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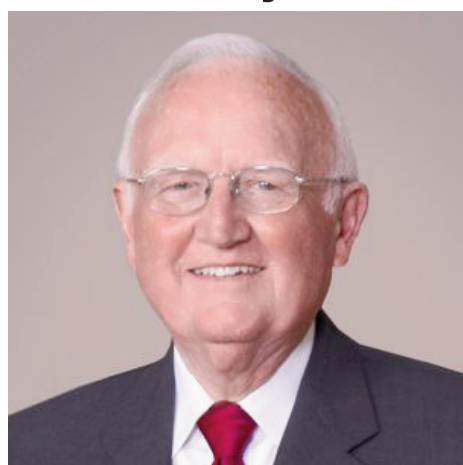
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Batchelor's legacy one of humility, service and dedication to family and community

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

They were the best of friends, but rarely spoke each other's names. Dennis Upchurch and Cecil Batchelor met in 1985 at a banking association meeting in Mobile. Upchurch was seated alone, so Batchelor invited him to join the Citizens Bank table. It was a gesture symbolic of who Batchelor was, and it sparked a business relationship, but more importantly, a friendship that grew over the next 36 years.



COURTESY PHOTO

Upchurch accepted a job offer from Batchelor and he became President and CEO of CB&S Bank in 1989, where he worked side-by-side with his friend (and his boss) for more than 30 years.

Batchelor was a pillar of the Russellville community and will be remembered as a kind and caring person to those that knew him.

Huntsville Hospital after a bout with COVID-19. He is survived by his wife
See 'BATCHELOR,' page 7

Trump rally sees massive crowd brave rain, lightning, long delays

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Ronald Reagan may have been known as *The Great Communicator*, but Donald Trump isn't far behind, if at all.

a 90-minute severe weather incident with heavy rain, a long trek through a wet and muddy parking area, and a lengthy wait to get through the Secret Service checkpoint, all to hear the former President address an Alabama crowd for the first time in four years.

Trump's 90-minute speech highlighted a *Save America* rally held at York Family Farms in Cullman. The venue is the same one that hosts the *Rock the South* music festival each year.

And Trump didn't disappoint. After taking the stage with Lee Greenwood's *God Bless the USA* playing through the sound system, Trump wasted no time in working the crowd into a frenzy, as he went down the list of effective speech making.

Trump, a masterful speaker in his own right, checked the boxes on almost every element an effective must include. And an estimated crowd of more than 30,000 endured

—*First Impression*: "Look at this crowd. It goes all the way back there."
See 'RALLY,' page 8



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Cecil Batchelor, 96, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, August 17th. A private graveside service was held.

Irean Young Meade, 68, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, August 21. Interment at Fairview Cemetery.

Wanda Gail Orrick, 67, of Russellville, passed away on Friday, August 20. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

Francisco Sebastian, 52, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, August 15. Interment at Holy Cross Cemetery.

Harold Ray Smith, 75, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Wednesday, August 18. Interment at Botush Cemetery.

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INTERNAL MEDICINE

Kiel, Stutts join AFA to host 'Back the Blue' event

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A special event for first responders will be held next Wednesday at the A.W. Todd Centre.

Back the Blue is being hosted by Sen. Larry Stutts, Rep. Jamie Kiel and the Alabama Forestry Association as a way to thank and honor first responders with a meal.

The cookout will be held from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., September 1.

All first responders are encouraged to stop by and enjoy a free lunch of hamburgers and hot dogs.

"We wanted to host this event to show our appreciation to our first responders and honor their service. This lunch will be a small way to do just that," Kiel said.

The Alabama Forestry Association is dedicated to protecting and improving the business, regulatory and legal environment for landowners and forest business owners to ensure the sustainable growth of America's forests and forest industry.

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Rain holds off long enough for festival contests to take place

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Although severe weather wiped out the Saturday evening musical entertainment at the 2021 Franklin County Watermelon Festival, the rain held off long enough for several contests to be held earlier in the day.

