians can call 256-331-2122 Monday-Thursday from 7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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

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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.

Phil Campbell Cemetery will hold its annual Decoration on Sunday, June 7. The Phil Campbell Cemetery Fund is a voluntary organization that sees after the upkeep of the cemetery. The fund receives no monies from any other entity to help keep the cemetery maintained. There is more information on the "Friends of Phil Campbell Cemetery" Facebook page. For those wanting to make a donation, please send it to Phil Campbell Cemetery Fund, Inc., P.O. Box 419, Phil Campbell, AL., 35581.

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.

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

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

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

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

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Russellville library cancels summer reading program

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Public Library will not hold its summer reading program this year out of safety concerns relating to the COVID-19 virus.

"I can tell you we will not be doing our summer program this year,"

Cummins said. "There were safety concerns about having so many kids congregating together in one area."

The annual summer reading program provides incentives through prizes for kids to read as many books as they can during their vacation from school.

On a brighter note for the library, though, curbside pickup service resumed Monday, June 8.

Patrons can call 256-332-1535 for books. Additionally, patrons can email documents

that need to be printed to russellvillepubliclibrary@gmail.com and the library staff will schedule an appointment for a contact-free pick-up.

The library's online catalog is available for viewing at <https://russellvillepl.booksys.net/opac/rpl/index.html#menuHome>.

Job Opportunity

The Franklin County Commission will accept applications for the following position:

Animal Control Technician in the Franklin County Commission Office until 12:00 PM on Wednesday, June 10, 2020.

An application and job description may be picked up, faxed or emailed upon request from the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N. Jackson Ave., Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

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Local veterans hoist flag on REB's new downtown flagpole

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5184 were on hand to conduct a ceremonial flag raising on a new 80-foot flagpole located at the Russellville Electric Board pole yard.

The pole yard is located where Southside Field used to be, behind the fire station on South Jackson Avenue.

REB General Manager Charlie Canida said his board members wanted to have the flag raising during Memorial Day weekend. The 20' x 30' flag and flagpole were purchased by the Russellville Electric Board. Hovater Metal Works installed the flagpole.

VFW Post 5184 members Bill Jackson, Milford Brown, Barry Robinson, Barry Moore, Jerry Harbin and Cody Bragwell attended the brief ceremony, along with employees of the Russellville Electric Board and members of the Russellville Fire Department and Russellville Police Department.

Canida said there will be permanent lights installed at the base of the flagpole so it will remain visible at night. The large flag can be seen on Highway 24, South Jackson Avenue and in a few spots on Highway 43.

"We wanted to do this in honor of our veterans as part of Memorial Day weekend," Canida said. "We appreciate the heroic efforts of the men and women who have served our country and those who died protecting us."

Memorial Day began on May 30, 1868, as a day set aside to honor the sacrifices of men who fought in the Civil War and lost their lives. Family members were encouraged to decorate their graves with flowers. That first event turned into Memorial Day, which is celebrated the last Monday in May.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

The flag, which was installed behind the fire station on South Jackson Avenue and can be seen from various points along highway 24, South Jackson Avenue, and highway 43.

'DRAINAGE,' from page 1

normal rain events it wasn't much of an issue, but with some more intense rainfall, the storm drains around there are undersized to handle those types of rain events," Palmer said.

Palmer said the project will split some of the runoff into two different storm drain systems, one of which will have to be built. The design also includes the installation of a new pipe (storm sewer) on the other side of Lauderdale across from the church.

"There will now be more capacity to carry water and that will help the whole situation there," Palmer said. "Not only for the church, but it will help the area in and around the vicinity of that intersection."

Work is expected to begin this summer. Palmer said the goal is to complete the project before the next rainy season begins.

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Back to the gridiron

Raper named to AHSAA all-state baseball squad

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - When you're the coach's son, more often than not what you do on the field is going to feel as though it's under a microscope. Every little detail is focused on, making the pressure that much more intense. And with the pressure, also comes a certain level of expectations as well.

