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Agreement includes dismissal of warrant against former BCDA Chair Tricia Montgomery

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A criminal investigation centered on former Bear Creek Development Authority Board Chairwoman Tricia Montgomery has ended after Montgomery paid \$20,000 that will be returned to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

As a result of an agreement reached among Montgomery and her attorney, Eddie Beason, along with representatives from TVA and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA), the investigation is now closed and Montgomery will not face prosecution for any criminal offense.

Last year a criminal warrant was taken out by investigators from ALEA against Montgomery charging her with theft of property. Montgomery was never arrested on the warrant, though.

According to Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing, the warrant was taken out due to concerns that, although the investigation remained ongoing, the statute of limitations was approaching. Under Alabama law, a prosecution is considered to have commenced once a warrant is issued and that has the effect of tolling the statute of limitations.

Rushing said he filed a motion to See 'MONTGOMERY,' page 9

New animal ordinance poses problem to local families with wild animals within city limits

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With six children, Amanda and Luis Hernandez already have a big family living in their Russellville home. But there's more to the Hernandez family—a lot more in fact—and they're worried about the Russellville City Council's new animal ordinance breaking up their 'other' family members.

That family also includes the Hernandez's two marmosets (small primates native to Amazon rainforests), their beloved pair of kunekune (small domestic pigs), their lion head rabbits, their miniature rescue Shetland pony, their quail and chickens and their dogs.

The Russellville City Council approved a new ordinance at the council's May 3, 2021, meeting, that significantly limits the ability to keep livestock, fowl and wild animals within the city limits. The council approved the ordinance by a 5-1 margin, with District Two Councilman Darren Woodruff casting the lone opposition vote.

The ordinance effectively eliminated possession of chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese and other fowl within city limits.

Additionally, the ordinance bans ownership or possession of wild or exotic animals. Some of those enumerated in the ordinance include monkeys, raccoons, skunks and ven-

See 'ORDINANCE,' page 7

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Farrell Lynn Boyles, 67, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, May 16th. Interment at Duncan Creek Cemetery.

James Owen "Jim Odie" McNatt, 76, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, May 11th. Interment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

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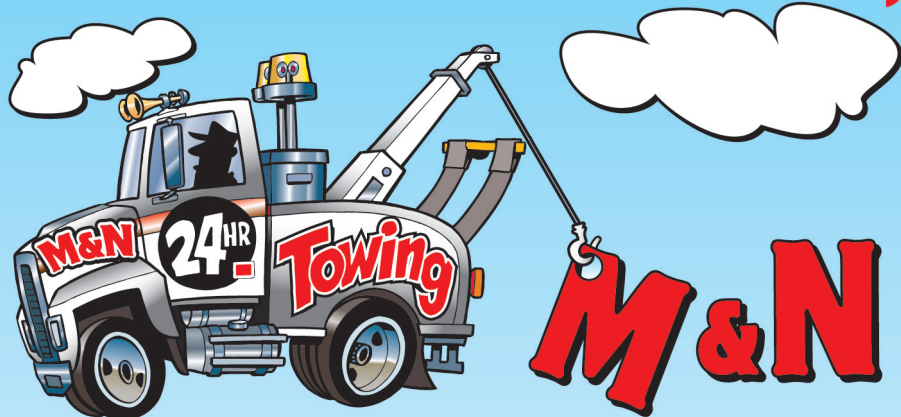
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Department and City Operations: Provides clerical and administrative assistance to support the effective and efficient operation of the department and City.

QUALIFICATIONS:

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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.

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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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Sealed bids will be received by the Russellville City Board of Education at its office in Russellville, Alabama, until the above time and date, and then opened as soon thereafter as practicable.

The Russellville City Board of Education is soliciting bids on the following;

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You are invited to bid with the following considerations;

This sale of property will include all three structures (the original school building, the cafeteria building and the old kindergarten building). Also, any property associated with said location owned by Russellville City Schools (Approximately 4.3 +/- Acres). The School Board is requiring bidders to include their plans for the property within their bid package. **The new owner must begin work to repair or demolish the structures within six months of the approval date of the winning bid by the Russellville City School Board.** If actions are not compliant within the six month time frame, the winning bid will be rejected and awarded to the second highest bidder or this bid process will be voided and a second bid process will be completed.

