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Limited supply, large demand hamper COVID-19 vaccine schedule

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With the Alabama Department of Public Health having started the state's COVID-19 Vaccination Allocation Plan, the question for most residents is when they can receive the vaccine.

The short answer seems to be not any time soon, as the plan is behind schedule and most residents are not able to get through to the toll-free number to schedule an appointment even if they are eligible.

The 1-855-566-5333 "COVID-19 Vaccine Scheduling Hotline," as state officials describe it, was flooded with calls last week and most who dialed the number repeatedly

received a busy signal.

An employee with the Franklin Free Press dialed the hotline 45 times Monday and received a busy signal 45 times.

According to an employee at the Franklin County Department of Public Health, residents may not schedule their vaccine through local health departments. Instead, all scheduling is being done through the hotline.

ADPH officials said Friday the hotline had received more than 338,000 calls in its first few hours of operation, and there was a promise of "adding staff to assist callers" in a press release from ADPH Friday.

Vaccines to Alabama health care

See 'VACCINE,' page 9



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Doe's Eat Place owner says closing is temporary

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Downtown Russellville's centerpiece restaurant, Doe's Eat Place, closed its doors last week, but its owner says the move is temporary.

A sign was posted on Doe's front door last Thursday that reads "Closed due to COVID-19."

MS Industries II owner Steve Smith, who also owns Doe's, told the Franklin Free Press it was a temporary closing and there are definite plans to reopen.

"As most sit-down restaurants have suffered, we have as well. However, we are closed temporarily but are completely committed to reopening at the appropriate time," Smith said.

Doe's Eat Place opened October 8, 2018, at its 114 North Jackson Avenue location. Doe's is a chain of restaurants established in 1941 in Greenville, Mississippi, by Dominick "Big Doe" Signa and his wife Mamie. The menu features the chain's staple hot tamales as well as steaks cooked on an open broiler.

See 'DOE'S,' page 3

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Noah Drake Bickerstaff, 13, of Russellville passed away on Saturday, January 2nd. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

Lela Fay Broadway Black, 71, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, January 3rd. Interment at Jonesboro Cemetery.

Roger Terrell Bradford, 48, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Sunday, January 10th. There will be a graveside service for family only.

Suzanne Wages Langcuster, 85, of Russellville, passed away on Friday, January 8th. Interment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Fredi Vargas Martinez, 45, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, January 3rd. Interment at Colbert Memorial Gardens.

Mack Mitchell, 60, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, January 3rd. Interment at Mitchell Cemetery.

Arrie William Murray, 68, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday January 5th. Interment at Bethlehem Cemetery.

Lisa Josette "Jodi" Prince, 53, of Russellville, passed away on Friday, January 8th. Interment at Blue Springs Cemetery.

Jane Cook Thompson, 66, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, January 3rd. A service will be planned at a later date.

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'DOE'S,' from page 1

The restaurant's social media accounts, including its Facebook page, had been removed as of Friday.

When Doe's debuted in 2018, Smith billed it as a centerpiece to downtown Russellville's restoration.

"Any restaurant in America has a 10 percent chance to be successful and a 90 percent chance to fail. We need this in order to be successful. Every town in America is trying to resurrect its downtown and you can't do it without an A-1 anchor restaurant," Smith said.

The Russellville City Council approved the restaurant's retail liquor license application in August 2018.

Smith said the ever-changing situation with COVID-19, as well as a turbulent political climate, will factor into when Doe's reopens.

"We just don't know. From what we hear, all heck is about to break loose in our country over the next 10 days," Smith said. "We are hoping by the end of January but we just don't know to be exact."



COURTESY PHOTO

While Doe's closed its doors earlier this month, owner Steve Smith is hopeful that the centerpiece restaurant of downtown Russellville will be reopened by the end of January.

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Russellville council approves transport contract with coroner

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved a contract with the Franklin County Coroner's Office Monday that will see the city pay \$250 for transport of bodies to the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences if requested by Russellville Police Department officials.

After approval last month from the Franklin County Commission, Coroner Charles Adcox entered into the same agreement with the towns of Phil Campbell and Red Bay. Adcox said the \$250 will help pay for maintenance and transportation costs for the coroner's van purchased last year.

In other agenda items, the council:

—authorized payment to the Alabama Municipal Workers Compensation Fund in the amount of \$52,913 for annual premiums.

