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Education officials working to come up with plans, dates for school year

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The only thing certain about Alabama's upcoming 2020-21 school year is that it will be markedly different from anything parents and students have seen in the past.

With an educational 'road map' set for release on June 19, Alabama State Superintendent of Education Dr. Eric Mackey will use that date to share plans with educators and parents about how to return K-12 students to campus as well as presenting a virtual education option for parents who don't want their children to physically return to campus.

There will be a virtual option. That much is certain. The State of Alabama is in the process of soliciting bids from vendors for a virtual instructional platform that would be used statewide, with each school district responsible for using the platform to educate its students.

Franklin County Schools Superintendent of Education Greg Hamilton said he expects the state plan to include several options for the 2020-21 academic year, including a plan for students on campus, a virtual option, a blended option and possibly a hybrid option that incorporates both on campus and virtual classroom instruction.

"This will have a lot of impact on our system. We'll have to look at our school calendar after we have more details," Hamilton said. "If our teachers have to handle virtual and classroom responsibilities, it will have a tremendous impact and likely will push back the start of the school year."

Hamilton said he will have a recommendation to the Franklin County Board of Education on an amended school calendar for the board to consider at its July meeting.

Franklin County Schools are set to see the return of students on August 7, with Russellville City Schools' stu-

See 'EDUCATION,' page 5

Qualifying for Franklin County municipal elections to begin soon

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

While most political eyes are focused on the July 14 primary runoff, qualifying will soon begin for the August 25, 2020, Alabama municipal elections.

Candidates wanting to run for mayor or city council of any municipal government may begin qualifying at city hall on July 7, 2020. The two-week municipal qualifying period ends July 21, 2020, at 5 p.m.

In Franklin County, municipal elections will be held August 25 for the cities of Russellville, Red Bay, Phil Campbell, Hodges and Vina.

The Code of Alabama provides that every mayor and council member elected by the entire electorate of a town or city must reside in that town or city. For cities where candidates run in districts, the council member must reside in the district in which they were elected during the terms of their office.

That residency may be established no later than 90 days prior to the election, and the candidate must be a

qualified elector at the time of filing. For the 2020 municipal election, that means candidates must meet the residency requirement as of May 26, 2020.

Essentially, if a person meets the residency requirement and is a registered voter, he or she meets the qualifications for municipal office.

According to Section 11-43-81 of the Code of Alabama, 1975, the mayor serves as the executive branch of municipal governments in Alabama. As such, he or she is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the municipality.

In municipalities with less than 12,000 residents, which includes all Franklin County cities, the mayor presides over council meetings and serves as a member of the council. The mayor may vote on any issue before the council, introduce measures and participate in discussion just as council members do.

The council serves as a town's legislative branch, with authority over finances and property of the municipality.


Belinda Miller serves as election manager for the City

See 'ELECTIONS' page 3

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Emma J. Baker, 83, of Russellville, died on Friday, June 12th. Interment at Fairview Cemetery.

Lucy R. Grisham Davis, 85, of Leighton, died on Saturday, June 13th. Interment at Vandiver Hollow Cemetery.

Brenda Faye Martin, 74, of Hartselle, died on Saturday, June 13th. Interment at Winston Memorial Cemetery.

Vergil Thomas McKelvy, 86 of Russellville, died on Friday, June 12th. Interment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

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County BOE approves vast number of personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education approved 44 personnel moves at the board's June 9 meeting, including the hiring of a new band director at Tharptown High School.

Andrew Epperson was hired to fill that position after the board approved the non-renewal the contract of former THS band director Callie Henderson last month.

Epperson majored in Music Education at Jacksonville State University after graduating from Pleasant Valley High School in Jacksonville. He currently lives in Piedmont, AL.

Other personnel moves approved by the board included:

—Resignation: Melissa Kiel, Tharptown Elementary teacher, Amanda Odom, TES teacher, Bryan Jimenez, Spanish teacher at Belgreen and Phil Campbell High Schools, Holly Borden Williams, BHS English teacher and Ciara Whitten, TES teacher.

—Leave of Absence: Julie Bolton, Red Bay Elementary teacher, one year leave effective through 2020-21 school year.

