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From Russellville to Nashville: Arthur named top massage therapist by Nashville magazine readers' poll

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

As a Russellville High School student in the late 1990s, Tyrus Arthur realized he had a talent for massage therapy and helping classmates relieve pain.

What he didn't realize was that massage therapy could be a profession that allowed him to have a successful professional career.

So the 2000 RHS graduate moved to Nashville to study automotive repair. After completing his professional training, Arthur moved to Muscle Shoals where he worked in a repair shop.

It didn't take long for Arthur to realize he wasn't enjoying his job, so he decided, albeit a few years late, to study massage therapy. He enrolled at North Alabama School of Massage and graduated in 2005. Once he passed his Boards and earned his certification, Arthur finally began the career path he originally wanted back in high school. He worked at several Shoals locations, including the resort spa at the Marriott Shoals, before getting married and moving back to Nashville. Arthur's wife, the former Amber Bryan, is a Russellville native and the daughter of Donnie and Joni Bryan.

Arthur now owns and operates his

See 'ARTHUR,' page 3

Depression or other mental health issues: It's about Reaching Out!

Pounders uses personal experience to relate to others facing mental health issues

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

On the third anniversary of the death of his friend, Shanley Pounders posted a message on social media that could help prevent someone from taking his or her own life:

Suicide is such an ugly thing. If you or anyone you know is struggling with their mental health or feeling suicidal, it's okay to reach out for help and have a safe space to flourish! You'll never be forgotten! My inbox is always open for anyone!

A powerful offer made by Pounders to anyone who feels the need to accept it. Depression is real, and the

2016 Russellville High School graduate knows it. He's been there, struggling with mental health issues since he was a child.

Untreated, depression can spiral into suicide, as was the case with his friend, a RHS junior whose life ended January 24, 2019.

And mental health issues are increasing at an alarming rate since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The situation is so serious that the American Academy of Pediatrics recently declared a national state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about mental health and some people

See 'HEALTH,' page 7

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Missy Clements, 56, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, February 2nd. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Edna Fay Harris, 79, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, February 1st. Interment at East Franklin Cemetery.

Mary Faye Senkbeil, 84, of Russellville, passed away on Wednesday, February 2nd. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

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'ARTHUR,' from page 1

massage therapy business in Nashville, concentrating on deep tissue and Thai massage.

He was recently honored as 2021's top massage therapist in East Nashville, an honor voted on by the area's more than 100,000 residents through the *East Nashvillian* magazine.

"I was really happy and honored to receive that. East Nashville is a very tight knit community. There are a lot of massage therapists, but we get along well and it's friendly competition," Arthur said.

Arthur still thinks about his high school days where his passion, and talent, for massage developed. He helped a Majorette classmate relieve pain in her shoulder, or a football player with an injured elbow.

"I was working on people in high school and it was always something I could do," Arthur said. "I liked the idea of making something like a joint or muscle in the body feel better and improve mobility where the person didn't have to take a shot, or drugs. It was a way to relieve pain right there on the spot."

Arthur has learned that an effective massage therapist is one who listens to the people he treats.

"Listening to a complaint, identifying what's causing it and figuring out how to resolve the problem are some of the basic principles," Arthur said. "The work I do is oriented towards pain relief and increased mobility, not so much towards relaxation.

"It's also important to listen so you never go beyond anyone's tolerance. There's no reason to cause an excessive amount of pain. When you do, the body you're working on tends to tighten up and fight against you and you definitely don't want that," he added.

Arthur uses a blend of trigger point therapy, a blend of active/passive stretching and he does cupping to stretch tight fascia and muscles, all with the goal of relieving pain.

Although not the case with every client, Arthur helped four people last year who had surgeries scheduled end up not having surgery for their issues. That included a musician who was scheduled for carpal tunnel syndrome surgery. Arthur's therapy on the man's wrist, elbow and thumb after two sessions eliminated his pain and he decided not to have surgery.

Arthur is also certified in dog and pet massage. Although a small part of his

practice, he explained that dogs with soft-tissue related pain can benefit from massage therapy the same as humans.

He works on older dogs with arthritis or hip dysplasia, dogs who have been hit by cars, etc. He's also volunteered his services to treat shelter dogs with injuries.

Arthur is also developing a line of self-treatment massage tools that can be used at home to treat a variety of conditions. He worked with a design engineer through most of 2020 and the manufacturing process has started.

The line will consist of all-wood, eco-friendly tools. The goal is to launch his product line late this year or in early 2023.

The son of Gene and Patsy Arthur, Arthur is from the Crooked Oak community. Although he and Amber love their lives in Nashville, he thinks of home every day.

"I miss Franklin County and Russellville daily. That's home and all my family is there. Nashville is home now, too. Amber and I both couldn't do what we do and make the money we make and have the careers we have if we hadn't left, but Franklin County will always be a special place to me," Arthur said.