—accepted a deed transferring 2.35 acres of land from the Frank F. Seay estate to the City of Russellville. The land adjoins approximately 31 acres already owned by the city on the south side of Alabama 24, across from Sloss Lake.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be held January 19, 2021, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at
[www.franklinfreepress.net!](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)

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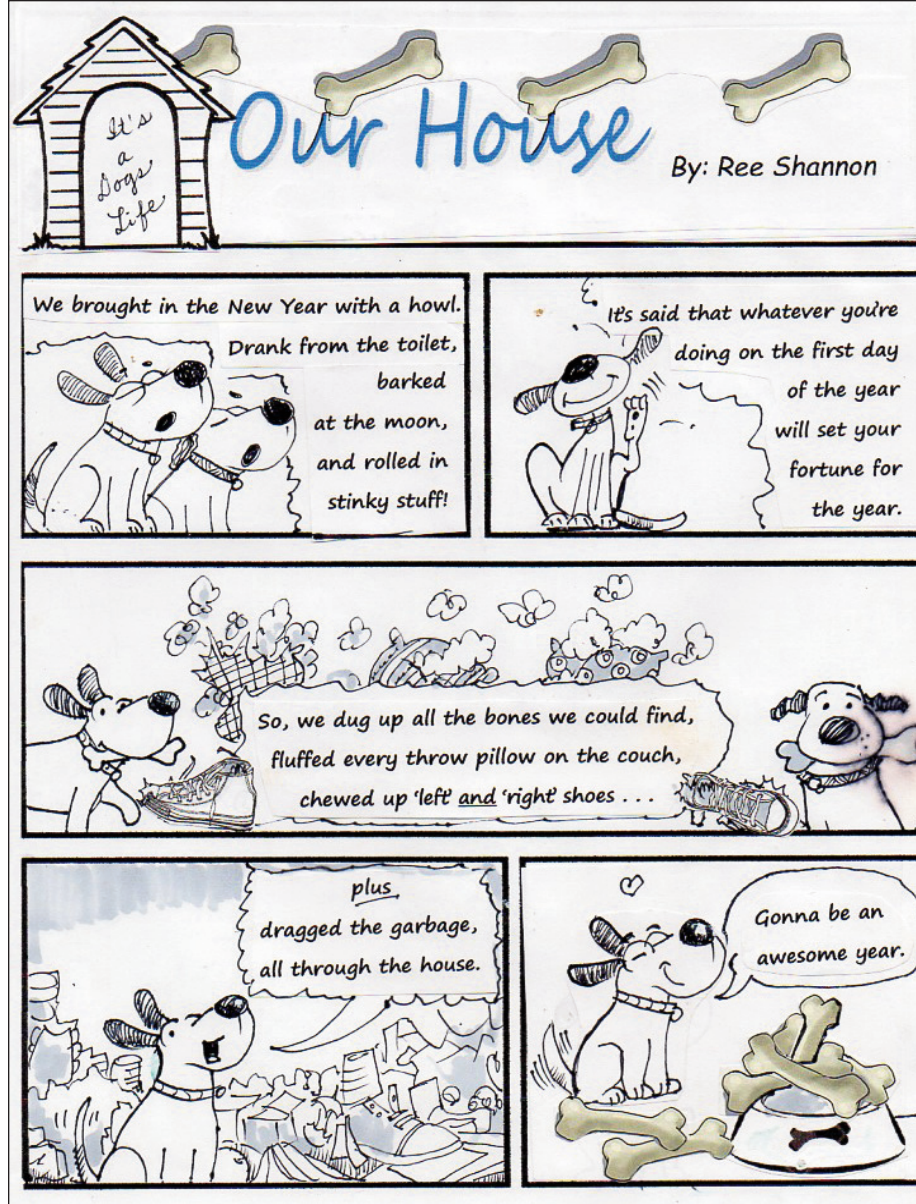
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Letters to the editor

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In accordance with the Alabama Abandoned Motor Vehicle Act, Alabama Code Sections 32-13-1 through 32-13-8, the following motor vehicle will be sold for cash at 10:30 a.m., on April 14, 2021, at M&N Wrecker & Service Center, 11833 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, AL, 35653. Seller reserves the right to reject any bid and the right to bid.

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County extension office announces open enrollment for Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Extension Office recently announced the opening of enrollment for the 2021 Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

The program provides low-income seniors with coupons and vouchers that can be used to purchase eligible foods at the local Farmers Market. Vouchers may be redeemed at state certified farmers markets, farm stands and u-pick operations.

Eligibility is based on income levels of the recipients' gross household income (income before taxes) and may not exceed the following limits:

- \$1,756 monthly for a household of one.
- \$2,371 monthly for household of two.
- \$2,987 monthly for household of three.
- \$3,604 monthly for household of four.
- \$4,219 monthly for household of five.
- \$4,835 monthly for household of six.
- \$5,452 monthly for household of seven.
- \$6,067 monthly for household of eight.

