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Russellville City Board of Education approves new contract for superintendent

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education approved a contract extension for Superintendent Heath Grimes at a special meeting held Monday afternoon.

The board voted 4-0 to approve the 45-month contract. Board member Greg Trapp was absent from the meeting.

The contract, which Grimes is expected to sign this week, supplants Grimes' current contract, which was set to expire after the 2020-21 school year.

Grimes' contract includes a raise in the base salary and an annual

increase each of the three years.

Among the 139 public school system superintendents in Alabama, Grimes has the 15th longest tenure with 11.5 years at Lawrence County and Russellville City Schools.

Grimes expressed his appreciation to the board during the superinten-

See 'SUPERINTENDENT,' page 5



Heath Grimes

Absentee voting deadline extended for municipal elections

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

For voters who want to cast absentee ballots in the upcoming Alabama municipal elections, that process just became easier thanks to Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill.

Merrill announced Monday that absentee ballot applications may be submitted through Thursday, August 20 for the August 25, 2020, municipal election.

The deadline to hand-deliver an absentee ballot is the close of business Monday, August 24, the day before the election. If an absentee ballot is returned by mail, it must be postmarked by August 24 and received by noon on August 25.

The deadline to register to vote in time for municipal elections is Monday, August 10.

Additionally, Merrill has authorized any Alabama voter concerned about contracting or spreading COVID-19 to cast an absentee ballot in order to avoid the polls on election day.

"We have worked to provide safe, secure and free elections to the people of Alabama through offering an extended absentee voting period during the recent Primary Runoff Election, and we will continue to see that Alabamians have the opportunity to safely participate in the electoral process during these challenging times," Merrill said.

Voters concerned about COVID-19

See 'ABSENTEE,' page 3

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Terry Bolton

District City Council 1

Pd. Pol. by Terry Bolton, 70 Virginia Av., Russellville

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Michael Anthony Carter, 62, of Phil Campbell, passed away Thursday, August 6th. Interment at Gray Rock FCM Church Cemetery.

Tallulah Watson Johnson, 87, of the Dempsey Community, passed away on Sunday, August 9th. Interment at Dempsey Cemetery.

Larry Landers, 78, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Thursday, August 6th. Interment at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery.

Mary Jo Mitchell, 66, of Russellville, passed away on Friday, August 7th. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

Pernie Mae Wellington, 72, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, August 10th. Interment at Crooked Oak Cemetery.

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'ABSENTEE,' from page 1

should check the box on the absentee ballot application that is most applicable, Merrill said. Merrill encourages voters to check the specific box that reads "I have a physical illness or infirmity which prevents my attendance at the polls."

If runoff elections are needed, municipal runoffs will take place on Tuesday, October 6.

Grissom looking to continue teamwork in third term as mayor

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

David Grissom spent the evening of July 21 putting up political signs around the city.

Nothing unusual about that, as Grissom was seeking a third term as mayor of Russellville. But on this particular evening, Grissom was erecting "Thank You" signs.

Strange, considering the August 25, 2020, municipal elections were more than a month away.

But when the clock struck 5 p.m., on July 21, qualifying for municipal office ended with no challenger to Grissom having entered the race. Alabama law provides that a certificate of election be prepared in cases of unopposed municipal races, so Grissom won't even appear on the August 25 ballot.

That's the way elected officials like their races to be—unopposed.

"I want to thank the people of the City of Russellville for the confidence they have placed in me," Grissom said last week. "It's an honor to continue serving the people of my hometown as mayor. I look forward to working with our city council members as we continue to move Russellville forward."

First elected as mayor in 2012, Grissom faced competition in both of his previous mayoral campaigns. He was unopposed when he ran for City Council District Five in 2008 and served a four-year term.

Since his election eight years ago, Grissom has stressed a teamwork-based strategy for moving Russellville forward. That includes not only the mayor and council working together, but a teamwork approach with county, state and federal officials all working toward the same goals.

"We have many positive things taking place in and around Russellville. We continue to add new jobs, improve our infrastructure and improve our city services, and we continue to redevelop our downtown district," Grissom said.