The *Franklin Free Press* congratulates the following winners of the 2021 Watermelon Festival Contests:

- Most Unusual Watermelon: First place, Greg Dalrymple.
- Adult Seed Spitting: First place, Joe Weldon. Second Place, Samantha Hartsell. Third place, Jill Bonds.
- Youth Seed Spitting: First Place, Zoe Hartsell. Second Place, Hannah Adams. Third Place, Elijah Bonds.
- Best Dressed Melon: First Place, Aymar Bonilla. Second place, Damaris Bonilla. Third place, Peggy Martin.
- Best Tasting: First place, Crimson Lindsey. Second Place, Josh Viliatte. Third Place, Peggy Martin.
- Largest Melon: First Place, Jake Holloway, 190 pounds. Second Place, Billy Roberts, 127 pounds. Third Place, Greg Dalrymple, 50 pounds.
- Largest Franklin County Grown Melon: First Place, Reed Jackson, 164 pounds. Second place, Rhett Jackson, 126 pounds. Third place, Chasity Jackson, 110 pounds.

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

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Publisher

John Pilati

Executive Editor

Brady Petree

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

Sales Representatives

John Pilati

Content Contributors

John Pilati, Brady Petree, Christian Medina, Ree Shannon, Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton, Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

Graphic Design

Jason Hill

Correction Policy

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

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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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My take on this... a big thank you to all of the Spruce Pine Day sponsors!

I've had the undesirable task of asking for ad money this year for Spruce Pine Day. I know I'm one of four who collect, but this has been a tough time for me.

I've had friends who have lost their restaurants and small businesses and know of ones who are still trying to recover from last year and then I come along asking for money. Excuse the way I made this sound.

There are those I know the circumstances and don't ask, but there are those I have had to ask and then find out it hasn't been a good step forward yet.

It feels like I have given them a punch in the face or a kick while they are down. I'd never intentionally do that and I have walked away feeling so bad. It's not because you told me no, either. It's because I hurt for you.

I have been praying as so many are doing now for the financial recovery and human recovery.

Even during all this, I still have to have support to continue our hopes and dreams of Spruce Pine. Our sponsors are a necessity to our growth.

It is a good feeling when you come to see us on Spruce Pine Day and remark about our beautiful



Gail Motes

and friendly little town. It has become a favorite of many.

We might have ten people who work their hearts out preparing for our special day. We have lost our finest and hardest workers in the past few years.

Since then, we have not replaced any more working members. It's tough to do a lot of work with a few people. It would be impossible without your help financially. Your ads are so much more important to us than you realize.

It scares me and some of our other members that within a few years that all the history and the memories of what has been built will no longer exist. Unless there are people that can put in the time and labor, the money will no longer matter.

The people will no longer be asked for ad money because the care and ambition was obsolete.

All I can truthfully say at the moment is we barely have enough to get prepared for Spruce Pine Day this year in October. But thanks to all sponsors who purchased an ad, we have the financial help we need to make it possible.

If you care and are prepared to work for love and no money, we need you at our next meeting on Tuesday, September 7 at 6:30 p.m.

Once again, thanks to all of our sponsors!
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The Why Knot Diner in downtown Russellville will host a Car Show on Sunday, Sept. 12, from 12 p.m.-6 p.m. They have scheduled for Jackson Avenue between Lawrence and Montgomery Streets to be closed during the event. There is a \$10 entry fee for those who want their vehicle to be judged. (Best All Around Car, Truck/SUV, Bike will get trophies) and Race Car & RatRod will receive plaques. We will also have door prizes for those who enter their vehicles. But anyone who doesn't want to pay the entry fee can still bring their vehicles and show them off right along with the rest. Contact Dustin at 256-668-2585 for more info and follow @Why Knot Diner on FB to see posts and updates.

McLomoe and Turner reunion will be on September 11th at 11 a.m. at Spruce Pine Community Center. Bring covered dishes. Call (256)-324-5288 for more information.

Community Action of Northwest Alabama has COVID-19 funding available through its Utility Program. If you have missed work or lost income due to COVID-19, the program may be available for you. You can apply online at www.caanw.org, or in person at the Community Action office, located in the Russellville Wellness Shopping Center on Hwy. 43 South. The office is open Monday thru Friday from 8-4:30 p.m. Community Action also has a rental assistance program that may help you with rent if you meet the qualifications. Call 256-332-7534 for more information.