Applicants must be 60 years of age or older on the day of the application, and applicants must reapply each year.

Go online to enroll at www.fma.alabama.gov or call the Franklin County Extension Office at 256-332-8880. You will need to provide your date of birth, last four numbers of your Social Security number, mailing address, monthly income and number of people in your home.

Vouchers will be mailed in late May or early June.

The Franklin County Extension Office signs up residents as a courtesy due to the issue of lack of reliable broadband in the county. But the Extension Office does not have any authority of when the vouchers are mailed. Coupons/vouchers must be expended by November 15 of the calendar year they are received.

Issuance of vouchers is on a first-come, first-serve basis until all available funds are expended.

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 **E**veryone 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.

 **N**ew 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.

 **T**OPs 0155 Russellville is now meeting at the Russellville Hospital Education Room at 4:30 p.m. every Monday. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more info.

 **T**he 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.

 **R**ussellville Al-Anon is meeting at Russellville First Baptist Church at 6 p.m., each Thursday. We are wearing masks and social distancing.

Have an event we can help publicize? Call us at 256-332-0255.

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Inmate from Franklin County stabbed in Limestone prison incident

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Housed at Alabama's largest men's prison, an inmate serving three sentences from Franklin County was stabbed last month by another inmate.

Troy Eugene Dawson, an inmate at Limestone Correctional Facility in Harvest, was stabbed multiple times, according to a source familiar with the incident.

Limestone Correctional Facility, with 1,878 inmates, is the largest prison in Alabama.

When contacted by the *Franklin Free Press*, a spokesperson for the Alabama Department of Corrections confirmed there was an inmate-on-inmate assault at Limestone on December 20, 2020, but the spokesperson did not indicate the names of the inmates involved.

"On December 20, an apparent inmate-on-inmate assault involving two individuals was reported at Limestone Correctional Facility in Harvest, Alabama.

One inmate was treated at a local hospital for non-life threatening injuries and the second inmate was treated at Limestone's infirmary for minor injuries. As the ADOC's investigation into the alleged incident is ongoing, we cannot release additional details at this time," said Samantha Rose, Public Information Specialist for ADOC.

Dawson is serving four sentences, three of which are convictions from

Franklin County. They include two 20-year sentences for Burglary Third Degree and Theft of Property First Degree, and a 78-month sentence for Assault Second Degree.

Additionally, Dawson is serving a 45-month sentence for Robbery Third Degree from Colbert County. While the three Franklin County sentences are running concurrent, the Colbert sentence is consecutive to Dawson's Franklin County time, according to ADOC records.

The United States Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the ADOC last month, alleging that the ADOC officials have failed to correct unsafe conditions within the prison system.

One count of the lawsuit alleges that ADOC officials have failed to provide inmates with reasonable protection from assaults, both from inmate and/or guards.

Alabama Governor Kay Ivey said the state has been working with DOJ officials to improve overcrowding and other conditions in the state's 13 prisons. Ivey announced a plan last year for a private contractor to construct three new prisons in Bibb, Elmore and Escambia Counties.

The Department of Justice's concern about Alabama's prison system is nothing new. Negotiations between the state and DOJ went on for almost two years without a resolution that would satisfy the DOJ's constitutional concerns about Alabama's prison conditions.

As of June 2020, the ADOC housed 19,562 inmates in a system designed for a maximum capacity of 12,400.

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Job Opportunity

Franklin County Water Service Authority (FCWSA) is accepting completed application with accompanying resume for the following position until 4 pm on Friday, January 15th, 2021.

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Espino leading charge for immigrant advocacy through ACIJ

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As an advocate for adults with intellectual disabilities, Ana Espino loved her former job.

But she felt a calling to do more to help her community, so she became a grass roots organizer for an immigrant advocacy organization. Through that job, she was introduced to the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ).

After more than four years as a volunteer, Espino was hired as ACIJ's Executive Director in April, and in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, she hit the ground running, even though she has to wear a face mask to do it.

"When I hired in, we were already working remotely. I'm taking this respite as an opportunity to check in with our grass roots leaders and really deepen those relationships," Espino said. "We want to energize them and power up so when we can get back in the field regularly, we'll be ready to go."

ACIJ's mission is to "advance and defend the right of immigrants in Alabama." The coalition consists of six non-profit organizations and has hundreds of members statewide.

