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Lawsuit filed in November 2020 inmate death case

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

A lawsuit has been filed against the City of Russellville, Keller EMS, Russellville Police Department Chief Chris Hargett and three police officers, as a result of the death of an inmate at the city jail last November. The suit was filed by Carrie Willis, as administrator and personal representative of the Estate of Dylan Kyle Lane, her son, who was found deceased in a cell on November 15, 2020, by Russellville Fire and Rescue personnel. Lane was 22 at the time of his death. The legal action was filed in Franklin County Circuit Court on November 30, 2021, by Birmingham attorney Stephen D. Heninger.

Lane was arrested on November 13, 2020, on a misdemeanor warrant and taken to the Russellville City Jail. According to the lawsuit, Lane was placed in a cell with other inmates "who were known (or should have been known)" to possess illegal drugs. The following day, jail officials called Keller EMS to come to the city jail to conduct a "well person check" at 4:02 p.m. According to the complaint, the call was described as "non-emergency to check a prisoner who took some drugs." At that time, plaintiff alleges her son's heart rate was 136 with blood pressure of 175/125. The complaint further states that EMS personnel recommended Lane be transported

See 'LAWSUIT,' page 5

Heart of a servant - Fowler retiring from Russellville First Baptist Church

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

After more than 28 years' service as Associate Pastor of Worship and Senior Adults, Bert Fowler will soon retire from First Baptist Church Russellville. Fowler's last Sunday service in Russellville will be December 26. His first Sunday as part of the FBC staff came on August 29, 1993. Fowler and his wife Carole will retire to Tuscaloosa to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Both Bert and Carole have extended family in and around Tuscaloosa, Fowler said. There will be a church wide recep-

tion for Fowler on Sunday, January 9, from 1:30-3:00 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall. For FBC Pastor Bro. Chase Dowdy, now in his second year at the church, Fowler has been a source of wisdom, guidance and a shining example of someone with a servant's heart. "Bert has been a mainstay at First Baptist Church Russellville. He's someone who's been faithful to the Lord and faithful to the church," Dowdy said. "I can always count on Bert for answers to any questions about our members or what worked well in the church in the past, or what didn't work well.

See 'FOWLER,' page 8

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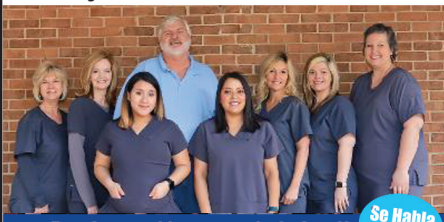
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Martha Anita Burney Poe, 80, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Wednesday, December 15th. Interment at Bear Creek Cemetery.

Dorothy Irene Widener, 75, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Saturday, December 18th. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Merry Christmas from Jason Miller and the Miller Family



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
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Resident says he's target of REB manager's harassment

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A local resident believes he is the target of harassment by Russellville Electric Board General Manager Charles Canida and he wants the community to know his story.

A Russellville police officer came to Jackson's house December 2nd after Canida filed a report the previous day alleging Jackson came onto private property to take photos of him and REB employees cutting trees at a residence on North Jackson Avenue.

Jackson said he took the photos because he believes the trees are located on private property, were not interfering with utility lines and, as a result, Canida should not have authorized their removal.

RPD Chief Chris Hargett confirmed Canida filed a report on December 1 where Canida alleged Jackson came onto private property to take photos of him and REB workers.

After the report was filed, an officer came to Jackson's home the following morning to notify him about a report of harassment, Hargett said.

Jackson said he showed the photos he took to that officer and to RPD Investigator Jake Tompkins the next day. Hargett said the photos were taken from the roadway and not on private property and there was no evidence of Jackson harassing anyone.

“As long as you don't go onto private property, you can take photos of work being done in public view,” Hargett said.

The Code of Alabama defines Criminal Surveillance in Section 13A-11-32, as the “intentional engaging in surveillance while trespassing in a private place.”