"One of the main things I campaigned on eight years ago, and it continues to be just as important today, is that we all work together as a team to accomplish what we want for the city. I think we have built relationships with people across the state and country that will help us keep moving forward," he added.

Grissom is the son of Judy Keeton Grissom and the late Bob Grissom. He



David Grissom

See 'GRISSOM,' page 7

We love to hear from you! Please send your guest columns, cartoon panels, letters to the editor, recipes and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.



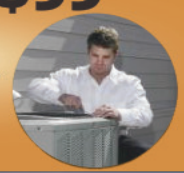
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Signs of the times: Political signs can vary as much as the candidates themselves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press



John Pilati
Publisher

I had some business out of town last Friday that took me through four towns on the way to my destination.

As you might expect with Alabama municipal elections three weeks away, there were political signs everywhere.

When it comes to campaign signs, I've always been a fan of keeping it simple. Your first name should be in small print, just above your last name which should be the largest, boldest print on the sign. And the bottom of the sign should have the office you are seeking.

For example, John SMITH, City Council District Four.

Keep it basic, clean and simple. Too much content means print that's too small to be seen from the roadway.

The reality, though, is political signs are like snowflakes—no two are the same.

Many political signs state a call to action. In case you're not sure why the person has posted a sign, the sign reminds you to VOTE, ELECT, RE-ELECT, VOTE AND ELECT, VOTE AND RE-ELECT or KEEP John Smith in office.

If a potential voter doesn't understand that you're asking for his or her vote by erecting a political sign, chances are that voter won't be able to find his or her way to the polls on election day anyway.

After the call to action, many candidates next want to put a catchy slogan

on their political sign. These vary as much as the candidates themselves.

Some of my favorites include: *Our voice, Our town. For the People. For a Change. Change for the better. Change for our future. Your vote and support are greatly appreciated. Our kids are our future. Proven leadership. Effective leadership. Experienced leadership. Honest leadership. New blood, new Values. Small town values. The smart choice. Moving forward. Moving (insert town name here) forward. Clear vision. (We're not sure what that means). Your vote, your town. Your vote, your choice. Your vote, your future.* And the list goes on and on...

Then there's my favorite from Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh's most recent state campaign. Cavanaugh has campaigned for so many different positions that she came up with a generic sign to work in all races. *Twinkle. Jobs.*

In Haleyville, there's apparently a city ordinance that you can't run for municipal office unless you have a nickname.

Haleyville political signs implore voters to elect "Boo," "Bicycle" and my favorite..."Rat." Finally, candidates feel compelled to use catchy words to describe themselves, and cram as many of them onto an 18" x 24" sign as possible.

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If you're still compelled to use catchy words and phrases, feel free to use these for a guaranteed victory.

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

Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

Publisher

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My take on this... there can be peace amongst our trials and confusions

What is it with people in today's world? We have gone through a shortage of toilet paper, hand sanitizer, lysol spray, and most of all, good ole ground beef. Of course, the list goes on and on.

The ones who bought to resale made money, but didn't stop to think about what would be the result of their greed. You became a reason for the inflation of prices we are dealing with now. You may not have been aware of a little thing called supply and demand, but it could be something to remember. Horrible, isn't it?

I wonder who the mastermind is that sits around thinking of the next "panic," but we have a new one in the making, called "the coin-shortage." Greed will prevail again.

Coins will be hoarded and prices will begin rounding off to the nearest dollar. A previous purchase of \$1.39 will become \$2.00. It could very well happen!

Since this is already stirring in the midst of those greedy ones, the mastermind is probably working with the next one. I'm a very curious person, so I'll sit back and see what is next.

I'd like to see something positive on the horizon. Oh, I know! All checks issued to each child upon birth should be discontinued immediately. So



Gail Motes

many working women choose a method of birth control because they realize the expense to raise a child. It's so unfair their paycheck goes to help pay all expenses of non-workers and lazy women. Can you imagine the money saved?

That wouldn't work, at this time. Today's actions have different goals. Oh, well! I still like the idea!