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The Belgreen Boys Basketball Camp will take place June 7 and 8 at Belgreen High School Gym. The camp is for boys from grades K-6. The K-3 group will have camp from 8-10 a.m., and the 4-6 grade from 10-12. The cost is \$30 if you preregister by May 27. Cost is \$40 after May 27. Please make checks payable to Belgreen Boys Basketball. Camp will be run by head coach Marty Cooper and assistant coach Jennifer Cooper. The Coopers have more than 20 years college coaching experience. Belgreen varsity players will also assist. Free camp t-shirt with registration. Call Coach Marty Cooper with any questions at 1-662-790-3672 or email to martycooper@franklin.k12.al.us. There is an information sheet that must be submitted with the registration fee.

LifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on Thursday, May 20, 2021 from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at deborah.lindsey@russellvillehospital.org. Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive a free T-shirt, an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, a free cookie dough card from Papa Murphy's and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. All donors will receive a free cholesterol screening. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES!

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'ORDINANCE,' from page 1

omous snakes.
Ponies, even the miniature variety, may be kept by residents who have at least five-acre lots.

Swine, even kunekune, are forbidden as are rabbits, even if kept in hutches or pens, pursuant to the ordinance.

Amanda Hernandez has a problem, make that a big problem, with the new ordinance. With the exception of her dogs, the rest of the Hernandez animal clan appear to be illegal now inside city limits.

Hernandez already sent her quail and chickens to live at her sister's home in Cloverdale, but she's drawing the line on her remaining pets, all of which live inside her home with the exception of the miniature Shetland pony, but he's away at 'cowboy college' being trained at the moment.

"You wouldn't know we have any of these animals. All their cages and pens and living areas are kept clean and are well taken care of," Hernandez said. "We have fences for the pony and kunekune and even the rabbits' hutches are inside a fence to protect them from dogs.

"We've lived in Russellville two years and never had a complaint. In fact, I called the compliance officer before we moved in to get approval for our pets. I later called him about a compliance problem with loose dogs killing our rabbits. Everything was put up. He didn't even see our chickens when he came," she added.

Hernandez called her city councilman, District Three's Gary Cummings, to voice her concerns about the ordinance. Additionally, she's spoken with Woodruff. Hernandez plans to appear on an upcoming agenda to address the entire council.

She learned of the new ordinance from a neighbor five days after the council approved it. And that's part of Hernandez's concern. She believes citizens should have been prior notice the ordinance was being considered.

"They did this with no warning. Why couldn't there have been some notice and input from the public? I literally had no idea this was done," Hernandez said.

Hernandez said the restrictive ordinance takes away a food source from Russellville families.

"Our monkeys ate the quail eggs. Our family ate the chicken eggs. We breed and sell rabbits and a lot of kids buy our rabbits for 4H projects in school. We use that money for things our family needs, so it goes back into our home," Hernandez said.

Hernandez has started a petition campaign calling on the Russellville City Council to rescind the animal ordinance. She believes the ordinance violates basic Constitutional rights of city residents.

"People should be allowed to live anywhere. Your homestead can be anywhere. It's your choice how you live off the land you live on," Hernandez said. "I've had a lot of people say they agree with me but they're afraid to speak up. They don't realize we as citizens have rights and we can stand up and say 'no.'"

Hernandez has even contacted an attorney to help guide her through the process of challenging the ordinance.

"I hated to have to do that because if we lose, that's money we need for our family, but this is important. I was raised poor. We had a farm and that's how we made it. Most meals came from our yard and a lot of people live that way," she said.

Hernandez said she will deliver copies of the petition to Tractor Supply and Tompkins Farmers Warehouse in Russellville. She also invites anyone who wants to get involved in her effort to contact her through Facebook, or call her at 256-324-7317.

She plans to distribute more copies of the petition and even conduct a door-to-door campaign.

"I'm not going to give in. We'd rather move before we give in. They'll have to take me to jail. They're not going to get my monkeys and rehome them. Those little monkeys are like babies. We bottle feed them, we're attached to them and they're part of our family. They're not a bother to anyone because no one would even know we have them in our home," Hernandez said.

The ordinance allows for a three-day period for those in violation of the animal ordinance to come into compliance. Hernandez believes that is an unreasonable time period, and that most of the animals prohibited by the ordinance live inside Russellville homes where no one even knows they are there.