To convict a person of Criminal Surveillance, the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt the person engaged in surveillance, did so while trespassing in a private place and did so intentionally. Conviction of 13A-11-32 carries up to a six month jail sentence and a fine up to \$3,000.

Hargett said the matter was closed as there was no indication any law was broken.

For Jackson, though, that's not good enough.

“I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't say anything to (Canida), the property owner or any employees,” Jackson said. “He's made me feel like he's after me for some reason and I don't understand why. I've never done anything to him.”

“I want people to know. I'm tired of it. Why would a manager go down there and tell the police a lie just to try and get me locked up? I want someone to answer that. I'm not stupid. If I said something to him he would have had me locked up and I know that. This is just not right, and people need to know,” he added.

This is not the first time police have visited Jackson in response to a complaint from REB.

Jackson, who retired from his meter reader position with Russellville Utilities six years ago, said police served him with a notice banning him from any Russellville Utilities property several years ago after an incident at a local business where Jackson spoke with Cummings. The content of what Jackson said remains disputed, but Jackson said he told Cummings that he “made a lot of people happy” when the city council turned over operations of the Park and Recreation Department to Russellville City Schools. Jackson

See 'HARASSMENT,' page 9

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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 January 12, 2022, 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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Ministry collecting items for hygiene bag outreach

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A northwest Alabama ministry is looking for donations for hygiene bags that will be distributed this month.

Shaken Outreach, a Christian ministry "with a heart for serving and worshipping God," is asking for the following items to fill the hygiene bags: Drawstring bags, toothpaste, toothbrush, mouthwash, deodorant, bar soap, razors, single packs Kleenex, feminine products, bottled water and reusable insulated cups.

Any donation, large or small, is welcome. Other items being collected and donated include can openers and canned food, preferably with pop top lids.

Additionally, the ministry is collecting coats and jackets of all sizes, along with purses/bags/backpacks, that will be donated as part of an outreach. With winter ahead, these items will come in handy for people who can really use them.

To learn more about Shaken Outreach, or to arrange to make a donation of items, visit the 'Shaken Outreach' page on Facebook.

Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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Correction Policy

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

Letters to the editor

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

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'LAWSUIT,' from page 1

to the hospital, but that a police officer told Lane if he agreed to be transported to the hospital he would have to serve an additional three days confinement in jail once he was released.

The complaint alleges Lane refused the transport but also refused to sign a 'Medical Care Refusal' form, so the officer signed it for him. EMS personnel left without transporting Lane for further care.

On Sunday, November 15, 2020, RFD personnel responded to the jail where Lane was lying in a cell by himself, with no pulse and not breathing. The complaint alleges 'significant rigor mortis and lividity' had already set in.

According to jail records, Lane was observed eating breakfast around 5 a.m., by jail personnel.

When contacted by the FFP about the lawsuit, Hargett said the matter has been referred to the city's attorneys and he could not comment due to there being pending litigation.

Last year, Hargett told the FFP Lane was observed unresponsive in his cell and jail officials contacted 911. After Lane was pronounced dead, Hargett said the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency was called to conduct the investigation.

The complaint alleges Keller EMS officials were negligent in not providing "reasonable and necessary medical care" to Lane. The allegations against the three officers are based on their alleged failure to pat down or search inmates for possession of drugs at the time of their confinement.

An additional count of the complaint alleges violation of Lane's civil rights by the alleged "deliberate indifference to the serious medical needs of (Lane)."

Russellville City Attorney Danny McDowell said Thursday he was aware of the complaint being filed but had no comment.

"We do not try cases through the media or comment on pending litigation," McDowell said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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 January 26, 2022, 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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Food Giveaway - Groceries will be given out while supplies last! Thursday, December 30, 2021 2:00 p.m. Please stay in your vehicle and use social distancing. Russellville First United Methodist Church (Corner of Madison and Washington).

Russellville Masonic Lodge #371 is selling Smoked Hams for Christmas. Hams are \$30 each and may be pre-ordered by dialing 256-810-1970. Pickup is Thursday, December 23, between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.