The NACOLG SenioRx Medication Assistance Program supplies free and low-cost medications for anyone in Alabama with a disability or a chronic illness, regardless of age, that requires daily medication. Medicare recipients may also be eligible. For more information, contact NACOLG SenioRx today. There is no charge for this service. Call 1-800-AGE-LINE (1-800-243-5463) or 256-389-0529 and ask for Paula Pardue. This program is in partnership with the state of Alabama and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

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'BATCHELOR,' from page 1

of 75 years, Olivia, children Greg (Donna) and Rebecca (Brad) and two grandchildren.

Though Batchelor and Upchurch were retired from their former positions, they still used the formal monikers that became a ritual between them.

"I called him Mr. Chairman, and he called me Mr. President," Upchurch said. "We never had an argument, not that we always agreed, but we worked out our differences in a mutually respectful way.

"I found a cartoon one day that I gave him. It said, 'the Chairman may not always be right, but he is always the Chairman!' He loved it and the last time I looked, he had it under the glass on his desk," Upchurch added.

Wednesday was excruciating for Upchurch, and it was a dark day for the City of Russellville, which lost one of its favorite sons.

If you randomly select a building in Russellville, chances are Cecil Batchelor owned it or at least owned it some time in the past. But he never strayed from his humble roots that saw him grow his first business, Dependable True Value and Service Center, into a thriving success. Batchelor treated people like each was special, and the stream of tributes to him on social media reflect his servant's heart: "He went out of his way to speak to me." "He was kind and caring to everyone." "Such a wonderful leader in our church." "A good person who cared about all his employees."

He was a veteran of the United States Navy who served during World War II. When Batchelor was stationed in Virginia, he befriended a German prisoner of war he had been ordered to supervise. 20 years later, Batchelor helped his friend's family move from England to Russellville. He was a 72-year member of the Russellville Civitan and former president of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Batchelor served as president of the Grand Lodge of Alabama, an organization he was part of for more than 74 years.

He's a multiple honoree of the Russellville Outstanding Citizen of the Year, as well as Franklin County Citizen of the Year and a recipient of the Franklin County Hall of Fame Award.

Last year, Batchelor was inducted into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame. In addition to decades of work building CB&S Bank, Batchelor founded First Federal Savings & Loans in Haleyville, which merged with another entity and is now known as Pinnacle Bank.

Under his leadership, CB&S Bank's growth was meteoric. During his tenure on the CB&S Board, the bank grew from a \$5 million local bank to a \$2 billion regional bank with more than 50 locations across three states.

And behind the scenes, Batchelor's spirit of service also shined. He led fund-raising campaigns for hospitals and other health-related causes. And he loved helping people. Russellville Mayor David Grissom reflected on how Batchelor impacted Grissom's life at the young age of nine.

"My relationship with Mr. Batchelor started at age nine when I was first diagnosed with diabetes. He helped me gain access to the best healthcare through his relationship with Dr. Boshell at the Diabetes Hospital at UAB," Grissom said.

"Mr. Batchelor's dedication and service involvement throughout our city was unparalleled. He served our community in so many ways and his business success can be attributed to his continued desire to make things better for others," he added.

Batchelor possessed the lost art of being a good listener—something Upchurch will always remember.

"Cecil and I met every morning and most everyday had lunch together. Even when issues would arise and I would seek his advice, he would always ask me my thoughts first," Upchurch said. "I soon learned to be prepared and have solid reasoning for that plan.

"Not only was he very insightful, but he was a visionary. I have never known anyone who worked harder than he did. He was the guiding inspiration that drove our bank to success. And he was a people person," he added.

Russellville attorney Danny McDowell has represented CB&S Bank for decades. More important than his client-attorney relationship, though, was his friendship with Batchelor.

"He influenced and helped shape me and many others who were fortunate enough to have him as a friend and role model," McDowell said. "His success is evidence of his ability and work ethic yet he remained humble and unassuming in his day-to-day contacts and dealings with everyone.