—Employment: Craig Thomas, Dallas Gilliland, Megan Skidmore and Tonya Emerson as bus drivers, Meaghan Hardy Reed, PCES teacher, Beatrice Hardin, Red Bay custodian, Carrie Pharr, RBES teacher, Myra Webster, RBES teacher, Lorie Robbins, Red Bay special education aide, Gary Blackburn, maintenance worker, Savannah Smith, pre-K teacher at Vina, Brooke Williams, TES teacher, Hanna Malone, TES teacher, Molly Bates King, TES Assistant Principal and Tiffany Hallmark, Registered Nurse for Franklin County Schools.

—Transfer: Jeff Clark, from Special Needs bus driver at Tharptown to bus driver at Tharptown and Lorena Lucas Hernandez, from Special Education Teacher at THS to elementary teacher at TES.

—Principal Contracts: Three year contracts for TES Principal Karen Thorn, East Franklin Junior High Principal Megean Berryman, PCHS Principal Darit Riddle, RBES Principal Leigh Burks and PCES Principal Jennifer Warhurst.

—Volunteers: Randy Pike for PCHS football, Gage Roberson for PCHS baseball and Cantrell Tyson for PCHS football and basketball.

—Resignation in Supplement: Shauna Humphries as RBJH Girls Basketball Coach.

—2020 Summer (Virtual) TRACKS hires: Sherry Smith, Amanda Oliver, Cindy Peppers, Amy Thomas, Briana Champion, Dalany Roberts, Deborah Townsend, Savannah Smith, Kristy Smith, Kristie Thorn and D'Andrea Robinson.

'ELECTIONS,' from page 1

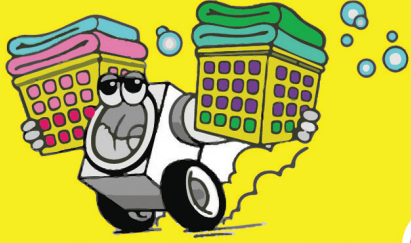
of Russellville. Miller said there will be no qualifying fee to run for mayor or council in Russellville, although the State of Alabama allows a fee of up to \$50 per candidate.

Once a candidate qualifies for municipal office, he or she must complete a Statement of Economic Interests form with the Alabama Ethics Commission in order to appear on the ballot.

Additionally, municipal candidates have until July 27, 2020, to file an Appointment of Principal Campaign Committee form with Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore's office.

Candidates are encouraged to visit www.sos.alabama.gov to download a free copy of the Alabama Municipal Candidate Filing Guide and the Alabama Municipal Election Calendar, to familiarize themselves with all applicable laws and dates related to municipal elections.

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A quick pep talk for fathers

In honor of Father's Day, I want to pause, huddle up the dads out there, and give us men a quick pep talk.



Chris Hogan

We have a massive opportunity to impact our children's lives, for better or worse. I have three incredible boys, and I want to do everything in my power to raise them well. One of our main jobs as fathers is to teach. We help our children learn to walk, ride a bike, and eventually, drive a car. But there's one lesson too many dads overlook: how to manage money. And just like handling a car, if you don't learn to handle money well, you can do some serious damage.

But conversations about money can be tough. You might feel unequipped, and you might feel guilty for mistakes you've made in your own life. It's time to set that negativity aside, and focus on what we can do moving forward. Here are five tips to get the ball rolling:

Dialogue—don't monologue

It's easy to lecture, throw a list of rules at your kids, and hope for the best. But these conversations are a two-way street. Listen well, ask questions, and be patient as you explain the "why" behind the what.

You may need to revisit these concepts many times!

Have age-appropriate conversations

The Hogan boys learned simple money concepts early on, like how to divide their money into three categories—save, spend, and give. But as they get older, we've started to unpack concepts like investing and how to cash flow college.

Share real stories

I've learned to be open about my mistakes with money. It's an opportunity for my boys to make real-life connections, and avoid the same problems that I created for myself.

Widen the circle of influence

If you feel overwhelmed, get some help! Have your children read books like *The Total Money Makeover*. Bring them to your next meeting with your investment professional, or your tax advisor. You don't have to share the details of your portfolio, but introducing them to financial experts at such a young age will boost their confidence and give them a head start.