Enforcement of the ordinance falls upon the Russellville Police Department, which has no full-time compliance officer since Brian Shackelford retired in January. The compliance officer position has not been filled due to shortages in manpower, according to RPD Chief Chris Hargett. But Hargett said he has officers working compliance on a part-time basis currently along with their other daily duties.

"As soon as we get our two officers out of the academy and get our field training officer's duties completed, we'll appoint a compliance officer full-time," Hargett said. "And as soon as school is out, we'll have our two full-time school resource officers working nothing but compliance through the summer."

Hargett said officers are not looking to enter residents' homes and take their pets. Instead, he believes the intent of the ordinance is to address violations that are visible by driving down the street.

"If there are complaints from neighbors about roosters keeping them up at night, or chicken roaming through other people's yards, or goats tied to a tree or vicious dogs. Those are what the animal ordinance and nuisance ordinance are

for," Hargett said.

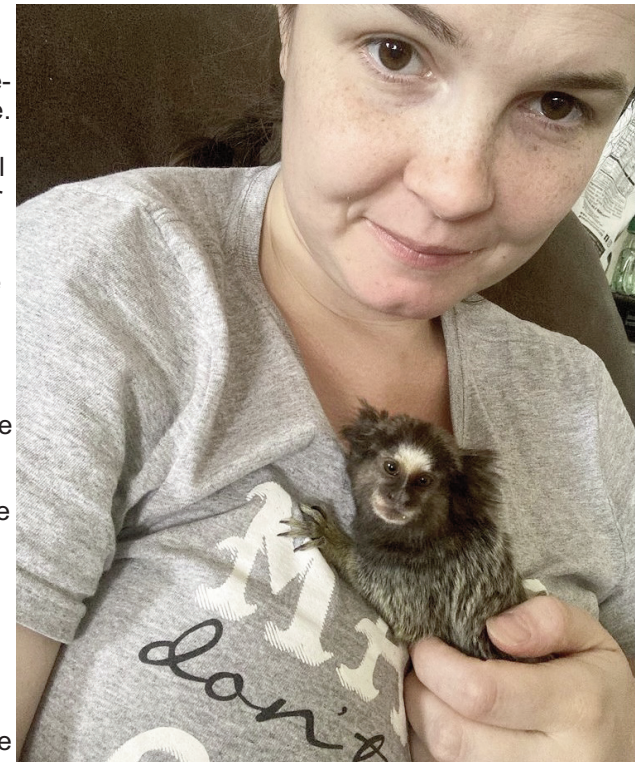
For most compliance violations (grass, weeds in yard, junk cars, etc.) an officer issues a compliance notice and the violator has five days to correct it. After five days, if the violation remains in effect, they are issued a citation. The animal ordinance has a three-day period rather than five. Outside of dog complaints, most of our animal calls are about roosters or chickens running loose," he added.

Penalty provisions in the animal ordinance include fines up to \$500 and/or imprisonment for up to 60 days.

In Hernandez's case, she won't ever let it get that far. The family is prepared to leave Russellville before they lose their beloved pets.

While she understands the need for some type of animal ordinance, Hernandez believes that ordinance should be fair.

"It is unfair to give people three days to rehome their pets. It's unfair to give people three days to find another way to feed their family, three days to find a safe home for your pets and three days to relocate your entire family to make others feel better about living in this city. This is inappropriate to say the least," Hernandez said.



COURTESY PHOTO

Amanda Hernandez with her pet marmoset, one of the animals banned under the City of Russellville's new animal ordinance.



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'MONTGOMERY,' from page 1

dismiss the warrant against Montgomery last week after her attorney delivered a \$20,000 cashier's check to his office. Those funds will be paid to TVA, Rushing said.

The \$20,000 is the amount of a check from TVA that was issued to Bear Creek Development Authority in 2017. Montgomery, who served as BCDA Board Chairwoman at the time, deposited that check, and two others, into a CB&S Bank account in the name of "Bear Creek Education At Overton Farm Trust, Inc.," and the checks were endorsed as "TM for deposit only" into the trust account.

The other two checks from TVA, for \$2,500 and \$10,000 payable to BCDA, were also deposited by Montgomery into the Overton Farms trust account. Montgomery paid back the \$12,500 and returned a fourth check, for \$25,000, that had never been deposited, to BCDA Manager Shannon McKinney two years ago.