"He will remain a part of Russellville for many years to come and will be missed by family and friends throughout the state. He may have been small in stature, but he was a giant of a man," McDowell added.

It was five years ago when Batchelor stepped down as CB&S' Chairman of the Board, handing the reins over to his son Greg. At a ceremony honoring Batchelor's service to the bank, Greg spoke about how special it was to work together with his father.

"It's been a major blessing. Not only is it a blessing, it's also fun to be able to work alongside your father. You can't put a value on what that's worth," Batchelor said. "Growing up in our house as a youngster all the way to today, it's been a constant learning experience. We never get too old to learn from our parents."

And the lessons taught by Cecil Batchelor will live on for many years to come, not only in his family, in his community as well.

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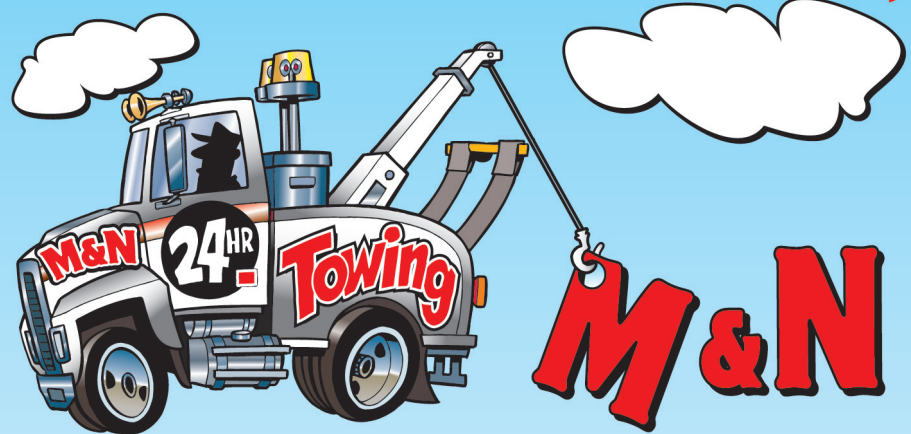
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'RALLY,' from page 1

I'm thrilled to be back in your wonderful state we won by a record number. We did have a rigged election. Now you see what's going on in Afghanistan. With your help we will elect our friend Mo Brooks to the United States Senate and we're going to fire Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and we'll make America great again."

—*Keeping Your Audience's Attention*: "When I was President we had energy independence. We didn't need the Middle East. Soon, gas will be more than \$5 a gallon, even here."

—*Adding Unpredictable Elements*: "You know what WOKE (the Woke Movement) means? It means you're a loser. Everything WOKE turns to s**t."

—*Making Your Audience Smile*: "Our relationship (between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un) was rocky at first. He said 'I have a red button on my desk.' I said I have a much bigger red button on my desk and it works."

—*Tell a Great Story*: "We rebuilt our military stronger and better than ever before. Now we see it dissipated and our military equipment being given to the enemy."

"It's the greatest humiliation I've ever witnessed. (President Joe) Biden botched the exit in Afghanistan. It's the most embarrassing military catastrophe I've ever seen."

—*Give Them Powerful Statistics*: "We handed over to Biden the most secure border ever. He turned it into the greatest border disaster in our history. I achieved 90 percent reduction in illegal border crossings. Under the Trump administration, our message was clear: If you enter our country illegally, you will be caught, you will be detained and you will be sent home."

Russellville resident Matt Fuller was among the thousands who waited more than two hours to get through the security checkpoint. After the rally was over, Fuller said the experience was more than worth the wait.

"I've seen his rallies on TV and I wanted to see the man in person to see if he's really like he is on television," Fuller said.

"It was absolutely unbelievable. He's a good one and it far exceeded my expectations."

"He's not a career politician. He ran one time and won. He's a working man's president, not a career guy with 50 years on his resume who hasn't done anything," Fuller added.

Fuller said he met people from Louisiana, New York, West Virginia, Texas and other states, noting Trump's popularity across the country.