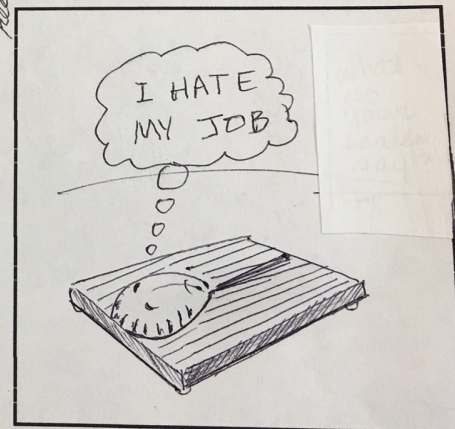
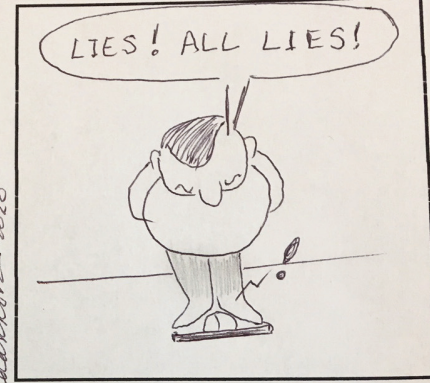
Celebrate their progress

We should intentionally look for ways to celebrate our kids and tell them how proud we are. I love patting my boys on the back when I see

See 'PEP TALK,' Page 7

OUR HOUSE

BY Ree Shannon



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Correction Policy

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

Letters to the editor

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

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My take on this... Father's Day memories

Hello friends!

I hope you had a good weekend and that your week is starting off in a positive way. As we all know, Sunday will be Father's Day. It will be a day to hang out with your dad if you are fortunate enough to live nearby. Can't go far during this quarantine.



Gail Motes

My grandchildren have already made plans to hang out with their daddy and cook and swim and spend some time together. Their daddy and I will be spending our day without an opportunity to be with ours.

I will miss daddy as I always do. I'm thankful that time has eased the loneliness somewhat. I don't like living on 'what-ifs' for long periods at a time. That doesn't mean I don't wonder how amazing life would be to still have him in my life, but if I dwelled too long on 'what-ifs', I'd have myself worked up in an 'emotional mess'. It would not solve anything so I do my best to appreciate what I had and not what I don't have anymore.

I had an amazing daddy in my life for fourteen years. I know God could have taken him sooner, but he didn't so I was blessed with the time God gave us together.

My daddy lived during the Great Depression. I can remember when I was very young how he occasionally took on part-time jobs. His regular job was being one of the best carpenters of his time. I'm sure his dad being a good carpenter played a big role in that because I'd heard stories about how good he was too! Everytime someone bragged about my daddy's work, I felt so much pride for him.

Being in the Great Depression had a lot to do with making him wise and frugal. He knew the importance of a job and good money management and based purchases on necessities, not wants. There were things I wanted and didn't get but I never wanted for necessities or love.

There is no way I can even put into words how much I miss him but with everything that is happening in the world at this time, I'm kinda glad he's not around to endure more hardships in his life. I'm glad his hard work had come to an end and that he is getting that rest he deserved.

I'm glad he wasn't around to see his wife (my mother) die from cancer. I'm glad he didn't see me go through a divorce, take chemo and radiation and battle cancer, but he would have been excited to see me beat it.

To see mother and myself go through such a painful ordeal would have broken his heart. I saw his heart broken a few times during my childhood and I'm so glad he didn't have to be sad for one more day in his life.

I'm thankful to know that everything I go through in my life, whether good or bad, is God's will. I do my best to not question why God took my daddy from me when I was so young.

Even though I won't have my daddy when Father's Day comes Sunday, I still am thankful I had such an amazing one.

I've always said you hurt as bad as the love was strong, when loved ones are taken from you. So his loss was devastating!

I hope you know or have known what a daddy's love feels like, I hope all of you dads have a happy Father's Day! I'm wishing all of you a good week and as always, until later...

Routine traffic stop escalates into car chase, arrest of federal fugitive

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

What should have been a routine traffic stop turned into a car chase and resulted in the apprehension of a federal fugitive Wednesday morning in Franklin County.

Steven George Melton, 41, 2266 Hwy. 81, Phil Campbell, was taken into custody at his Hwy. 81 residence after leading police on a chase that began in Russellville.