Espino visited Russellville recently to spend the day meeting with local elected officials and community leaders. With the assistance of Rev. Charles

See 'ACIJ,' page 9



Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

COURTESY PHOTO

Ana Espino was hired on as the executive director of the ACIJ, whose overall mission is to "advance and defend the right of immigrants in Alabama."

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Espino lidera el cargo por la defensa de los inmigrantes a través de ACIJ

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Como una defensora de los derechos de adultos con discapacidades intelectuales, Ana Espino amaba su antiguo trabajo. Sin embargo ella sintió que podía hacer más por su comunidad, y por esta razón se convirtió en una organizadora de base, para una organización de Ayuda y Defensa de los inmigrantes. En ese trabajo, fue presentada a la Coalición de Justicia para los inmigrantes, en Alabama (ACIJ).

Después de más de cuatro años como voluntaria, en abril, Espino fue contratada como Directora Ejecutiva de ACIJ, y a pesar de la pandemia COVID-19, ella tuvo éxito al comenzar su trabajo de base, a pesar de tener que usar una máscara para poder hacerlo.

"Cuando fui contratada, ya habíamos empezado a trabajar en forma remota. (en línea) Estoy aprovechando este respiro, para contactarme con nuestros líderes de base, y de esta manera, profundizar esas relaciones", Espino dijo: "Queremos energizarlos y empoderarlos, de tal manera que, cuando volvamos al trabajo de campo regularmente, estaremos preparados y listos para seguir adelante" La misión de ACIJ es: "Progresar en la Defensa de los Derechos de los Inmigrantes en Alabama".

La Coalición consiste en seis organizaciones no por lucro, y tiene cientos de miembros en todo el Estado. Espino visitó 6 Russellville recientemente y pasó el día encontrándose con Oficiales electos de la comunidad y con líderes de la comunidad. Con la ayuda del Reverendo Charles Dale, Espino está trabajando para aumentar la visibilidad de la Coalición en el Condado de Franklin. Con un 54% de enrolamiento de estudiantes, clasificados como Hispanos, una proporción significativa de la población está compuesta por inmigrantes.

Ya sea animar a que completen los formularios del Censo, o de participar activamente en sus comunidades, Espino cree que es la clave para ayudar a que la gente comprenda, cómo estas cosas impactan en sus hijos.

Espino dijo: "El mensaje que resuena en la comunidad Latina, es acerca del futuro de sus hijos. El Censo impacta directamente a las escuelas, a los programas como "Head Start" para los más pequeños. Ahí es donde golpea directamente, Cuando la gente se da cuenta que el Censo afecta estas cosas para sus hijos, realmente aumenta la participación "

La Visión de ACIJ "un Alabama que valora la Justicia, nutre la igualdad, protege los derechos de todos, sin considerar raza, género, orientación sexual, religión, habilidad física o status migratorio, entra en conflicto con los sentimientos de muchos Alabamians que apoyan vehementemente al presidente Donald Trump, en su meta de construir un muro en la frontera, y la deportación rápida de inmigrantes indocumentados.

Sin embargo Espino reconoce otra imagen de la mayoría de los residentes de Alabama, que está más de acuerdo con el encanto y la hospitalidad de la gente del sur.

"Cuando me mudé a Alabama, me encontré con gente realmente amigable, que nos hacía amigos cuando pasábamos manejando por el camino." Espino afirma: "construir relaciones es la clave. No es hablar de "vecinos blancos" o "vecinos negros", sino de solamente "de vecinos". Todos somos parte de la comunidad, y necesitamos tratarnos como vecinos."

Espino continúa diciendo "juntos podemos construir relaciones con personas que tienen el Estilo Sureño de ser buenos vecinos y de dar la bienvenida a otros".

El principio más importante en ACIJ, es cultivar la participación cívica en los inmigrantes en Alabama.

"Es un proceso de dos niveles. Primera necesitamos apoyar a la Oficina de Extensión, en el condado de Franklin, por ejemplo proveer acceso al lenguaje: traducciones/interpretaciones, y segundo ser la Voz Confiable en la comunidad," o "Podemos guiar a las personas hacia esa Voz Confiable en la comunidad. Estamos aquí para construir esos puentes para cubrir los vacíos que existen. Con la Comunidad inmigrante y la Comunidad Latina, necesitamos un Sistema de trabajo, para que la gente pueda convertirse en parte activa de la comunidad en el Condado de Franklin, y para que se sientan cómodos al hablar con educadores, líderes de la ciudad, y con las Fuerzas del Orden.