With all of this said and all of the confusion of today, I'm glad to know there is one who is never surprised or confused. He made us and He knows us. I'm very glad all control is in "His Hands." Our almighty God!

He is our way and if we will follow in his footsteps, we will have peace in our hearts and goodness in our soul.

Everything happens for a reason!

I have said my peace for now. I'm running out of paper. I remember being told throughout the years, "Gail, when you run out of paper, it's time to shut up!" I've been told I talk too much and I've even been told I can turn sadness into smiles, so one out of three isn't too bad.

On this, I will have to say good-bye...until later.

I do have one thing to add. Many have heard this, I'm sure, but I have read it several times because it's important to know.

It's funny because we ask God to change our situation, not knowing, He put us in this situation to change us.

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

'SUPERINTENDENT,' from page 1

dent's comments portion of the meeting.

"I want to thank the board for its renewal of my contract. I appreciate the strong board support both of me and what takes place in our school system," Grimes said.

The 45-month contract will run through the 2022-23 school year.

Grimes serves as the president and a founding member of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) affiliate organization Alabama Leaders Advocating for English Learners.

The organization is comprised of a group of educators across Alabama who are striving to improve on and strengthen the way English language learning is taught, funded and prioritized in Alabama's public school systems.

The Alabama Leaders group's efforts led to increased funding for educating English language learner students.

Those increases have brought almost \$1 million into Russellville City Schools the past two years.

Russellville City Schools has approximately 625 students whose primary language is something other than English. The system's ELL percentage, which exceeds 20 percent, is one of the highest in Alabama.

Grimes also serves as president of the District Eight Superintendents Association, part of School Superintendents of Alabama. He is on the Board of Directors of CLAS and serves on the Board of Directors of the School Superintendents of Alabama.

In addition to renewing Grimes' contract, the board approved several personnel moves, including:

—Part-time Temporary Student Workers: Kage Malone and Ian Miller at West Elementary School for the month of August 2020.

—Leave of Absence: Shannon O'Neal, WES teacher, from August 19-October 30, and Hannah Prince Bendall, RHS teacher.

—Temporary Employment in Position: Hannah Lopez Saldana, temporary employment to fill Shannon O'Neal's leave of absence, and Donna Trapp, EL teacher at Russellville Elementary School.

—Resignation in Position: Carol Fretwell, RES teacher, and Quinetta Phillips, part-time certified worker at Park and Recreation Department.

—Employment in Position for 2020-21 School Year: Skyler Kirchner, RHS teacher, Candace Boyd, RCS Nurse and Megan Riley, RCS Nurse.

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 The McLemore and Kinder Family Reunion will be held Saturday, September 5th at the Spruce Pine Community Center, beginning at 10 a.m. Please bring a covered dish. If you need additional information, call (256)-324-5288.

 Red Bay Founders Day Festival will host its annual Car, Truck, Tractor and Motorcycle Show on Saturday, Sept. 19 in downtown Red Bay. Registration is from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Awards start at 1 p.m. Door prizes, trophies and cash prizes! Awards for best paint, best engine and more! \$20 entry fee. Second entry fee \$15 with same address. \$10 to show without entering. All proceeds go to the Red Bay Senior Center. For more information, call 256-324-0419. Entrance for the Car Show will be at West 2nd St. and 4th Ave. (Hwy. 24) by Heritage Park.

 You are cordially invited to new service time at Pleasant Ridge Missionary Baptist Church on Highway 48 in Russellville, at 11 a.m., Sunday mornings. Social distancing practiced, mask optional. Pastor Roger Bond.

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‘GRISSOM,’ from page 3

and his wife, Melissa Fuller Grissom, an art teacher at Russellville High School, have one daughter, Kate Reed Grissom, a 14-year-old sophomore at RHS.

Grissom earned a B.S. In Marketing and graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of North Alabama in 1994. Since that time, he has been involved in numerous business endeavors in north-west Alabama.