"There was literally a sea of people there so he must be doing something right," Fuller said. "I met a lot of really cool people there. We didn't agree on everything, but we

Trump's speech capped a parade of speakers that included Rep. Andrew Sorrell (R-Muscle Shoals), who served as the chairman of the Alabama Trump Delegation at the 2020 Republican National Convention. Sorrell is vacating his seat in the Alabama Legislature to run for State Auditor in 2022.

Sorrell tapped into the running theme of the day—that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump.

"If only legal votes had been counted in 2020, Donald J. Trump would still be President," Sorrell said.

The program began with 101-year-old World War II veteran Roy Drinkard leading the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Drinkard, a successful Cullman businessman, is a Marine Corps veteran and owner/founder of Drinkard Development, a commercial property company in Cullman.

Alabama Republican Party Chairman John Wahl spoke first. Republicans also held their annual summer meeting over the weekend in Cullman. Trump said his visit to Alabama helped Republicans raise more than \$1.2 million in contributions over the weekend.

My Pillow, Inc., CEO Mike Lindell used his time on the podium to rip Fox News for what he labeled insufficient coverage of 2020 election rigging and voter fraud.

"Shame on you Fox. Fox does not talk about it. They turned on us. The way we're going to win is to get our voices out there," Lindell said.

Lindell also offered to employ any Fox on-air personality who might get fired for what he described as 'speaking out' on the truth of the 2020 election.

"If you don't start talking about 2020, there won't be any 2024," Lindell said.

U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Haleyville), talked about how Trump advocated for the values and beliefs important to Alabamians.

"Donald Trump defended our beliefs. He worked for them. He fought for them. Now, our nation has gone adrift," Aderholt said.

"(Nancy) Pelosi, (Chuck) Schumer and Biden don't want to make America great again. They want to make us like Venezuela or Cuba."

Alabama Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth delivered the most scathing remarks about President Biden, including a call for impeachment.

"I can assure you if a football coach performed as poorly as Joe Biden, he would already be fired. It's time for Joe Biden to be impeached," Ainsworth said to a standing ovation.

U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Huntsville), who Trump twice supported during his speech, was the last speaker to precede the President. Brooks delivered a lengthy speech that devolved into an angry crowd chanting *Mo Must Go* and *We Want Trump*.

It was Brooks' recommendation to 'put that behind you,' when he referenced the 2020 election, that agitated much of the crowd.

As the crowd grew more boisterous, Brooks backtracked, saying "Alright, look back at it, but go forward and take advantage of it."

Brooks, who's running for Sen. Richard Shelby's seat in 2022, was called to the stage near the end of Trump's speech, reaffirming the former President's support of Brooks in next year's Republican Primary.

Other speakers included radio host Todd Starnes, Sen. Garlan Gudger (R-Cullman), Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall and U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville.



COURTESY PHOTO
Trump's speech captivated an audience of over 30,000 at his Saturday rally in Cullman.



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Repair of College Road underway after intense flooding causes significant damage

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Work began Friday morning to repair College Road in Phil Campbell after extensive water flow damaged a portion of the road Thursday afternoon.

Franklin County Engineer David Palmer said the sheer force of the water, which flooded several feet over a low lying area of College Road north of Northwest-Shoals Community College, broke the entire asphalt surface down to the old pea gravel 1970s base.

College Road was repaved from Highway 43 south to Dan Street earlier this year with a micro-paving surface approximately .25 to .50 inches thick. The microsurface did not come off as a result of the flooding. Instead, it remained intact.

“What came off was the entire asphalt surfaces which represent at least two layers underneath the microsurface,” Palmer said. “It broke all the way down to the 1970s asphalt. The microsurface is still stuck to the two layers of asphalt that did come off.”

College Road saw a number of improvements this year and last year, including installation of guardrails, safety groove pavement on the shoulder as well as restriping and resurfacing.

Franklin County Highway Department crews were onsite Friday making repairs to portions of the shoulder that were washed away yesterday on College Road.

The asphalt damage led to the road being closed north of NW-SCC. College traffic was rerouted to Hwy. 237 in Phil Campbell.

Palmer said the damage was not the result of any flaw or defect in the microsurface. Instead, it was simply a ‘natural occurrence’ resulting from the enormous amount of pressure from the rushing water.