Russellville Police Department Sergeant Craig Bullion attempted to stop Melton Wednesday morning after Bullion observed Melton driving without wearing a seat belt. Melton failed to yield for the officer, and instead, fled south on Highway 43, at one time reaching speed in excess of 100 miles per hour.

Bullion pursued Melton with assistance from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and other agencies, before Melton was taken into custody. A records check showed Melton to be on federal probation, according to RPD Chief Chris Hargett, for a methamphetamine conviction. A warrant had previously been issued for Melton as a result of an alleged probation violation, Hargett said.

Melton was being held in the Franklin County Jail Thursday morning with a hold for federal authorities to pick him up.

Hargett was asked about his department's policy on car chases, and he said there were several factors that go into whether officers pursue a fleeing vehicle.

"It depends on if it gets to the point where it presents a danger to everyone else, and what the pursuit is for," Hargett said. "In this case, the traffic was light. The supervisor takes into account whether it's worth the risk but this incident never got to the point of extreme danger."

Hargett said RPD does not have a policy where officers can't pursue a fleeing vehicle. Instead, factors including the risk of danger, how the suspect is driving, location of the chase, etc., are taken into consideration.

'EDUCATION,' from page 1

dents scheduled to begin classes August 12.

Students participating in athletics, band and other extracurricular activities were allowed to return to campus this month, subject to social distancing requirements. Franklin County's summer learning program, TRACKS, is being conducted virtually.

"I visited three schools this week and they are adhering to social distancing requirements and athletes had masks on and there was no scrimmaging going on. We will continue to follow all rules from the Alabama High School Athletic Association," Hamilton said.

The state road map will include a tier component for schools as far as returning students to campus, according to Mackey, although the criteria for moving from one tier to the next remains an issue.

The Facebook page for Franklin County Schools has a seven question survey for parents to complete that was posted June 12. Parents and/or guardians of students are encouraged to complete the survey. Hamilton said there will also be a paper option to complete the survey.

Systems like Franklin County Schools face difficulty with virtual learning due to the large number of households without access to reliable broadband internet. Hamilton has previously said that up to two-thirds of his students do not have high-speed broadband internet available at their residences.

Although the system offered virtual instruction after schools closed in March, every student was provided with written lesson plans as well. Those were distributed at the same time school meals were delivered.

Another factor for officials to consider is the unusually large percentage of Franklin County residents who have tested positive for COVID-19. As of Friday afternoon, that total had grown to 665.

With the scheduled start of the school year likely to be pushed back, Hamilton said he will still have to find a way to provide 1,080 hours of instruction for students, as required by the Alabama Department of Education.

The road map is expected to address other issues including athletics, extracurricular activities and special education.

"We are absolutely dealing with an unprecedented situation that is ever-changing," Hamilton said. "As always, though, our decisions will be guided by what is in the best interests of our students."

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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.

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.

There will be a District 4 community meeting on Monday, June 22 at 7 p.m. at the Chucky Mullins Center at 814 Hamilton Street. The meeting will be to discuss community concerns. Social distancing protocols will be followed and facemasks are required. Multiple city officials will be in attendance.

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. Burleson 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.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

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

Corrections officer/dispatcher: 2 positions
Deputy Sheriff: 1 position

in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Friday, June 26, 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 or applications are available at www.franklinountyal.org under the careers tab.

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NWSCC announces President's, Dean's Lists

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Northwest-Shoals Community College recently announced its President's and Dean's Lists for the 2020 Spring semester.

Requirements for the President's List are a semester grade point average of 4.0 and completion of a minimum semester course load of 12 semester credit hours of college-level work.

Those students in the *Franklin Free Press* coverage area earning President's List honors were:

Hodges: Jessie Oliver.

Mt. Hope: Emma Henderson.

Phil Campbell: Anna Benford, Cody Cotham, Samantha Crandall, Angelia Mims and Abby Swinney.

Red Bay: Hunter Bays and Emma Russell.

Russellville: Irma Ajujalip Huarcas, John Argueta, Stephanie Fuentes Salvador, Megan Fullman, Lisette Gonzalez, Mandy Hall, Lauren Hammond, Madison Hargett, Morgan Hill, Elizabeth Jenkins, Jarrod Lasseter, Erica Mateo Lopez, Carley McCalpin, Courtney Murphree, Yaslin Perez and Brianna Weeks.

Spruce Pine: Maggie Fowler and Christopher Gonzalez.