The remaining \$20,000 check was the only one involved in the criminal investigation against Montgomery.

Montgomery told the *Franklin Free Press* last week that she had not done anything illegal and the settlement, which included dismissal of the theft complaint, demonstrates her innocence.

"I have been very diligent and proactive regarding this and took care of it," Montgomery said. "It's all exactly what I said in the first place—that I had done nothing wrong. I've been cleared of all the allegations against me."

Public records from the Alabama Secretary of State's Office show the formation of a domestic non-profit corporation, "Bear Creek Education at Overton Farm Trust, Inc.," on September 21, 2016. Tricia Montgomery is listed as the registered agent for the trust. The purpose of the trust was described as "supporting/promoting public education/awareness of Overton Farm facility."

McKinney and the BCDA board, other than Montgomery, were unaware of the TVA checks when they were issued in 2017, according to BCDA attorney Jeff Bowling. The matter reached McKinney's attention when he had an employee contact TVA about a check BCDA officials were expecting from TVA. When TVA Accounts Payable department said the check had already been deposited and was not mailed to the BCDA office, but was sent to a Spruce Pine address, that's when McKinney contacted Bowling about the

matter.

Bowling said Friday neither he, McKinney or any BCDA representative was contacted about a possible settlement of the Montgomery case. Bowling said McKinney learned about the \$20,000 payment after the agreement was reached when he was contacted by an ALEA investigator.

"We were not part of any settlement agreement nor were we asked if we supported an agreement in this case," Bowling said. "BCDA is the victim in this matter. These were public funds diverted into a private trust account. That's why we turned it over to law enforcement."

When BCDA went before the Alabama Sunset Committee two years ago, the issue with the checks was the primary concern committee members had. The Sunset Committee reviews state agencies with the option of three recommendations: Continue without modification, continue with modification, or termination. The committee operates under the authority of The Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts.

The Sunset Committee took no action against BCDA, but raised "significant issues" relating to the three TVA checks.

One of those concerns related to the address TVA had on file for BCDA. The 2017 checks were mailed to a Spruce Pine address that is the location of a business owned by Montgomery and her husband.

Bowling said he hopes TVA will reissue the \$20,000 check and send it to BCDA, as the funds were originally intended.

The matter was referred to Rushing's office in 2019 by Bowling, on behalf of BCDA. Rushing then turned over the investigation to ALEA.

That investigation formally closed last week.

"I can verify I was involved in discussions with TVA and ALEA investigators and an agreement was reached where (Montgomery) returned the BCDA funds that were deposited in another account," Rushing said. "It was disputed as to whether any funds were ever spent on non-BCDA items and whether the grant specified what purpose the money was going to."

"Everything has been restored to normal and ALEA and TVA representatives approved that as a settlement and full dismissal of the warrant on the theft complaint," Rushing added.

Rushing said he did not contact BCDA officials about settlement talks because the funds came from TVA.

"I relied on ALEA and TVA representatives in this investigation. They advised me it was a fair resolution under the circumstances," Rushing said. "There's a lot of emotion involved in this. I tried to put those feelings aside and rely on the people who knew the most about the case and they thought it was a fair resolution based on all the facts and circumstances."

Rushing said the Montgomery investigation had been scheduled for presentation to a future Franklin County Grand Jury had it not been resolved. He declined to say whether the case would have been on last week's grand jury docket.

With the matter now resolved, Montgomery said she will continue to work on projects to benefit Franklin County. Montgomery is no longer on the BCDA Board of Directors, but said she's involved in several other efforts to highlight and promote all Franklin County has to offer.

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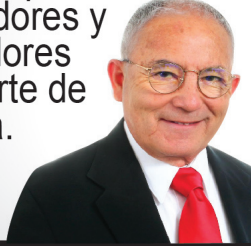
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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Bobcats clinch spot in 3A baseball state title game

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - For the second straight week, the Phil Campbell Bobcats found themselves with their backs against the wall with an elimination game staring right back at them.

Taking game one over Piedmont in the 3A north semifinal matchup, the visiting Bulldogs managed to take game two to force a decisive game three last Friday.

And, as most games have gone this season for Phil Campbell, the Bobcats handled their business - in orderly fashion too.