“That water gets under there and works its way into little crevices and creates pressure. It’s a very wide surface that creates an enormous amount of force and pieces of asphalt just float off,” Palmer said.

“What happened on College Road has nothing to do with the contract work or any poor workmanship. That surface has been there 25-30 years or longer. And now it’s back down to the old state road that was pea gravel,” Palmer added.

Palmer said Highway Department workers will repair the asphalt next week, weather permitting, and the road will soon be open to regular traffic once again.

The microsurface is a very hard surface that has an extremely high friction coefficient, Palmer explained.

“It has cement in it. It’s really hard, like a thin layer of concrete and it didn’t separate anywhere,” he said.



COURTESY PHOTO

The flooding of College Road caused the asphalt surface to be broken down to the very base of the road.

County commission approves purchase of chest compression units for all county fire departments

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved the purchase of 14 LUCAS 3 chest compression devices for each of the county’s fire departments.

Franklin County Emergency Management Agency Director Mary Hallman-Glass said the \$211,359.26 purchase comes from grant funding made available through CARES Act monies.

Additionally, the commission approved the purchase of a medical mobile trailer from Midway Trailers at a cost of \$108,800. This purchase also comes from grant funds.

The trailer will initially be used to provide vaccinations for Franklin County residents, but also can be used in the event of weather or other emergency situations.

After a public hearing to consider vacating a portion of Hollow Drive, commissioners approved the request that was made by Tim Horton.

In other agenda items, the commission:

—approved the hiring of Lucas Shepherd as a non-certified property appraiser in the Franklin County Revenue Commissioner’s Office.

—approved the retirement of Franklin County Solid Waste employee John Burcham, and the temporary employment of John Burcham as a part-time worker. Matt Miller was also approved as a temporary employee along with Ricky Johnston.

—approved a three-year extension of the county’s hauling and disposal contract with BFI. Either side has a 90-day cancellation right with notice.

—approved the transfer of Heath Boyles from corrections officer to dispatcher, and the part-time employment of Valerie Landers as corrections officer/dispatcher and the resignation of Shelley Hill from the same position.

—approved a 12-month extension of the contract for inmate medical services with Southern Health Partners at a cost of \$212,158.

—approved the FY 2022 Franklin County Transportation Plan, which uses funds from the state’s gasoline tax for local projects. Projects approved by the commission include resurfacing and restriping of CR-77 from Hwy. 48 to AL 24, CR-59 from Gravel Hill Road to CR-22, Lost Creek Road from CR-49 to CR-84 and CR-124 from AL 24 to AL 24.

—extension of a 12-month agreement with Tatum Oil to provide fuel for the county.

—approved the resignation of Roy Gober from the Franklin County 911 Board, and the appointment of Chris Hargett, Harlon Hutcheson, Andy Devaney and Mary Glass.

—approved the resignation of Cindy Smith from the Franklin County Department of Human Resources Board.

—approved the appointment of Rebecca Massey and Mary Mills to the Northwest Regional Library Board.

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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 September 22, 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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Wildcats kickoff season with win for fourth straight year

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

Since Kevin Lacey took over the Tharptown football program in 2016, the Wildcats have steadily been on the upswing.

And after a 2020 season that saw the Wildcats finish off their best season since 2014 as they finished with a record of 4-6, Lacey and his staff had high hopes headed into this season.

With their 22-6 win over Shoals Christian on Friday night, the Wildcats are starting off the season on the right foot as they look to embark in search of a playoff berth for the first time in program history.

For the Wildcats, the key that will get them to the proverbial promised land, is the offense that possesses some quality playmakers.

And the main cog in the offense begins with Blake Daily. Daily, a senior running back for the Wildcats, who had a career game in his first game of his senior campaign.

Daily rushed for 216 yards on 20 carries to go along with three touchdowns on the night in the win over the Flames.

And despite some early penalties and turnovers, once the Wildcats (with a healthy mix of young and veteran players) found their footing, things started to turn a corner for Lacey and his squad.