A lifetime member of Russellville Masonic Lodge 371, a member of Scottish Rite 32nd Degree Valley of Birmingham, Cahaba Shrine, Huntsville and a member of the Franklin County Shrine Club, Grissom is active in many community organizations and civic causes.

He and his family are members of South Side Baptist Church in Russellville.

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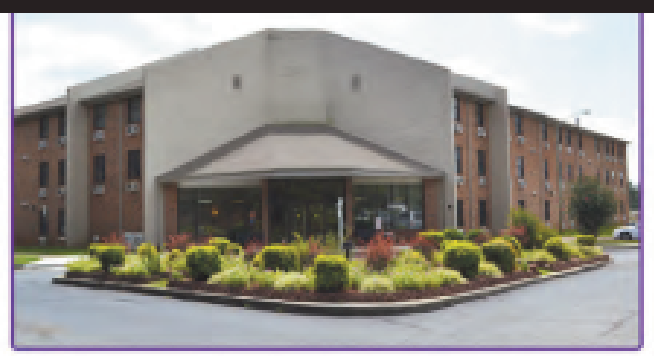
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Several months later, I started attending City Council meetings and learning all I could about what was going on in the City of Phil Campbell. When election time came around in 2012, I decided it was time to throw my hat into the political ring. I was elected and served my 4-year term, after which I ran again for the same council position as an incumbent and was reelected for a second term.

On July 10, 2020, I publicly made my intentions known by qualifying for reelection for City Council Place 4. The last eight years have been a real learning experience for me. I've learned that it takes time to make changes and to witness the outcome. I've learned there are guidelines as well as laws to follow; that you can't go in and start making all sorts of changes without following each and every step of the process.

I will not take credit for what we, as a council have done as a whole, but in the last four years we have acquired approximately \$14.4 million dollars in grant monies that, although is unseen, went into the infrastructure of the city such as the new sewer system. Many of the city streets were repaved. The Industrial Park was completed along with a new water tank that serves both the park and has eliminated the lack of water pressure for the people of the Spruce Pine area. We have one business, Montgomery Distributing, in the industrial park that has created 43 jobs and is still growing and making plans for a new addition. Our administration was instrumental in bringing Mar-Jac Poultry to Franklin County. A new feed mill was constructed. Also, a new hatchery was built in our Industrial Park to accompany the feed mill. The hatchery is currently undergoing an expansion in order to run at full capacity.

Due to the costs of reinstalling the swimming pool, a decision was made to go with the splash pad idea. This eliminated the problem and expense of becoming ADA compliant as the splash pad is accessible for those with dis-



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City Council

Pd Pol Adv By Lynn Landers 78 Hughes Lane,
Phil Campbell, AL 35581

Lynn Fleming Landers

abilities. After numerous years, we have finally completed a new concessions area along with storage areas and restroom facilities. Since the splash pad opened, we have had numerous residents rent it for birthday parties and other events. We started out charging \$1 for entry, over the years, it has increased to \$2 which offsets the cost of hiring an employee to oversee its operations. Chemicals and filters are a big expense as well as maintaining the system. When the swimming pool was in operation, an entrance fee was charged as well.

The 24-unit at Village at Oliver Place, a townhouse complex, is one completed project that we are proud of. We have made it possible for many families to relocate to Phil Campbell. We have been successful in attracting Charter Cable to our city limits. New lines have been strung and services are being added daily.

Over the past eight years, I was instrumental in acquiring a new garbage

See 'LANDERS,' Page 9

Vote David PALMER

City Council District 1

Dear Friend:
It has been an honor and a joy serving you over the past eight years. We have been truly blessed with historical growth and progress. What a great time to live in Russellville! Let's keep it going! Please vote Tuesday, August 25, 2020. Thank you for all your support.
~ Sincerely David Palmer

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JIM MAYOR BONNER

Pd Pol.: Jim Bonner 289 Highway 123, Phill Campbell, AL 35581

'LANDERS,' from page 8

truck and recently a better dump truck and service truck as well as a new lawn mower & bush hog and updated equipment for our Street Department employees. Hopefully, these new additions will make our Street & Sanitation Department more efficient at their job and in serving you.