For the 26th time across 38 wins this season, the Bobcats managed to eclipse the ten run margin of victory to take game three and clinch a spot in the 3A state title game against Bayside Academy beginning on Thursday.

For head coach Jonathan Raper, getting the Bobcats to the championship game holds a deeper meaning than it might normally have for a coach.

"It's just so exciting. The emotional part of it is the fact that my father won two state championships and I wish he was here to see this. Being able to experience those championships with him as I was sitting with him on the bench is what makes this such an emotional thing," Raper said. "I wanted us to win so bad for these kids because they have worked so hard to get where we are and they deserve the opportunity to be here and I want them to enjoy it."

After game two ended in a fluky way after a pair of errors led to Piedmont taking game two and

See 'BOBCATS,' page 14

A cause for celebration

RHS celebrates former Golden Tiger cheerleaders with ceremony and permanent display

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The more hours Stephanie Mayfield spent in the Russellville Fieldhouse Touchdown Club meeting room, the more she realized the place needed a woman's touch.

Mayfield, who monitored English Language Learners exams last year in the upstairs meeting room, saw the accomplishments of past Golden Tiger football teams and players forever memorialized on the walls and in the display cabinet. Many of those displays highlighted the accomplishments of former RHS athletes at the collegiate level.

As the varsity cheerleading coach for Russellville High School, Mayfield wondered if, and how, her former students who went on to cheer at the next level could be part of a permanent display.

When Mayfield discussed the idea with RHS Athletic Director and varsity football coach John Ritter, he agreed to give the cheerleaders a place in the Touchdown Club room where those who were part of collegiate cheer squads would be honored.

Mayfield's idea became reality Sunday afternoon at the inaugural RHS Cheer Celebration, which recognized those cheerleader athletes who carried their talents to the next level.

14 ladies who cheered at RHS and beyond attended Sunday's ceremony, including two 2021 RHS graduates, one that will cheer at the University of North Alabama and one who received a scholarship to be part of the Roar, UNA's official dance team.

The celebration included comments from RCS Superintendent of Education Heath Grimes and Ritter, and included a meal and individual introductions of each former cheerleader along with a short bio.

Mayfield, along with junior varsity cheer coach Beth Gilmer, Russellville Middle School cheer coach Hannah Bendall, attended the celebration. Mayfield expressed her appreciation to Loretta Hatton, Mike Mayfield and others for helping to make the celebration special for everyone who attended.

"This is something that's been on my heart the past two years. Our goal is to let our students see what you have done by going on to cheer at the collegiate level," Mayfield said. "Our cheerleaders coming up to the high school need to see that. You will each be an inspiration to them."

Grimes said one of his goals when he came to Russellville City Schools was to bring girls' athletics to the same level of priority as boys' athletics.

"We have made progress and are working toward that. Part of that is recognizing the accomplishments of our cheerleaders after they leave Russellville High School," Grimes said. "This has not been done before and I'm very glad it was put together. It's great to be able to celebrate you and



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI
 Former RHS cheerleaders who cheered at the collegiate level were honored at a Cheer Celebration Sunday afternoon at the RHS Fieldhouse.

your accomplishments."

Mayfield said she realizes there are more ladies who graduated from RHS and cheered in college and she hopes to continue supplementing that list. Former cheerleaders who fit into this group are encouraged to contact Mayfield at 256-810-7067.

"I know there are many more and we want to be able to honor each of them," Mayfield said.

The introductions for Sunday's honored guests came chronologically, starting with those who graduated in the 1990s.

Perhaps more impressive than their cheerleading accomplishments were the tremendous family and professional success most of these ladies have enjoyed. Honorees present at the Cheer Celebration included:

—Julie Epperson Hamm: RHS Class of 1993. Northwest-Shoals Community College, Shoals Campus, cheer scholarship 1993-1995. Graduated with Cosmetology/Nail Technology Ass. Degree and Computer Technology/CIS Associates Degree.

Worked for Books-A-Million corporate office. Hamm is now a book keeper and secretary for Hamm's Roofing. Married to Riley Hamm and she has three children and five step-children. Daughter of Tommy and Pat Epperson.