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Russellville Electric Board holds four-minute business meeting

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Electric Board held a four-minute business meeting Thursday morning that saw the board approve November 2021 bills and the November 2021 meeting minutes before adjourning with no other business conducted.

The meeting date and time was changed from the REB's customary business meeting held the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

After sending a request to be notified of all future board meetings pursuant to the Alabama Open Meetings Act, the *Franklin Free Press* was notified of two meetings in the month of December.

They included this morning's business meeting and a special called meeting set for Thursday evening at 6 p.m., at the Marriott Shoals Conference Center. That meeting, for which invitations were sent to employees and selected guests, is described as the "Annual Safety Dinner" on invitations sent to invited guests.

Agenda items on the Annual Safety Dinner meeting include comments from REB General Manager Charles Canida, and a presentation from Kevin Chandler with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In attendance at the Thursday morning meeting, held at the Russellville Electric Board Warehouse, included board members James McDuffa, Nick Willis, Bill Jackson and Chad Wells, along with Canida.

The *FFP* spoke with two former members of the Russellville Electric Board who both said they did not recall a business meeting where the board didn't consider any business and that such a meeting would be highly unusual.

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'FOWLER,' from page 1

"People know his heart and see a servant and that's how I can best describe Bert—he has the heart of a servant. Christ said He came not to be served but to give His life as a ransom for many. Bert has that heart of service and a heart to love people and God and serve both and that's one display every day," Dowdy added.

Fowler, a Montgomery native, is the son of Albert & Kitty Fowler. He is a 1974 graduate of Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery. Fowler received a B.S., and a M.A., in Music Education from the University of Alabama. He later received a Master of Church Music from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He and Carole have two children, Andrea Sartain (Hunter) and Daniel (Brandi). The Sartains have three children, Ensley, Camden and Hunter, Jr. (with the Lord). The Poss family has three children, Braxton, Brody and Eliza Grace.

Fowler first felt the Lord's call to music ministry when he was a high school senior. His professional experience includes service at churches in Tuscaloosa and Brent, Alabama, and Fort Worth, prior to his joining First Baptist Russellville in 1993.

Fowler has been active in his community. He volunteered to do filming for RHS football and the coach's show. He's the long-time emcee for the Franklin County Watermelon Festival. Fowler taught music appreciation at Northwest-Shoals Community College as well as guitar and voice lessons to dozens of young people.

"I hope I am leaving something positive here in this community. I've always enjoyed being a part of the Russellville community," Fowler said.

When pastors come to a new church, there's no definite timeline as to how long their tenure will be. Fowler is thankful he and Carole were able to raise their children in Russellville and said the community will always be special to him.

"This is a great, tight-knit community with an outstanding school system. We love the way the community rallies around the school, and I don't think you could ask for a better place to raise our kids," Fowler said. "For us to be able to spend so much time in Russellville is a blessing. The average tenure of a minister at one church is a little less than 28 years, so we've been blessed to make friendships and relationships here and we'll miss it a lot," he added.

Fowler said it was through extensive prayer that he and Carole decided it was time for him to retire. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted his ministry, limiting or preventing the choir from being part of weekly services and trips and activities with the senior adults also came to a stop once the pandemic set in.

"It's been really stressful and has really changed what I did in my ministry," Fowler said. "We've had to learn new technology to be able to live stream and so much is being done differently now. I still enjoy doing it but it's really different from what I love doing the most, and that's music.

"We had a Christmas brunch last Tuesday (for the senior adults) and that was an emotional time. I'm 65 and with our grandkids getting older and all our family in the Tuscaloosa/Northport area, it's just the right time to move on," Fowler added.



COURTESY PHOTO

Fowler, who has served for more than 28 years as Associate Pastor of Worship and Senior Adults at First Baptist Church Russellville, is retiring with his last service being on December 26th.

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Ralton Baker,
Franklin County Board of Education

'HARASSMENT,' from page 3

said that was the only comment he made and he received the notice barring him from the property and from communicating with REB employees. Jackson ran for Russellville City Council District Three, Cummings' seat, in 2016, but Cummings won the election over his two challengers without a runoff.