My husband and I purchased what was once the Star Theater, one of the older buildings in town, with the intentions of establishing a restaurant. After long hard hours of work, the interior was completely gutted and the exterior was refurbished making it more appealing to the public. You may have even noticed the "Train" mural on the side of the building. We sold the building to the owners of El Patron Restaurant. They have plans on establishing a new Mexican restaurant in the building. Although that is just one building, we hope to do more and attract new businesses and visitors to town. This was my personal "1st step" in the revitalization of the downtown area.

As for myself, I am the daughter of Phillip & Patricia Fleming. Other than my time away at college, I am a lifetime resident of Phil Campbell. I am married to Jason Landers.

We have four children (Jay Grissom, Andy Landers, Aaron Landers and Alaina Landers) and two grandchildren, Drake & Raven. I am a proud 1983 graduate of Phil Campbell High School and was an 8-year member of the Marching Band. I am also a graduate of Northwest-Shoals Community College and the University of North Alabama. I am a member of the First Baptist Church of Phil Campbell.

My name is Lynn Fleming Landers. My number is 256-810-4572. Thank you for the privilege of working for you the past eight years. I am seeking reelection to City Council Place 4. I've always had an "open-door policy" and will continue to do so. Let's come together and work "hand in hand" to make this city greater than it's ever been. I appreciate your support!



We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at franklinfreepress.net!



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To the next level

Ridge Raper has been as dominant as a pitcher can be at the high school level. Once his senior season is all said and done, he will have the chance to continue his dominance at a higher level after signing with Wallace State.

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Raper sports a career 17-2 record with a 1.74 ERA on the mound as the ace of the Bobcats staff and looks to lead Phil Campbell to their first state title game appearance since 2006.

tion for Phil Campbell head coach (and Ridge's father) Jonathan Raper.

After advancing to the 2A state semifinals where the Phil Campbell fell to the hands of Piedmont, Raper says the Bobcats have unfinished business to attend to in 2021.

"We've worked in this program every year to win a state championship. Of course we want to win the county and area championships every year too. But a state championship is the ultimate goal for us and we're committed to getting there this year," Raper said.

Of course Raper has had a unique high school career in the sense that his father Johnathan has been right alongside him as he has progressed on the field and Ridge says that had it not been for his father helping him along the way, the dream of pitching at the college level might not have come to fruition.

"My dad has meant the world to me. I honestly could not have asked for a better father or a better situation to be in. He's pushed me harder than anyone else has but he's also helped me more than anyone else has too," Raper said. "Not every

See 'LEVEL,' page 13

A deep dive: Examining the Golden Tigers history with 2020 non-region opponents

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press



Brady Petree
Sports Editor

RUSSELLVILLE - In last week's issue of the *Franklin Free Press*, we took a quick look at the history between the Golden Tigers and their 2020 region opponents. We premised the observations last week with the statement that head coach John Ritter was still searching for an opponent for week one after Deshler pushed their schedule back and cancelled their matchup with the Golden Tigers.

After about a week of searching, the Golden Tigers now have a new week one jamboree opponent in the Florence Falcons, scheduled for August 28th at home.

So now that we have more clarity as to who will be lining up opposite the Golden Tigers this season in their non-region games, we thought it would be a good idea to take another deep dive and examine Russellville's history with these opponents and recent results from the past few seasons for each respective team as well.

So without further ado, let's take a look...

Decatur - week 0/August 20th (Thursday)

Having last played the Red Raiders back in 2007 (which ended in an overtime 24-23 loss for the Golden Tigers), Russellville has historically done very well against Decatur.

Finishing at 2-8 last season, just ahead of a winless Columbia team, the Red Raiders averaged an offensive output of 21.7 points per game while allowing a staggering 32.7 points per game in 2019.

See 'OPPONENTS,' page 12

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Being able to sign on to play college ball has long been a dream of Raper's and he says that seeing his hard work culminate into this kind of opportunity has meant everything to him.

"This means the world to me. This is everything that I've worked for and it's everything that my dad and I have worked for as well. All the work and time that we have put in is finally paying off," Raper said.