Requirements for the Dean's List are a semester grade point average of 3.5 or above but below a 4.0, and completion of a minimum semester course load of 12 semester credit hours of college-level work.

Students in the *Franklin Free Press* coverage area earning Dean's List honors were:

Hodges: Allison Oliver.

Phil Campbell: Baily Bishop, Karley Ergle, Alexandra Greer and Xavier Pascual.

Red Bay: Destiny Deaton, Carlee Humphres and Amy Kanehl.

Russellville: Georgia Amick, John Aycock, Anna Bond, Christina Chavez, Kaitlyn Darracott, Stephanie Garcia, Rachel Griffin, Katie Howard, Rudy Huarcas Ajujalip, Kimberly Martinez, Joanna McClure, Lisette Mojica Osorio, Jenny Ordonez Lopez, Kimberly Pace, Thomas Scott, Kaylee Smith, Cameron Vandiver and Jazmin Vidal.

Spruce Pine: Johnathan Gonzalez, Austin Odom and Seth Taylor.

Vina: Colton Corum and Anna Humphres.

Congratulations to these students!

'PEP TALK,' from page 4

them place the "give" envelope in the basket at church. And my middle son, who's 14, has almost \$2,000 saved for a car! Life is short and these moments will be gone before you know it, so celebrate everything you can.

Just like anything in life, the good things are often the hard things. I hope you feel re-energized and excited to love and teach your children. Happy Father's Day!

For news updates throughout the week, don't forget to check us out on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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County commission approves expenses for voting safety

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved the reimbursable expense of more than \$9,000 in protective supplies to help keep voters safe during the upcoming July 14 primary runoff election.

Commissioners approved the \$9,047 expense at their June 15 meeting. Franklin County is eligible for 100 percent reimbursement through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES).

Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore said there will be a number of protective measures in place at each of the county's 24 voting precincts to protect both poll workers and voters on July 14.

There will be a kit prepared for each precinct. These virus protection kits have a plentiful supply of disinfectant, wipes, gloves, hand sanitizer and alcohol pads to clean screens. The expense also includes payment to Anita Scott, Absentee Election Manager, and a \$25 supplemental payment to each poll worker in addition to their regular payment.

Moore said there will be a similar plan in place for the November 3, 2020, general election.

In other agenda items, the commission:

—authorized the advertisement for two corrections officer/dispatcher positions with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and a vacant deputy position.

—authorized the hiring of five temporary employees in the Franklin County Highway Department. The employees are Trey Willingham, Michael Hall, Adam Borden, Shane Mansell and Billy Moore.

—approved the hiring of Matt Mayfield as an animal control technician.

—approved the removal of Casey Adcox as secretary in the Franklin County Coroner's Office effective May 30, 2020.

—set a public meeting to receive input on the proposed closing of a 1,500-foot section of Sanders Road, with the request made by Ken Baggett. The public meeting will be July 20, 2020, at 8 a.m.

—authorized Franklin County EMA Director Mary Hallman-Glass to apply for a Homeland Security Grant, fully reimbursable, to upgrade the county's Emergency Management Office.

—heard a report from Moore on how the Franklin County Courthouse has been operating smoothly under the restricted-access reopening two weeks ago. Moore expressed his appreciation to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office for its assistance with helping direct the public to the appropriate line while waiting outside the courthouse.

"We appreciate the help of Sheriff Oliver's department, as well as every employee in the courthouse. And we also want to thank the public for being so patient with us during this time," Moore said.

Franklin County Revenue Commissioner Veronica Stancil told commissioners that citizens with March-June renewals for vehicle registration may renew through July 17 without penalty. That extension also applies to newly-acquired vehicles purchases. And mailing fees for renewals continue to be waived, Stancil said.

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Yogi's Spruce Pine Citgo convenience store open for business

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Mark "Yogi" Welborn closed the doors on his Spruce Pine Raceway convenience store July 29, 2015, he made a gentleman's agreement with Tommy Jackson, co-owner of the property, that Welborn would open another store at the same location one day.

Five years later, after removal of the old gas tanks and approval from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), along with major renovations to the building and exterior, Welborn and Jackson both kept their word. The result? Yogi's Spruce Pine Citgo, which is now open for business.