There were never any charges filed from the incident. The FFP attempted to contact Cummings to get his account of the incident but as of press time was unsuccessful in reaching him.

Jackson said during his tenure with Russellville Utilities, he had no issues with Canida and that changed only after he retired and ran for city council.

"I'm tired of him trying to push me around and I'm not going to take it anymore. I'm tired of being told I can't do this or that. I am a Russellville resident and a paying utility customer in this city," Jackson said.

Jackson said the owner of the property he rents asked about a tree located on the city right of way in front of his home being trimmed by REB but was told it wasn't close enough to a power line.

Although he hasn't been on Russellville Utilities property since being served with the no trespass letter, Jackson doesn't believe it's legal to ban someone from a public building where customers go to pay their bills.

"If I have to go onto that property to pay my bill, I will. I've not done anything to any of them and I want people to know what they've done to me," Jackson said.

With the most recent complaint filed by the REB manager, Jackson believes the situation has turned into a pattern of harassment.

"If I was threatening him or saying anything out of the way, I could understand this, but I never said anything like that to (Cummings) and I haven't had any contact with Charlie Canida," Jackson said.

Jackson said he has contacted an attorney to receive advice as to how to protect himself from further accusations and is considering legal action in response thereto.



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IN THE PROBATE COURTS OF MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION PETITION OF:

TIMOTHY AND ANDREA EWART

CASE NO.: 8739

STATE OF ALABAMA }
 COUNTY OF MADISON }

NOTICE TO: SKYLER SHANE VANDIVER
 FATHER OF S.I. VANDIVER, DOB MAY 21ST, 2020

Please be advised that a Petition for Adoption, in the above-styled matters have been filed in the Probate Court of Madison County by Timothy and Andrea Ewart and that on the 10th day of February, 2022 at 1:30 p.m., these matters have been set for a hearing on the same in said Probate Court in Madison County, Alabama. Should you intend to contest this adoption, you must file a written response within thirty (30) days of the date of the last publication herein, with counsel for said Petitioners, whose name and address are shown below and with the Clerk of the said Probate Court.

Coby McEachern Boswell, Esq.
 Attorney for Petitioner
 1000 Church Street. NW
 Huntsville, AL 35801
 (256) 534-8799




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Bulldogs maintain perfect area record

Staff reports

Heading into the final two weeks of the year, the Belgreen Bulldogs are trying to cap off a successful first half of the season before the calendar flips over to 2022.

Taking part in the Times Daily Classic while also squaring off against area opponents, the Bulldogs were able to reach a double-digit win total.

Belgreen 64 Phillips 33

The Bulldogs were able to improve to 2-0 in area play in the 2021-22 season as they came away with a victory over the Phillips Bears last Tuesday night.

Jumping out to a quick 20-13 lead in the first quarter, the Bulldogs got eight points from Collin Bonner while getting six points from Austin James who knocked down a pair of three-pointers in the quarter.

Collin Bonner scored six points in the second quarter that saw the Bulldogs outscore Phillips 17-11 to give Belgreen a 37-24 lead heading into half-time. Will Bonner scored seven points in the second quarter while Cole King scored four points.

The third quarter was a strong defensive showing from the Bulldogs as they held the Bears to just one made field goal while outscoring Phillips 10-2. The Bulldogs would carry a 47-26 lead into the fourth quarter.

Will Bonner led all scorers in the third quarter with eight points.

Jordan Wright scored six points in the fourth quarter as the Bulldogs cruised to their second area win of the season by a 64-33 final. Collin Bonner and Canaan Stough scored four points each in the quarter.

Will Bonner led all scorers in the game with 19 points while Collin Bonner scored 18 points. Canaan Stough scored eight points with Jordan

See 'BULLDOGS,' page 13

AHSAA reclassification



PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

One of the region changes include the Golden Tigers welcoming newcomer Fairview and former region member West Point into the fold on the gridiron. Other changes include juggernaut Mars Hill joining 3A region 8 alongside the Phil Campbell Bobcats.