The aforementioned mindset that Raper has every night that he's on the mound plays a pivotal role in his dominance. Raper says that having the right kind of mentality night in and night out has been key for his performances.

"I just try to go out there and have that bulldog type of mentality. You just got to go at guys with every single pitch and just try and get the next guy out," Raper said. "I try not to dwell on anything that happens before. Just look ahead and execute my pitches every single pitch."

With a 17-2 career record and a 1.74 ERA on the mound for the 2020 AHSAA all-state selectee, Raper will once again anchor the impressive rota-

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'OPPONENTS,' from page 11

Allowing a total of 327 points last season was a team record for the Red Raiders.

The first meeting between Russellville and Decatur came nearly 100 years ago in 1926 which ended in a 14-0 victory for Russellville.

Russellville leads the all-time series between the Golden Tigers and Red Raiders at 6-4.

Florence - week 1/August 28th

After merging Bradshaw and Coffee High Schools in 2004 to form Florence High School, the series between Russellville and Florence has been very even-matched over the four meetings between the Falcons and the Golden Tigers.

The last meeting between Russellville and Florence (2011) ended in a loss for the Golden Tigers by a final of 18-35. However, the year before that the Golden Tigers were victorious against the Falcons by a final of 35-7.

Having made the playoffs every year since 2016, last season Florence was able to compile a 7-5 record while advancing to the second round of the 7A playoffs where they fell to the eventual state champions in Thompson High School.

Last year the Falcons averaged 26.8 points per game while allowing just 25.8 points per game.

The all-time series between Russellville and Florence stands tied at 2-2.

Hartselle - week 6/September 25th

Going 4-7 and having a 2-3 record in a region loaded with talent at Muscle Shoals, Athens and Cullman is fairly impressive for a Hartselle squad with a new head coach in Bo Culver.

The Tigers would eventually fall to Fort Payne in the first round of the playoffs in 2019.

The offense averaged 27.5 points per game for the Tigers while they allowed a meager 20 points per game last season.

Out of all of the Golden Tigers opponents for 2020, Hartselle has the most history with Russellville in terms of football matchups.

As for the history between Russellville and Hartselle, the Tigers have had the upper hand in recent matchups with the Golden Tigers having won 6 out of the previous 7 games. However, in terms of the all-time series

See 'OPPONENTS,' on page 13



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'LEVEL,' from page 11

day is going to be a good day. You're going to have some bad days and
that's the good thing about having him there with me. He's there on the bad
days just like he is on the good days. He always helps me out so much and
without him I would not be anywhere close to where I am today."

'OPPONENTS,' from page 12

between the two schools, the Golden Tigers have dominated the series.
The Golden Tigers lead the all-time series against Hartselle with a 24-9-1
record.

Madison Academy - week 10/October 30th

The first season under new head coach Bob Godsey ended with a 5-6
record and a first round 55-14 playoff loss to Jasper in 2019 for the
Mustangs.

The Mustangs allowed nearly 32 points per game and scored an average
of 26.5 points per game in 2019.

This is the lone opponent on Russellville's schedule that the Golden
Tigers have yet to match up with so this will be the inaugural meeting
between the two schools.

Elect Dexter Hamilton

City Council District 4

Pa. Pol. by Dexter Hamilton, 805 Tyler Ave., Russellville, AL

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COURTESY PHOTO

RISING STARS: Five Franklin County students participated in this weekend's Rising Stars Baseball Competition in Cullman. In addition to a team tournament, kids took part in a Speed Competition, Pitching Velocity Competition and a Home Run Derby. From left: Sawyer Page (Winner of 8 and Under Speed Competition, Ryder Page (Winner of 9 and Under Speed Competition), Eli Baker, placed in the Home Run Derby, Kruz Cochran, placed in the Home Run Derby and Pitching Velocity Competition and Ty Hamilton, placed in the Home Run Derby and Pitching Velocity Competition. Congratulations to these students for great jobs and for representing Franklin County this weekend! Thanks to Greg Hamilton for sending us the photo!

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