Welborn began work on the project early this year, and even with a COVID-19 pandemic, he kept on schedule to open in June.

"This truly is a labor of love. It's gone like clockwork and has been a joy to put together," Welborn said.

Jackson, who owns the property located at 6675 Highway 43 along with his brother Wayne, worked with Welborn to make the new 3,000-square foot store and gas station a reality.

"Tommy and I shook hands, both worked together taking several trips to Montgomery, dealing with Raceway and ADEM, and we were able to make a 30-year deal," Welborn said. "The Jacksons are good people who care about their community and we look forward to working with them."

Welborn co-owns the new Spruce Pine Citgo with his brother Alf, who will handle the day-to-day management of the store.

Welborn's station on Waterloo Road in Russellville is also Citgo affiliated, as will be the truck stop he's going to construct next year near the Highway 24 East/Walnut Gate Road intersection. The installation of a traffic signal at that location is expected to be done in September. Welborn said the architectural plans for the truck stop are complete and he's also installed a turn-in lane. His expected date to open the 24-hour truck stop is July 2021.

"Citgo gave us some great incentives through their rebate program and they definitely helped make this financially worthwhile," Welborn said. "Citgo is very supportive of local schools and we'll have several promotions to benefit Phil Campbell High School at the Spruce Pine store."

"Citgo is really community-oriented and I'm excited that all my locations will be with one company," Welborn added.

Yogi's Spruce Pine will have 10 employees and will operate from the hours of 5 a.m.-9 p.m. Although the store will close at 9, a canopy complete with LED lights will illuminate the gas pumps and gas will be available 24 hours a day.

In addition to the standard three grades, regular, mid-grade and premium, Yogi's Spruce Pine offers diesel on the outside pump and a non-ethanol 100 percent gas option.

Yogi's Spruce Pine is truly a family affair. In addition to Yogi and Alf, Dianne Welborn Ozbirn will run the deli and cold bar. The store offers a variety of breakfast biscuits and corn dogs, hot dogs, hamburgers, school house pizza,



COURTESY PHOTO

Five years ago, when the Spruce Pine Raceway convenience store closed, Welborn made an agreement with Tommy Jackson to one day open another convenience store in the same location.

and Bosco sticks in a 'grab and go' setup.

Fresh coffee, cappuccino and fountain soft drinks are also available.

The Spruce Pine opening comes as Welborn celebrates his 25th year in business. He opened Yogi's bar in Littleville in 1995, followed by a package store three years later. Welborn operated Spruce Pine Raceway from 2004-2015, when he opened the Yogi's on Waterloo Road.

"It's important to me to invest in my home community, including here in Spruce Pine," Welborn said. "The closing of this store left a hole in this community."

Spruce Pine is a thriving community that has its own identity and is a big zip code area. It's family-oriented and there are generations of families who have been here for more than a hundred years. It's also a major intersection where 43/13/17 come together," he added.

Welborn said the store location was attractive because of the combination of transit customers driving through along with a good community base.

"There's a nice balance here. We're excited to be serving the community again," Welborn said.

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Our way-too-early 2020 Alabama football preview

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press



Although we are just now getting into the dog days of summer, it's never too early to take a look ahead to the fall and preview the upcoming college football season.

Brady Petree

Of course, things could look vastly different during the upcoming season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Games could be played without fans, and there could be certain limitations on the games themselves. Then there is the possibility, albeit a smaller one, there could be no games at all if things were to take a drastic turn.

Sports Editor

But for now, let's picture the college football season moving forward as planned.

This week we'll be taking a look at the Crimson Tide and what to expect in the 2020 season...

The offense

The offense is going to be the talk of practice once full practices get underway when school returns in the fall. Not only does the Crimson Tide have to move forward without their once-in-a-generation quarterback in Tua Tagovailoa, but they also lose quite a bit in the way of receivers and linemen. Guys like Jerry Jeudy, Henry Ruggs III, and Jedrick Wills all made the jump to the NFL and figure to have immediate impacts on their respective teams.

But we're here to focus on the guys still donning the crimson and white jerseys every Saturday.

At quarterback, Alabama figures to be set once again. The Tide welcomed one of the top quarterback recruits in the country in Bryce Young, and senior Mac Jones returns, so the talent is there for the Nick Saban offense to continue thriving. The only question for the quarterback position is how long will Jones be able to hold off the dynamic up-and-coming Young?