"When we didn't make mistakes, we did look good. We've got a lot of new guys making some first game mistakes and we also had some of our veteran guys that made some first game mistakes as well which was uncharacteristic," Lacey said. "But I thought we played really well up front where we've got three seniors and two sophomores

See 'WILDCATS,' page 14

A golden start to the season

With a potent offense and a stout defense leading the charge, the Golden Tigers got off on the right foot to start the 2021 season in their 27-15 win over Decatur.



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Russellville amassed almost 300 yards of total offense in their 27-15 victory over Decatur last Friday night. The Golden Tigers take on Deshler this Friday night at home.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

It didn't take long for the Russellville Golden Tigers to establish themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the 2021 season.

Taking on the Red Raiders of Decatur in their first matchup of 2021, Russellville was firing on all cylinders coming off of a quarterfinal run in the playoffs just one season ago.

Receiver T.J. King hauled in a 60-yard pass from quarterback Gabe Amick to get Russellville on the board quickly with just under ten minutes left in the first quarter.

It was a stark contrast in the way the Golden Tigers had gone about their successful offensive drives from just one season ago.

Last year, the Golden Tigers relied heavily on a run-first scheme with multiple backs to rely on.

And while the talent is certainly there for them to repeat that strategy if needed with Conner Warhurst and Arrieon "Boots" McCulloch leading the charge, (and there's no doubt they will do their fair share of running the football), the development in the passing game is just one more weapon for the Golden Tigers hope to be able to utilize this season.

And of course it's only one game and teams will taper their expectations and gameplans to match the Golden Tigers accordingly.

But if game one was any indication of how good the offense can be for head coach John Ritter and his squad, there is the potential for the Russellville offense to be scary good.

"Our guys put in a lot of work in the off-season. Gabe had a lot of good throws and TJ made some

See 'GOLDEN,' page 13

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'GOLDEN,' from page 11

plays. But you also had guys like Nathan Brockway and Nick McSpadden who are seniors for us and they both did a lot of nice things for us in the passing game," Ritter said. "We were 12-18 and two of the incompletions were pass interferences. And that's really where we want to be. Our offensive line gave Gabe enough time to drop back and make some throws and our guys to make some plays."

Once the Golden Tigers claimed the first lead of the game, the Red Raiders struck back with a touchdown of their own, following a safety earlier in the game, to take a 9-7 lead to close out the first quarter.

Naturally, it didn't take long for Russellville to reclaim the lead after Warhurst cruised into the end zone from five yards out.

And while the offense wasted no time in finding their footing, the defense was right behind them.

A blocked punt resulted in a returned touchdown to extend the Golden Tiger lead in the second quarter before the defense forced another turnover, this time via a forced fumble, which set up another scoring drive for the offense as T.J. King would snatch another pass from Gabe Amick out of the air and take it to the house for his second 60+ yard touchdown of the game.

And for a Golden Tiger defense that lost a decent amount of talent after last season, the only questions surrounding the defense, according to Ritter, wasn't about the quality of talent the Golden Tigers have on that side of the football. Ritter knew he had the talent there. But the only question was as to how quickly the defense could step in and find their rhythm.

Safe to say that answer was found out relatively quick.

"I thought that our guys grew up really fast. And outside of about five plays, we did a really good job on defense," Ritter said. "They played extremely fast and physical and that's really been our goal every year."

Coming into this season, after a historically good season on the defensive side of things for the Golden Tigers in 2020, fans expectations for the Golden Tiger defense were high, and understandably so.

And according to Ritter, the expectations that he has for his squad remain unchanged year-by-year. And the Golden Tigers are keen on sticking to that annual set of expectations.

"Expectations should be the same as ours. And that's to see a bunch of guys flying to the football and playing great team defense with a lot of energy and a lot of passion," Ritter said. "If we can do that week-in and week-out, we'll give ourselves a chance to be successful."

As the Golden Tigers begin their preparation for their much-anticipated rivalry matchup against longtime rival Deshler after last year's bout was cancelled due to COVID-19, the primary focus for Ritter and his staff will be centered around one thing: development.