Espino continúa diciendo: "ACIJ, organización a nivel Estatal, muy pronto contará con tratar a un o una organizadora para el Norte de Alabama, cuyas obligaciones incluyen coordinar y avanzar conocimiento de la Organización en el Condado de Franklin.

Espino anima a las personas que desean saber más sobre la Organización ACIJ, buscar en FaceBook "Alabama Coalition for inmigrantes Justice" - "Coalición de Justicia para los inmigrantes en Alabama", o visitar su website: www.acij.org

'VACCINE,' from page 1

workers began this month, as part of Phase 1a of the Vaccination Allocation Plan. This group includes frontline healthcare workers and workers in other healthcare settings providing services with a risk of exposure to fluids or aerosols.

Beginning January 18, 2021, Phase 1b will begin. Persons age 75 or older, along with frontline essential workers, first responders including firefighters and law enforcement and individuals living or working in congregate settings (group homes, jails, , homeless shelters, etc.) will receive their vaccines as part of this phase.

In addition to the difficulty of scheduling an appointment, residents wanting the vaccine also must deal with limited availability.

"It is critical for everyone to remain patient; demand is high and supply is low," said Gov. Kay Ivey Friday. "ADPH and their partners are working around the clock to assist as many people as they can."

ADPH statistics show that approximately 350,000 Alabamians will qualify for the vaccine based on the minimum 75 year age requirement.

ADPH officials report their initial allocation of COVID-19 vaccine was 226,250 doses. Phase 1a alone includes more than 326,000 healthcare workers.

Phase 1c, which does not have a specified starting date, will include persons in identified age groups at risk for COVID-19 associated morbidity and mortality, including cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, heart conditions, immunocompromised state, organ transplant recipients, obese persons with

BMI over 30, sickle cell disease, type 2 diabetes and pregnancy.

Essential workers not already covered (those in transportation and logistics, waste and wastewater, food service, shelter and housing, finance, information technology and communication, energy, legal, media, public safety and public health workers) will also be part of Phase 1c.

Finally, Phase 2 will include all persons not previously recommended for the vaccine between the ages of 16-64 and the general population not included in earlier phases.

The COVID-19 vaccine is free to all Alabamians. Both authorized versions of the vaccine require two shots to be effective. There is a one-shot vaccine that remains in clinical trials but has yet to be approved.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that persons who have received the vaccine still wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose when in contact with others.

The COVID-19 vaccine is not available for young children as of now.

The vaccine works by creating an antibody response in the body without having to experience sickness. The CDC is not giving a specific length of time that immunity will last after one receives the vaccine.

Some residents wonder if they have already had COVID-19 and recovered, should they receive the vaccine. The answer, according to the CDC, is yes, but people with a recent infection may delay vaccination until 90 days after they are initially infected.

'ACIJ,' from page 8

Dale, Espino is working to boost awareness of the coalition in Franklin County. With 54 percent of Russellville City Schools' enrollment classified as Hispanic, a significant portion of the city's population is comprised of immigrants.

Whether it's encouraging immigrants to compete their Census forms or to get more involved in their communities, Espino believes the key is helping them to understand how these things impact their kids.

"The message that resonates with the Latino community is about their children's future. The Census directly impacts schools, funding for Head Start," Espino said. "That's where it hits home the most. When people understand the Census affects those things for their children, it really helps encourage participation."

The vision of ACIJ, "an Alabama that values justice, nurtures equality, and protects the rights of everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability or migratory status," conflicts with the feelings of many Alabamians, who vehemently support President Donald Trump's goal of building a border wall and hastening the swift deportation of illegal immigrants.

But Espino sees a different side of most Alabama residents—one that is more in line with traditional Southern charm and hospitality.

"When I moved to Alabama, I met really friendly people who wave at you while you're driving down the road," Espino said. "Building relationships is the key. It's not about my 'white' neighbor, 'Black' neighbor, but rather it's just about my neighbor. We are all a community, and we need to treat each other as neighbors."

"Together, we can build relationships with people who value the Southern way of being a good neighbor and being welcoming to others," she added.

A major tenet of ACIJ is to foster civic engagement for Alabama immigrants. "It's a two-tiered process. First, we can partner with the Franklin County Extension Office, for example, to provide language access and be

that trusted voice in the community," Espino said.

"Or we can point them to that trusted voice in the community. We're here to help build those bridges, cover those gaps. With the immigrant community and the Latino community, we need a support system to people become fully engaged as residents of Franklin County, and feel comfortable talking with educators, city leaders and law enforcement," Espino added.