Young, a dual threat in high school, was widely regarded as a five-star signal-caller coming out of high school with some scouts comparing his game to that of former Heisman winner and now quarterback of the Arizona Cardinals, Kyler Murray.

Jones does have experience as a starter under Saban as he started four games last season in place of an injured Tagovailoa. Jones' numbers were solid as he compiled over 1,500 yards through the air with 14 touchdowns and a completion percentage of nearly 69%.

While those numbers are solid, and you can make the argument that nearly any other program in the SEC would be ecstatic to have those numbers out of their QB, just being solid won't cut it for Alabama. Jones will have to be better than he was last year and provide some kind of spark for the offense.

While it's nearly impossible to ask for Jones to provide the same kind of spark that Tagovailoa

See 'PREVIEW,' page 12

A high-flying talent



PHOTO BY BRADY PETREE

Holland will go from cheering at Golden Tiger Stadium on Friday nights to cheering at Braly Stadium on Saturdays after signing her letter of intent last Wednesday to cheer at UNA.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - Watching Golden Tiger football on those Friday nights in the fall at Golden Tiger Stadium is an experience in and of itself. But part of the reason that experience is so incredible is the work of the Golden Tiger cheer squad and this past season the cheerleading squad was led by senior Kaydee Holland.

Holland has been a member of the Golden Tiger cheerleading squad for years and began her cheering career when she was in the 7th grade at Russellville.

Last Wednesday as her teammates, coaches and family looked on, Holland signed a letter of intent to continue her cheer and academic career

at the University of North Alabama in the coming fall.

For Holland, this is something that has been in the works for years and her signing is the culmination of all of her hard work.

"It just feels amazing. Ever since 7th grade I knew that I wanted to take this to the next level and I didn't want this to end at my senior year," Holland said. "It's amazing and I am just thankful to everyone that has helped me get here to this point."

Holland is considered a flyer for the cheerleading squad. This means that she is the one on top of the pyramids and bases and is also tossed into the air and caught by her teammates.

Making the jump from high school straight to a

See 'TALENT' page 12

'PREVIEW,' from page 11

did, some kind of electrifying playmaking ability will be needed as Young has the talent to overtake Jones as the starter if the offense falters.

Whoever is under center for the Crimson Tide, they will have no shortage of weapons to use once again.

Running back Najee Harris returns with his sights set on a Heisman trophy in his senior season after rushing for 1,224 yards to go along with 20 touchdowns (13 rushing, 7 receiving). In the receiving core, DeVonta Smith figures to be the go-to guy this year with the electrifying Jaylen Waddle right behind him.

On the offensive line, Alabama returns 80% of its starting linemen with standout and top-10 pick Jedrick Wills being the only departure. Alex Leatherwood and Evan Neal figure to fill out the left side of the line, while Landon Dickerson and Deonte Brown will take charge at the center and right guard positions. The only question mark seems to be at right guard where Emil Ekiyor, Chris Owens, and Pierce Quick will all be in the mix to take that final spot on the line.

The defense

In any given year, Alabama typically suits up a top-10 defense in the country. That is the signature of a well-coached Nick Saban team.

However, last year injuries plagued Alabama and the Crimson Tide finished behind teams like Buffalo, Air Force, and Pittsburgh in total defense.

The Tide defense figures to be much better in 2020, if everyone can stay healthy that is.

While there were a host of injuries to point to as being the reason for the down year in defense, none hurt as bad as the injury to veteran linebacker Dylan Moses before the season even started. Moses, one of the key run-stoppers for the Crimson Tide was projected as a late first round pick in the NFL draft if he were to declare, even without playing one down of football in 2019.

Moses surprised some by announcing he would return to Tuscaloosa for his senior season and with the announcement, the optimism for a dominant defense to return for the Tide began to take shape.

On the defensive line, LaBryan Ray (who suffered a foot injury in week 3

See 'TALENT,' Page 13

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'PREVIEW,' from page 12

against South Carolina) and DJ Dale are penciled in as two of the three starters on the D-line for the Tide with Christian Barmore, Phidarian Mathis, and Justin Eboigbe all vying for the third spot.

With Terrell Lewis and Anfernee Jennings being selected in the NFL draft, it will be up to some key veterans returning from injuries to lead the linebacking corps.