Some players meet those expectations set before them, while others can't quite reach them. As for Phil Campbell senior Ridge Raper, whose father Jonathan is the head coach of the Phil Campbell baseball team, it's safe to say he's exceeded the expectations placed on him.

In addition to being the ace of the Bobcats staff, Raper also helped the Bobcats pursue a deep playoff run in which they reached the 3A state semifinals in 2019.

Now, Raper can add one more accolade to his already loaded resume.

In late May, as the AHSAA began rolling out their annual awards for spring sports, Ridge found his name on the impressive list of players named to the north team for the all-state baseball game..

Ridge says that he was in Memphis when he got word that he had made the team and that his father was actually the one who told him.

"I was in the bed in Memphis and my dad called me and told me that I made it and I was pretty excited, I'm not going to lie about it," Raper said. "To see my name on the team with all of the other great players, it's just a great honor. There's a lot of great players 1A-7A and anyone could have made it and I'm just honored that I did."

The list of players named to both the north and south all-state teams included players from bigger schools such as Auburn, Bob Jones, and Florence High Schools. So to see his name on a list with players from schools much larger than Phil Campbell (3A), Ridge says that he was honored, but that he wishes the season would have been able to be finished in order to solidify things.

"It's a huge honor and accomplishment for sure. There's no doubt about that," Raper said. "Obviously we didn't get a chance to finish out the season because of the Coronavirus, but I just wish we had gotten a chance to finish it out. But everything happens for a reason and it is what it is and we just have to pick up and move on."

Jonathan has had a front row seat to watching

See 'RAPER,' page 14



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Back on the field for the first time in months, Jackson (above, left) and his players are looking to shape up for what they hope will be a deep playoff run when fall arrives.

After making it to the state 2A quarterfinal game last year, Red Bay is led by an impressive amount of offensive and defensive senior talent to potentially guide the Tigers to a blue map in the fall.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

RED BAY - If you ask most high school football coaches what the key is to fielding a championship-caliber roster, you would more than likely hear the word 'experience' come up quite a few times.

For Red Bay head coach Michael Jackson, experience is something he won't have any trouble finding once those Friday night lights cut on in the fall.

This fall, the Tigers will return 18 seniors to the team, a number that Jackson says is the largest

number that he has had since he began coaching. "This is a very experienced group. This is the most seniors I've had returning across every level that I've coached at. One thing that does help us is that experience," Jackson said. "We have one 5-year starter coming back, we have four 4-year starters coming back, and seven 3-year starters coming back. That's the reason we're excited for this group. Because they've won a lot of football games over the past two years and our group of seniors we've got now were all playing back then so they've experienced a lot of winning."

Coming back from more than three months off

See 'GRIDIRON' page 12

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'GRIDIRON,' from page 11

due to the COVID-19 pandemic bringing all sports to a screeching halt, it was up to players to take it upon themselves to stay in shape and be ready once they could return to practice on June 1st after getting the thumbs-up from the AHSAA.

The participation numbers that have been at workouts and practices has been a very encouraging sign for things to come this season, according to Jackson.

"The kids were very excited about coming back. I'm really proud of the participation we've had so far and we're working out more kids this summer than I've worked out in the past seven years," Jackson said. "So we're really excited about the number of kids wanting to participate. Of course we are going by the guidelines and the practices haven't been quite as long right now as we try to get them back into it and more condition-oriented stuff. A lot of times you'll have older guys that are better conditioned and it's difficult to have everyone on the same level but we're getting there and we're working hard to get to where we need to be."

Jackson says that the experience his players have has played a huge part in getting back up to speed and making the transition back into football shape that much easier.

"It's a little bit easier to kind of get them moving because they understand the process of putting their work into getting better and better everyday. You can really tell it by those experienced guys because they know how much it takes and they know how much tougher the running and things like that will get as we build up to July 27th," Jackson said.

Once Red Bay players returned to practice on June 1st, things looked a bit different than what they might have been used to, which is becoming the normal way of doing things across the state.