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Alabama High School Athletic Association announced its new seven-classification system for the athletic seasons of 2022-23 and 2023-24, and when it comes to Russellville High School, not much has changed.

The Russellville varsity football team was once again placed in 5A Region 8 with A.P. Brewer, Ardmore, East Limestone, Fairview, Lawrence County and West Point High Schools.

With only a seven-team Region 8, Coach John Ritter's team will play four non-region games including Grissom, Deshler, Mars Hill and Athens High Schools.

The Golden Tigers will open at Grissom on August 19, 2022, followed by aa road game at Deshler (Aug. 26), home vs. Lawrence County

(Sept. 2), at West Point (Sept. 9), home vs. East Limestone (Sept. 16), home vs. Mars Hill (Sept. 23), home vs. Brewer (Sept. 30), a bye week, followed by road games at Ardmore (Oct. 14), at Fairview (Oct. 21) and home vs. Athens (Oct. 28).

Russellville's varsity volleyball team will compete in 5A Area 15, with Brewer, Lawrence County and West Point High Schools.

Region classifications for winter and spring sports will be announced after the championship games are complete for those sports.

Of the 56 schools in Class 5A, Russellville has the 11th largest enrollment with 556 students in grades 9-11 plus eighth-grade hold-back students. The largest 5A enrollment is Elberta High School with 583.

Phil Campbell High School remains in 3A Region 8 for football, with Clements, Colbert County,

See 'RECLASSIFICATION,' page 15

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A Very MERRY CHRISTMAS



Russellville City School Board of Education. Front Row, from left: Kim Clonts, Greg Trapp, Superintendent Heath Grimes. Back Row, from left: Radford Hester, Jerry Groce and Greg Batchelor.

Contact our central office at 256.331.2000

For updates on news throughout the week, visit www.franklinfreepress.net/

'BULLDOGS,' from page 11

Wright and Austin James scored six points each.

Belgreen 62 Hackleburg 35

Collin and Will Bonner both put on an impressive first half performance in the Bulldogs area win over Hackleburg to remain perfect on the year in area play.

The senior forward and guard scored 20 points (Collin) and 12 points (Will) each across the first two quarters to help the Bulldogs jump out to a commanding 34-19 first half lead.

An 18-8 outscoring by Belgreen enabled the Bulldogs to extend their lead to a very comfortable 52-27 lead leading into the fourth quarter.

Austin James did most of the heavy lifting in terms of scoring for the Bulldogs in the quarter, scoring nine points while knocking down a pair of three-pointers. Collin Bonner added four points to his total on the night while Will Bonner knocked down a three-pointer in the third quarter.

The fourth quarter was more of the same from Belgreen as they closed out their area win on a 10-8 outscoring to seal the game for the Bulldogs.

Canaan Stough scored four points in the quarter while Adrian Reaves and Cole King scored two points each.

Collin Bonner scored 24 points to lead all scorers in the game while Will Bonner scored 15 points. Austin James finished with nine points in the game and Canaan Stough scored six points.

Belgreen 51 Brooks 57

Playing in the annual Times Daily Classic, the Bulldogs squared off against 4A Brooks in the first round of the tournament.

The Bulldogs jumped out to a quick 16-14 lead after the first quarter thanks in part to five points from Will Bonner and four points from Canaan Stough.

However, the second quarter is where the Lions would take control, outscoring the Bulldogs 9-6 after a very well-defended quarter from both sides. The Lions would carry a narrow 23-22 lead into halftime.

Will Bonner scored four points in the quarter for Belgreen.

Brooks would be able to extend their lead after outpacing the Bulldogs 15-9 in the third quarter due to Knute Wood scoring eight points in the quarter for the Lions. Collin Bonner scored six points in the third quarter while Will Bonner scored three points in the quarter as Brooks held a 38-31 lead entering the fourth quarter.

In the fourth quarter, the Bulldogs would actually outscored h Lions 20-19 but it would be too little too late as the Lions were able to maintain their lead and take the win.