Moses will most likely be the signal-caller on the defensive side of the ball along with Joshua McMillon who is coming back from a season-ending knee injury during the preseason in 2019, to lead a revitalized linebacking group.

In the secondary, the Tide lost safety Xavier McKinney and cornerback Trevon Diggs to the NFL.

At the cornerback position, Patrick Surtain II figures to get a majority of the reps as the top corner for the Tide while JUCO cornerback transfer Ronald Williams will be counted on to contribute immediately alongside Surtain.

As for the safety position, Alabama will have some work to do. Jordan Battle figures to take the number one spot as he received valuable playing time in 2019. As for the other safety spot, count on seeing Demarcco Hellams, Brian Branch, or Daniel Wright fighting for a spot in the fall.

Special teams

We're going to be completely honest here, there isn't too much to be optimistic about as the Tide's special teams units have not been great over the past few seasons.

However there is one bright spot: Jaylen Waddle.

Waddle may be the most electric return man in college football and one would figure that he will once again be returning punts and kickoffs in the fall.

Joseph Bulovas returns as the punter for the Tide and Will Reichard returns as the placekicker after injuring his hip against Southern Mississippi last season.

Overall

For the first time since 2014, the Crimson Tide were not a part of the College Football Playoffs in 2019 after seeing their chances go down the drain at the hands of Auburn. The Tide will be back in the playoff picture in

2020, but to what extent?

With a plethora of offensive talent returning to help out either Mac Jones or Bryce Young, Alabama figures to once again be one of the dynamic offenses across college football.

On the defensive side, this season figures to be much more solid than last year as the Crimson Tide will finally have a deep linebacking corps and some experience on the defensive line as well.

In the secondary there will be some question marks regarding experience but those questions can be quashed with solid play early on from veterans like Surtain.

As for special teams? Just be glad the Tide has Jaylen Waddle returning kicks.



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'TALENT,' from page 11

division one school like UNA is a considerable step up for Holland. However, she is positive that she will be able to utilize her time better and become a better cheerleader once she reaches the next level.

"I'm looking forward to being in the stadium with large crowds and I feel like with college I'll have more time to practice and work on my form and everything," Holland said. "I'm just really excited to get started and I am a little nervous but I'm also just very happy to have the opportunity to cheer at the next level."

Stephanie Mayfield has been the Russellville cheer coach for the entire length of Holland's career at Russellville which means that she has had a front row seat to watching Kaydee develop both as a cheerleader, and as a person.

If there was one way to describe Kaydee and her talents when it comes to cheerleading, Mayfield says she knows exactly how to describe her senior standout.

"She's the total package. She's driven, she's goal-oriented and she's just fearless. I have known Kaydee since the 5th grade and from the time she tried out for cheer in the 7th grade I have gotten a chance to watch her progress," Mayfield said. "The first year I had her was her sophomore year and she embodied everything that cheer is about from the very beginning."

During her signing last Wednesday, Holland was also awarded a cash scholarship along with an award commemorating her time with the Russellville cheer squad.

Holland's list of achievements goes further than just a cash scholarship and an award. During her senior year, Kaydee was elected as the captain of the RHS cheer squad, which is voted on by her teammates.

Mayfield says that it was no surprise that Holland was selected as the captain. "It's a great honor to be selected as the captain especially in her senior year. Her teammates saw her leadership abilities and she led her squad fearlessly," Mayfield said. "Her drive is unmatched and I have never seen anyone that represented cheerleading as well as Kaydee does. She has always wanted to cheer collegiately and UNA has gotten the best of the best from Russellville."

Having watched Kaydee grow up in front of her and being able to be right alongside her as she pursued a cheerleading career, Mayfield is ecstatic to see Holland's hard work come to fruition.

"The pride I feel knowing what she's learned from Russellville and being a part of our varsity cheerleading squad is just immense pride," Mayfield said. "I'm proud that a Golden Tiger is going on to be a Lion and that she's carrying on our Russellville tradition."

Of course Holland says that without the help and guidance of Mayfield over the years, there is reason to believe that this day might not have been possible.

"She was always there pushing me to do my best and making sure I was always at the top of my game," Holland said. "I honestly think that without her I probably wouldn't be where I am today and she has just had a huge impact on me and I'm so thankful for her."

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