—Dr. Danyelle Hillman: RHS Class of 1993. Shoals Community College cheerleader on the Shoals Stallions squad. Earned a Bachelor's in Marketing from Auburn University in 1999. Selected as Auburn's first African-American cheerleader in 1995. Earned Master's Degree in Secondary Business Education from University of Phoenix in 2007 and Doctorate in Instructional Technology and Distance Education from Nova Southeastern University in 2019. Works as a Business/Marketing Education teacher at Muscle Shoals High School, where she has been the cheerleading coach the past 13 years. Dr. Hillman

See 'CELEBRATION,' page 13

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'CELEBRATION,' from page 11

has one daughter, Jaelin, a senior at Troy University.

—April Pickett Manlay: RHS Class of 1993. Attended NW-SCC on cheer scholarship from 1993-1995. Graduated from Auburn with a Nutrition degree. Worked as sales rep in medical diagnostics and pharmaceutical industry for past 21 years. Took five year break from corporate workforce to be stay-at-home mom. Employed now with Amgen as biopharmaceutical sales representative. Married to John Manlay. They have two sons and live in Franklin, Tn.

—Joy Stanley Bratton: RHS Class of 1994. Cheered at NW-SCC Phil Campbell campus on scholarship in 1994. Cheered the next year at NW-SCC Shoals campus. Received degree in drafting and design technology. Hired by TVA in 2006 as a civil designer. Married to Matt Bratton. They have four children.

—Amy James Scott: RHS Class of 1995. Cheered at UNA from 95-97. Earned her Criminal Justice B.S., in 1999. Earned her law degree from Jones School of Law in 2002. She's a partner with the law firm of Thigpen, Thigpen, Engelthaler & Scott in Muscle Shoals. Married to Brent Scott (RHS Class of 1996). They have one daughter, who recently made the Muscle Shoals Middle School cheer squad.

—Neco Hamilton: RHS Class of 1996. Cheered on scholarship at NW-SCC in 1997. Graduated from cosmetology program and became board certified cosmetologist in 1998. Owner of multiple businesses. Became licensed life and health insurance professional. In 2016, became Aflac's top account opener in Alabama and West Florida. Owns the Hamilton Agency. Married to high school sweetheart Charles (Tay) Hamilton and they have one son.

—Julie King Hulsey: RHS Class of 1996. Cheered at UNA in 1996-97 season. Graduated from UNA in 2000 with degree in Marketing. Employed at Shoals Orthodontics for 17 years. Married to Jason Hulsey (RHS Class of 1992) and they have two children in Russellville City Schools.

—Carrie Hester Dover: RHS Class of 2000. Cheered at NW-SCC 2001-2003. Works as Schedule Coordinator for Russellville Parks and Recreation Department. Married to Marcus Dover and they have five children, the oldest of whom, Grayson "Goose" Thorpe, is part of RHS' varsity baseball team.

—Shequetta Hillman Adkins: RHS Class of 2001. Attended NW-SCC on cheerleading scholarship from 2001-2003. Earned her Secondary Education in English/Language Arts degree from Alabama A&M University in 2009. Taught at J.O Johnson High School in Huntsville and was Auxiliary Sponsor from 2009-2013. Earned Masters Degree in Secondary Education in English Language Arts from Alabama A&M. Works as a seventh grade teacher in Birmingham's Wilkerson Middle School, where she is lead teacher in the English Department and dance coach. Named Teacher of the Year for 2019-20. Married to Courtney Adkins.

—Michaela Cox Marquis: RHS Class of 2014. Attended the University of West Alabama where she was on the CoEd Cheer team from 2014-16. In 2017, earned degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography from Lurleen B. Wallace Ultrasound School. Works at After Ours OB/GYN, a private practice in Homewood. Married to Logan Marquis, whom she met at UWA. They will celebrate two years of marriage in September.

—Devin Jones: RHS Class of 2016. Cheered for Alabama A&M from 2016-20. She is working toward a degree in Biology at Alabama A&M and hopes to earn her Masters in Athletic Training/Kinesiology. Coached varsity cheer at Mae Jemison High School this year and was offered head coaching position for next year. Active in judging cheer tryouts, competitions and evaluations. Won her first collegiate cheer title in 2016.