According to Jackson, as soon as players arrive they have their temperature checked and must follow the state health guidelines the entire time they are at practice. This involves staying socially-distanced and a heavy dose of sanitizing of equipment, weights, and other things used regularly.

When Jackson was coming up with plans to get back to practicing, while adhering to the guidelines, there was some concern as to how difficult it would be to maintain distance while getting an effective workout in. However, after the first couple of days, Jackson says that the protocols started to feel like a routine.

"It's a little bit easier to kind of get them moving because they understand the process of putting their work into getting better and better everyday. You can really tell it by those experienced guys because they know how much it takes and they know how much tougher the running and things like that will get as we build up to July 27th," Jackson said.

"When we first started following the guidelines and we were putting our plans together, it looked like it was going to be difficult. But as we got into it and started doing it more and get used to it, it got a lot easier," Jackson said. "Because now I don't even think about the normal routine of how much we have to wash or sanitize things. We just don't have to think about it anymore because we've gotten used to doing it and making sure everything is safe as possible for our guys to do things correctly."

As for the practice on the field, there is certainly a ton of room for hope and optimism for this Red Bay squad.

Normally after losing a pair of talented receivers in Colyn Humphries and Arden Hmlton, who combined for over 1,400 yards as a part of the dynamic Tigers offense, that typically might mean a sort of rebuilding year for most teams.

See 'GRIDIRON,' Page 13



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'GRIDIRON,' from page 12

But this Red Bay team isn't like 'most teams'. When you return a talented, dual-threat quarterback in Jalen Vinson who accounted for more than 2,300 yards of total offense last year, the sky's the limit for this Red Bay team. And that isn't even mentioning the plethora of senior-led defensive stalwarts such as Alex Kennedy and Logan Scott stuffing the run game on the defensive line, and Cam McKinney leading the linebacking core, just to name a few of the talented guys for Jackson's star-studded squad. For a team coming off of a 12-1 record (10-0 in the regular season) and reaching the quarterfinals for the first time since 2017, combined with the

immense amount of experienced talent coming back for Jackson and his staff, there's a lot of chatter about a deeper playoff run for the Tigers when the fall rolls around.

Jackson echoed that sentiment and understandably has high expectations for his players as well going into the upcoming season.

"We're very excited about this team because we knew last year we knew we had a good team and we went undefeated in the regular season last year. This team and their potential is as high as any team that I have ever coached," Jackson said.



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'RAPER,' from page 11

Ridge develop as a player over the years and so when he got word that his son had made the all-state team, it was undoubtedly a proud moment for him both as a father, and as a coach.

"I'm proud of him and I've enjoyed watching him play over the years. It was difficult in his 8th and 9th grade years but as he's gotten older things have gotten easier and we've started agreeing on things more and seeing things the same way as he's gotten older," Raper said. "He's such a competitor and it's just been great to sit back and watch him pitch and play. This is really the reward for all of his hard work and the valuable time he has put in to be the best he can be."

Phil Campbell has had a long list of noteworthy baseball talent come through the pipeline over the years, with the most recent big name being former Bobcat standout Peyton Thomas who is currently continuing his baseball career at the University of North Alabama and was named to the all-state team during his time at Phil Campbell as well.

Jonathan understands the difficulties that can arise when trying to get recognition for outstanding players in a smaller school. But he also feels like the program is headed in the right direction and hopes that this will have a positive impact on future players down the road.

"We have had some kids leave here and go play college and we feel we have kids just as good as any school in the state. I also think we get knocked sometimes for being just a 3A school but it's good for us to get our kids the recognition that they deserve," Raper said. "Our kids work so hard, all of our kids do. You can go to the field or the gym and see some of our guys working out or running or doing something to try and get better and hopefully it shows other schools and other people across the state that our guys can play and they're right up there with the best of them."

As for his senior year coming up, Ridge has some big plans after falling just two wins shy of reaching the state title game in 2019.

"Senior year we have the same goal as we do every year. Bring home a blue map," Raper said. "It would have been nice to have two, for sure. But we're going to bring one home before we're done."

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