Will Bonner scored eight points in the final quarter to give him 24 points on the night while Collin Bonner scored ten points for the Bulldogs. Adrian Reaves scored six points, Cole King scored five points and Canaan Stough scored four points.

Belgreen 65 Wilson 48

Following their loss to Brooks, the Bulldogs would again square off against a 4A opponent, this time it was against Wilson in the consolation bracket of the Times Daily Classic.

The first half was rather close as the Bulldogs were able to maintain a 26-24 lead headed into halftime.

Collin Bonner scored 16 points in the first half to lead all scorers as Will Bonner had five points in the half with Adrian Reaves scoring four points.

A monster third quarter is where the Bulldogs began to pull away from Wilson. Outscoring the Warriors by a whopping 25-6 in the quarter, Belgreen was able to carry a comfortable 51-30 lead into the fourth quarter.

Collin Bonner continued his scoring rampage, scoring 11 points in the third quarter as Will Bonner scored nine points. Adrian Reaves also chipped in with five points in the quarter including a three-pointer.

Despite being outscored 18-14 in the final quarter, the Bulldogs lead was large enough to withstand the comeback bid and bring their Times Daily Classic record to .500 with the 65-48 win.

The leading scorer on the night was Collin Bonner who had 29 points while Will Bonner scored 17 points. Adrian Reaves scored nine points and Cole King scored six points.

The Bulldogs record on the season after Saturday, December 18th, sits at 10-2.

Merry Christmas to You & Your Family!

Thanks for the opportunity to serve you!



From left: Commissioners Chris Wallace, Jason Miller, Joseph Baldwin and David Hester. Seated: Probate Judge Barry Moore.
~ The Franklin County Commission

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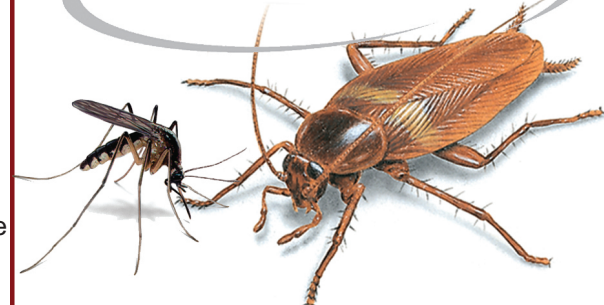
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'RECLASSIFICATION,' from page 11

Colbert Heights, Elkmont, Lauderdale County and Mars Hill High Schools. Class 2A Region 8 includes Red Bay, Tharptown, Falkville, Hatton, Lexington, Lindsay Lane Christian Academy, Sheffield and Tanner High Schools.

Vina's Class 1A Region 8 opponents include Addison, Cherokee, Hackleburg, Meek, Phillips, R.A. Hubbard, Shoals Christian and Waterloo High Schools.

In volleyball, Belgreen will compete in 1A Area 14 with Hackleburg and Phillips High Schools.

Tharptown volleyball was placed in 2A Area 15 with Hatton, Lexington, Mars Hill and Sheffield High Schools.

Red Bay volleyball will compete in Class 2A Area 11, with Lamar County, Sulligent and Winston County High Schools.

Phil Campbell's Class 3A Area 15 volleyball opponents will be Colbert County and Colbert Heights.

High school classifications are redone every two years to reflect updated enrollment information. The AHSAA divides schools into seven classifications from 1A-7A. The 32 largest high schools comprise Class 7A. Class 6A has 57 schools, Class 5A 56 schools, Class 4A 62, Class 3A 60, Class 2A 60 and 62 in Class 1A.

Classification is based on each public school's enrollment in grades 9-11 plus eighth-grade hold-back students.

Private schools are classified differently. Each private school students counts as 1.35 students for classification purposes. Additionally, a 'competitive balance success factor' is also applied to private school sports teams which win championships.

More than 190,000 Alabama student athletes are expected to compete in AHSAA sports over the next two years.

Full realignment information is available on the AHSAA website, at www.ahsaa.com.

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