ACIJ, a statewide organization, will soon hire a North Alabama organizer whose duties will include coordinating and boosting awareness for the organization in Franklin County.

Espino encourages people wanting to learn more about ACIJ to visit their Facebook page by searching "Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice," or visiting their website at www.acij.org.

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Russellville's Gallagher signs letter of intent with Wallace State Community College

Brady Petree & Christian Medina
 Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - If you look up the term "strike-thrower" in the dictionary, you should see a picture of Rowe Gallagher next to the description. While the senior pitcher for Russellville has a plethora of attributes on the mound that contributed to him being able to sign a letter of intent with Wallace State Community College last Friday afternoon, his ability to locate the strike zone is what stands out.

And Russellville head baseball coach Chris Heaps is very fond of his senior pitcher's ability to throw strikes, and rightfully so.

"Rowe is a strike-thrower and that's what their coaches noticed. They noticed that he's a strike-thrower with *good* velocity but they feel like he's potentially got *great* velocity. A lot of times college coaches don't look at where a player is now, but where they can be at down the road," Heaps said. "If you get a lot of swings and misses with your pitches, that's what makes you special and I think that's the separator for Rowe. I think that if we can get him to develop where he can really locate and command, that opens up an entirely new level for him."

See 'GALLAGHER,' page 13



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

After sporting a sub-one ERA with 23 strikeouts and only five walks in his junior year, the Golden Tigers hope Gallagher will take another step in development and be a key piece of the pitching staff again this season.

Senior leadership

After an appearance in the elite eight last year, the Phil Campbell Lady Bobcats have reloaded with a roster full of veteran experience and have their sights set on making another deep run in the postseason.



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

As the Lady Bobcats shoot for a return appearance in the elite eight, and possibly more, they'll have no shortage of experience to rely on as the area tournament is right around the corner.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - As the calendar flips over to January, basketball season has finally gotten into full-swing and the Phil Campbell girls basketball team has continued their hot streak of play into the new year.

In this difficult and extremely unpredictable 2020 season, having a team with as much senior talent as Phil Campbell has can benefit them in more ways than one.

One of the primary ways that head coach Craig Thomas is already seeing the veteran leadership come into play, is the fact that despite a pandemic, his players are able to find ways to adapt and overcome newfound challenges - while still winning games.

"It's been a pretty difficult season. We've already played a handful of games so far but we've also had some cancellations too. So a lot of phone calls are being made just trying to find whatever you can find and run with it," said Lady Bobcat

See 'LEADERSHIP,' page 12

'LEADERSHIP,' from page 11

head coach Craig Thomas. "We're pretty senior-loaded so our girls are pretty used to playing whoever so it's nice to have our group of veteran players."

After being led by senior standout Kallie Allen (who is currently continuing her basketball career at Wallace State Community College) last season, the Lady Bobcats have turned to a new regime of seniors to pave the way to victory while also mentoring the next group of players that will come through the program.

After averaging 11.8 points per game as a junior, Caitlynn Mills, a two-time Franklin Free Press All-County first team member, has picked up right where she left off last season in leading the charge for Phil Campbell. Fellow seniors Katie Thomas (8.0 PPG and 4.9 rebounds per game as a junior in 2019-2020) and Olivia Taylor (7.0 PPG and 4.5 rebounds per game as a junior in 2019-2020) are also on the front lines leading the way as Phil Campbell looks to build off of their elite eight appearance from a year ago. And that's not even mentioning sharp-shooting Kenner Scott who led the Lady Bobcats to a win over Belgreen with 15 points while going 3 for 4 from beyond the arc in the win.

One reason that Bobcat fans are optimistic about their chances to at the very least make a return to the elite eight, is the fact that the senior leader-

ship possessed by Phil Campbell lends a hand to getting games under control and not giving in to panic if things aren't going in the right direction early on in games.

"We don't panic a lot and that's mostly because of their maturity. If it's a situation where we get down by five or six points, it's not a big issue to them because they just keep their head down, keep playing and keep on rolling," Thomas said.

Not giving in to pressure and being able to excel under intense circumstances is part of the reason why the Lady Bobcats have been so successful in recent years. That success is still continuing to be built upon as they vie for a fourth-straight Franklin County Championship in the coming week.

"Our program is doing well right now. We've got a lot of young talent coming through the program and we've got a lot of great seniors leading the way for us right now," Thomas said. "We'll be competitive for a while hopefully but we're really proud of the way our program is developing right now and it's exciting to know that we can be competitive every single year."

Recapping last week's wins for the Lady Bobcats...