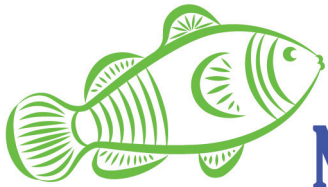
—Kaydee Don Holland: RHS Class of 2020. Cheerleader two years at UNA

See 'CELEBRATION,' page 15



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'BOBCATS,' from page 11

forcing a game three, the Bobcats weren't rattled. After all, they had been in an eerily similar situation just a week prior in their quarterfinal series against Fyffe, which went three games deep.

And during the Bobcats postgame meeting, Raper made sure to remind his team just where they were and exactly *who* they were as well.

"First thing I said to them after game two was, "does this look familiar?", because we were in the exact same situation last week against Fyffe. I told them that what happened in the past is over with and we can't do anything about it. We just need to show up and play and leave it all on the field," Raper said. "We have a saying that goes like, "so what, next pitch" and that's exactly what we needed to say. So what? Put it behind us and be ready to play the next day."

Getting the start in game three, senior right-hander Ridge Raper managed to hold the Bulldogs at bay, giving his offense the opportunity to set the tone.

Raper managed to get the win after going six innings allowing only two runs while striking out four. And for the Wallace State commit, while he might not have had his typical ace-like stuff, he knew that his defense would do the rest, as long as he stuck to his game plan.

He also knows that the Bobcats still have unfinished business to tend to. "We're just so blessed and excited to be here. We've got one more series to go and we've got to take care of business. I didn't have my best stuff today but I just attacked the zone and let my defense make plays and just let them take the game over," Ridge Raper said.

Knowing that Ridge might not have had his best stuff but still managed to navigate through six innings of two-run baseball – albeit in a semifinal play-off matchup – stands out above all else to Jonathan Raper watching his sons performance on the mound.

"Ridge labored a bit today and he was battling to throw strikes especially early in the game. And I was especially proud of that. Because it's easy to pitch when you've got everything working for you. He didn't throw his best but he threw well enough to give us a chance and that's all we can ask for," Jonathan Raper said.

Bryant Anthony, who has emerged as a strong up-and-comer in the local baseball scene, managed to go 2-3 with an RBI and a walk to his credit in

See 'BOBCATS,' page 15



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'BOBCATS,' from page 14

game three. And for Anthony, to see his squad make it to a place that the Phil Campbell program hasn't been in over a decade almost left the junior catcher without words.

"It's crazy. I'm speechless. Phil Campbell hasn't been to the state championship in ten years and last year we thought we had a good group that could go far too. Ridge has performed just like we expect him too and Mason, Luke and Austen (Baker), have all been outstanding and our pitching staff has just been amazing this year," Anthony said.

Mason Swinney, who got the win in game one to give the Bobcats an early advantage in the series while going 1-3 with two RBIs at the plate, spoke highly of his fellow "ace" of the Bobcats staff with Ridge taking the mound in an elimination game.

And when it comes time for himself to take the mound, both he and Ridge know that the superb defense behind them gives them peace of mind in allowing them to execute their pitches night in and night out.

"We knew we just had to keep competing. We had Ridge on the mound and he's one of our aces and we knew he would do his thing and we would be fine," Swinney said. "I knew I just had to fill it up and we have a great defense and just let them do the work behind you."

Trey Leindecker went 1-3 with three runs scored and four RBIs including a two-run homer. Luke Barnwell went 1-3 with an RBI and a pair of walks while John Miller Lawson and Ridge Raper both notched an RBI on the night as well.

'CELEBRATION,' from page 13

and member of Competition Squad. Majoring in Healthcare Administration. Works part-time as gymnastics and dance instructor at AFTT Studio. Daughter of Mark and AnnaKay Holland. Cheered six years

at Russellville (seventh through twelfth grade) and earned

Legacy Award in 2020 for that accomplishment.

Was a two-time All-American cheerleader.

—Ashlyn DeArman: RHS Class of 2021. Member of golf, volleyball teams and is a Legacy Award recipient at RHS. Will cheer at UNA starting this fall. Plans to major in Industrial Hygiene. Works as gymnastics instructor at Geronimo Gymnastics. Daughter of Cam and Susan DeArman and sister of Cameron DeArman.

—Destiny Roney Hatton: RHS Class of 2021. Co-captain of varsity cheerleaders her junior year and Captain her senior year. She choreographed dances and created new choreography for stand tunes. Signed a scholarship at UNA to become a member of the Roar dance team. Plans to major in Criminal Justice. Daughter of Dennis and Loretta Hatton.



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