"The biggest thing is that I want to see our development from one week to the next. Because the most growth a team makes is between that first and second game of the season," Ritter said. "I want to see how much we develop and how much we limit the mistakes we made last week. And obviously we're going to make different mistakes but the goal is to not make the same mistakes that we made the week before."

Against Decatur, Amick went 12-18 with 195 yards passing and two touchdowns while King hauled in both of those touchdown passes while going for 152 yards receiving on just eight catches, good for an average reception of 19 yards per catch.

Nathan Brockway brought in two catches for 27 yards while Warhurst and McCulloch shouldered the load for the running game for the Golden Tigers.

Warhurst finished his night with 13 rushes for 54 yards and one touchdown while McCulloch finished with 16 carries for 35 yards.



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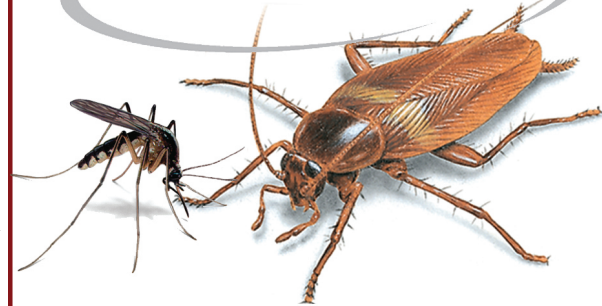
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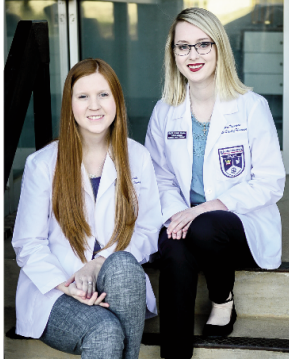
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'WILDCATS,' from page 11

starting for us. In the first half we shot ourselves in the foot a little bit but we were able to clean up some of our mistakes in the second half and put ourselves in a position to score."

Anytime you hold an opponent to single digits, regardless of the opponent, the feelings moving forward about said defense are on the rise.

For the Wildcats, outside of a handful of big plays from the Flames, they were able to force turnovers and limit the damage time after time. Something that had posed a problem for the Wildcats in years past.

But with some adjustments heading into the final half of play, Thartown turned a corner and shut the Flames down, holding them scoreless the rest of the way.

"Defensively we looked really good. Outside of three big plays we held our own. Shoals Christian has some athletic receivers and their quarterback could really get the ball out quickly.

We tackled well and they weren't able to really get anything going," Lacey said. "We made some matchup adjustments in the second half to get some of our guys in some more comfortable situations and we did a much better job in the second half cutting those big plays out."

Tyler Amos led the way in putting pressure on the Flame quarterback as he tallied two sacks in the victory while Adrian Banderas and Dawson Higgins both had an interception on the night to lead the secondary.

As is a standard first game of the season, mistakes and turnovers will be



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See 'WILDCATS,' page 15

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T.J. King Junior, Wide Receiver Russellville

Last season, fans saw glimpses of what a special talent King *could* be. This season, King is starting off on the right foot in making good on those glimpses of talent in the Golden Tigers first game of the season. Hauling in eight catches for 152 yards receiving (19.0 yards per reception) to go along with two touchdowns, King showed why he will be a force to be reckoned with this year in Russellville's 27-15 win over Decatur.



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'WILDCATS,' from page 14

aplenty. And while the Wildcats had their fair share of both on the night, once adjustments were made, the Wildcats were undoubtedly more comfortable and the results on the field reflected that level of comfort.

Getting more comfortable and limiting mistakes is something that Lacey and his staff hope becomes a significant development in the coming weeks with region play right around the corner.

"You're going to make mistakes in the first game. That's just typical. But as you get on into the year, you get more comfortable and that's what we're hoping happens week to week," Lacey said. "Our quarterback Hunter Reynolds holds all the potential in the world and he had some first game jitters but he settled in and got more comfortable. So we're going to go over some stuff this week to give him some more confidence and get him settled in that way he can lead this offense. So I think the coming weeks are going to be daylight and dark for us in terms of mistakes and turnovers and things like that."

The Wildcats will take on Phillips High School at Bear Creek this Friday night at 7 p.m.

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