The Lady Bobcats were able to snag a couple of wins this week with victories over Fayette County and county-rival Belgreen before Franklin County

See 'LEADERSHIP,' page 14

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'GALLAGHER,' from page 11

For Gallagher, the opportunity to continue his baseball career is something that he has long desired. And once the time came for a decision about the next level of his career, the choice for the Golden Tiger senior was clear.

"I just knew that it was the right place for me. I liked all the coaches, the facilities and I also have some friends that go there as well so that made the decision easier for me," Gallagher said. "It's a big day because it's the next step in my athletic career and I'm looking forward to getting started for sure."

Wallace State Community College has a prolific track record for developing pitching. Some of the most notable arms to come through the program include major league veteran Derek Holland and former Atlanta Braves closer Craig Kimbrel.

Seeing the quality of arms that have come through the program gives Gallagher optimism that the staff there can help certain aspects of his game develop before potentially trying for a professional career.

"I'm hoping to work more on my velocity and being able to throw harder. I pride myself on pitching well and getting outs and trying to win the game so if I can develop in my velocity and some other areas I'll be able to do those things more efficiently," Gallagher said.

Gallagher's junior season was cut short due to COVID-19, but that didn't stop him from putting up impressive numbers in the handful of games he was able to pitch in.

Across eight appearances totaling 22.1 innings pitched, Gallagher allowed just three earned runs while striking out 23 and only walking five. Gallagher also had a strike percentage of 66.85 percent on the season.

While Gallagher's command continues to develop, Heaps says that if Rowe can take one aspect of his game to another level, college ball might just be the first step along the way for the senior pitcher.

"I think if he develops his velocity he has potential to play at a really high level. Every guy would love to play division one baseball and would love a chance to play professional baseball and if he can develop that velocity, he can create that opportunity for himself for sure," Heaps said.

With his senior season just weeks away from getting underway and getting one more shot to chase after a state title, Gallagher has a good idea of what he expects from himself in his final season as a Golden Tiger and beyond.

"Trying to win a state championship. That's the goal this year. I'm really looking forward to just becoming a better player and winning games here and at Wallace State," Gallagher said.


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PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Once his time with Russellville is finished, Gallagher will head to Wallace State Community College where he will look to improve his velocity and command.

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'LEADERSHIP,' from page 12

Tournament play kicks off this weekend.

Phil Campbell 77 Fayette County 34

Almost everyone got in on the scoring fun for Phil Campbell in their 77-34 win over Fayette County on Tuesday night. Once the box score was tallied up, the Lady Bobcats would see 12 of their players score in the win.

Kenner Scott had a strong first quarter performance after putting up seven points including knocking down a three-pointer. Kaitlynn Mills led the Lady Bobcats in scoring on the night with 18 points, six of which came in a first quarter where Phil Campbell outscored Fayette County by an astonishing 23-6 pace. Olivia Taylor kicked in four of her 10 total points for the game in the first quarter as well.

Before heading into the locker rooms for halftime, the Lady Bobcats were able to extend their lead after pacing Fayette County 13-10 in the quarter, bringing the halftime score to 36-16. Mills would add five points in the second quarter with Taylor adding two points. Katie Thomas and ___ Vickery each knocked down a three-pointer in the quarter as well.

While the first half was quite dominant, the third quarter is where the Lady Bobcats put the game on ice. A 27-4 onslaught saw multiple Lady Bobcats get in on the scoring fun as Mills added seven points to her total on the night with Madison Branch getting all six of her points coming in the third quarter. The fourth quarter saw Fayette County matched the Lady Bobcats point-for-point at 14 apiece, but it was too little, too late as Phil Campbell came away with a 77-34 win.

Scott and Vickery would both finish with nine points while Katie Thomas finished with seven points for the game. Faith Cook contributed five points for the Lady Bobcats on the night as well.

Phil Campbell 60 Belgreen 38

A stellar defensive performance by the Lady Bobcats enabled Phil Campbell to jump out to an early 14-6 lead over Belgreen. On the offensive side of things, the first quarter charge was led by Katie Thomas who had six of her 13 points on the night in the first quarter. Kaitlynn Mills and Kenner Scott (who led Phil Campbell in scoring with 15 points for the game) both chipped in with a three-pointer each in the first quarter as well.

The Lady Bobcats got more production courtesy of Thomas (seven points) and Scott (six points) in the second quarter as Phil Campbell extended their lead after outscoring Belgreen 13-11. Heading into halftime, the Lady Bobcats held a comfortable 27-17 lead before opening things up in the second half. Mills would have a huge third quarter for Phil Campbell as she would continue to dominate from beyond the arc, knocking down three three-point shots in the quarter, finishing her night with 12 points. Scott would also continue to add to her scoring total on the night after knocking down two three's of her own in the third quarter en route to the Lady Bobcats outscoring Belgreen by a 22-10 margin in the quarter.

Heading into the final quarter, the Lady Bobcats were able to put things in cruise control after ending the third quarter up 49-27. Olivia Taylor would score six of her 11 points on the night in the fourth quarter while Madison Branch and Allie Herring would chip in two points apiece in the quarter for Phil Campbell as the Lady Bobcats came away with the 60-38 win.

Emma Dempsey led all Belgreen scorers with 16 points while going 2-3 from the free throw line. Kaley Chandler and Noelle Willinghamme each ended their night with six points for the Lady Bulldogs.



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PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Mills (10) is leading a strong group of seniors for the Bobcats after putting up 11.8 points in her junior season.



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Vina girls secure wins over Hackleburg, Phillips, set up for area showdown against Belgreen

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

VINA - The Vina girls basketball team has been climbing the area standings for a while now and they have finally reached the top as the Lady Red Devils are tied with in-county foe Belgreen after their 60-48 victory over Hackleburg last week.

Jumping out to an 18-7 lead after the first quarter gave the Lady Red Devils a comfortable headstart over Hackleburg thanks in part to six first quarter points from Abbie Mitchell while teammate Sara Scott chipped in with five points of her own in the first quarter.

The Lady Red Devils would continue to outscore Hackleburg in the second quarter as well by a margin of 16-12. Scott would add six points to her total as the Red Devils had six total players score in the quarter. Hailey Cantrell hit one of her two three-pointers on the night in the second quarter while Kaitlyn Athey and Mitchell each added two points before the half.

Out of halftie, the Lady Red Devils continued their scoring pace over Hackleburg after pacing the Lady Panthers 10-9 in the third quarter. Scott and Mitchell both scored four points in the quarter and Kaitlyn Athey added two points to her total on the night in the third quarter as well.

Closing out the game, the Lady Red Devils paced Hackleburg 16-10 as Mitchell sank four free throws in the quarter while Scott added five more points. With Kassidie Gesler leading the fourth quarter charge with seven points en route to the win.

Mitchell would finish her night with 16 points to go along with five assists, three steals and five rebounds. Scott led the way with 19 points in the win with two assists and 14 rebounds. Gesler added ten points for the game with one assist, two steals and two rebounds. Athey and Hailey Cantrell both added six points for the Lady Red Devils.

Vina 57 Phillips 27

Three players put up double-doubles for Vina as the Lady Red Devils trounced area-rival Phillips to set up a showdown for the top spot in the area against Belgreen on January 19th.

Sara Scott, Abbie Mitchell and Kaitlyn Athey each put up double figures in both points and rebounds en route to a 57-27 win.

A 14-4 outscoring is how the Lady Red Devils kicked off their win over Phillips as Scott led the way with six points in the first quarter. Kassidie Gesler and Athey each contributed three points in the first quarter as well.

Before the half, the Lady Red Devils paced Phillips by a 12-10 score led by Mitchell's five points including a three-pointer. Athey continued to add to her total on the night by adding four points in the second quarter while Scott chipped in with three points before the half.

After halftime, the Lady Red Devils completely unleashed, scoring 25 points in the third quarter while holding Phillips to just 11 points in the quarter. Mitchell added nine points in the quarter while Sara Harper contributed with five of her seven points on the night in the third quarter. Hailey Cantrell knocked down a three-pointer for her only points on the night.

A low-scoring affair in the fourth quarter (6-2 in favor of Vina) closed out the win for the Lady Red Devils.

Scott finished the night with 13 points in addition to one assist, two steals and 12 rebounds. Mitchell led the scoring for Vina with 16 points to go along with six assists, five steals and ten rebounds. Athey added ten points, four assists, two steals and ten rebounds.

Harper finished with her aforementioned seven points, two assists, five steals and four rebounds. Abbie Petree scored five points to go along with two assists, two steals and 11 rebounds. Cantrell and Gesler each added three points apiece for the Lady Red Devils.

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Caitlynn Mills Senior Guard Phil Campbell

Mills, a two-time *Franklin Free Press* first team selection, has been a key part to Phil Campbell's success carrying over into the new year. Against Fayette County, Mills put up 18 points in addition to four assists and two rebounds. Then against county-rival Belgreen, Mills put up 12 points to go along with five assists and three rebounds.



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