For more information on Arthur, visit his business website at www.tyrusarthurimt.com.



COURTESY PHOTO

Arthur, a Russellville native, was selected as the top massage therapist in East Nashville by the *East Nashvillian* magazine.

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Kiel in favor of bill to eliminate tax on groceries

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

If House Bill 174 makes it to the House floor for a vote during the 2022 Alabama Legislative Session, you can count Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) among its supporters.

HB174, sponsored by Rep. Mike Holmes (R-Wetumpka), would exempt food from state sales and use taxes, effective September 1, 2022.

While consumers would still pay local sales tax on food purchases, the state taxation of groceries and food would be eliminated.

According to the Alabama Policy Institute, Alabama is one of 13 states that tax groceries. Of those 13, only Alabama, Mississippi and South Dakota tax groceries at the full amount without any credit or rebate.

HB174 is a bipartisan bill with more than a dozen co-sponsors.

While Kiel is not a co-sponsor of the proposed legislation, he believes the time is right to cut taxes while the state budget is up significantly.

"For food tax specifically, in some ways it's taxing a basic sustenance item and I believe that is immoral because you're taxing the very poor at a higher rate than anyone else. Everyone has to have food and the poor are taxed at a higher rate as a result of their income," Kiel said.

Kiel also said he would support a cut in payroll taxes, at least during the period when state budgets are "up significantly" as a result of COVID-19 monies including an estimated \$4.04 billion from the federal government's American Rescue Plan

Act.

"I support cuts in payroll tax because it cuts taxes on people actually working and producing in the economy," Kiel said. "COVID money came directly to businesses and individuals and because of that, people spent more and made more than normal.

"The State Education Trust Fund is based primarily on income tax and sales tax revenue. Sales tax revenue is up but it's a mirage. It's not up because the economy is booming, but because people had more disposable income because of government checks received. The budget is up now and it's a good time to give some of that money back to the citizens, at least in the form of temporary relief," he added.

Kiel said the long-term answer would be for Alabama to eliminate state income tax altogether and let people pay use taxes on what they buy.

In 2020, Holmes introduced a bill called the Alabama Economic Freedom Act, which would have repealed all income (including capital gains and corporate), estate and gift taxes and the existing state sales tax, city and county sales taxes and replaced them with his bill.

The AEFA called for Alabama to impose a state consumption tax on all goods and services sold at retail. The tax rate would be set to be revenue neutral at the level necessary to replace the revenues generated by the repealed taxes.

A single rate 6.5% consumption tax would have been imposed on all retail sales for personal consumption of new goods and services. The consumption tax would have been separately stated

and charged on receipts so consumers knew exactly how much they were paying in state taxes. There would have been no exemptions for lobbyists, corporations or individuals, meaning everyone paid the same rate, but those who spend more pay more total taxes than those who spend less.

Every Alabama family would receive a rebate of the consumption tax on spending up to the federal poverty level and that rebate would be paid monthly in advance. A single person could spend up to \$12,880 per year tax free. A couple could have spent up to \$25,760 tax free.

"The bill said after a certain dollar amount, you pay taxes on what you purchase," Kiel said. "But you don't pay income tax. You actually get a prebate up to a certain amount for essential items like food and clothing that everyone has to buy.

"Right now, the food tax is a disproportionate tax on poor people. With the fair tax, you give people back, thru a prebate, money each month. You take that money and go to the grocery store and buy food and household items and that's what you pay sales tax with," Kiel added.

There has not been a similar bill to the Alabama Economic Freedom Act pre-filed for the 2022 legislative session.

Kiel believes HB174 has a chance to become law and he cites the spectrum of groups supporting the legislation.

"You have a lot of diverse groups, from the Alabama Policy Institute to the Southern Poverty Law Center supporting this bill, so it definitely could get legs," Kiel said.

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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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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**The following information is the annual report of receipts
and expenditures of the Franklin County**

Community Development Commission for the fiscal year ending 9-30-2021.

The information is "unaudited" and is reported to the citizens of Franklin County to document how these tax dollars are being expended. The Franklin County Community Development Commission is a 4-member board, whose membership for the previous year included: Brad Bolton as Senator Stutts' appointment, Jeremy Campbell, as Representative Kiel's appointment, Chris Wallace as Representative Robertson's appointment and the Chairman of the Commission, Mayor at Large- Charlene Fancher. All grants approved must be within the charter of the development fund which is as follows:

In accordance with Act No. 2008-75 enacted by the Legislature of Alabama,
grants may be awarded only for the following purposes:

1. To promote economic development, education, recreation, conservation, and fire protection.
2. To enhance the education of the citizenry through activities, expenditures for capital improvements or equipment, to promote literacy, learning, arts appreciation, public health, and mental health.
3. To promote activities that provide human and social services which reduce the hardships of old age, poor health, or poverty.
4. To promote the marketability, yield, or quality of Alabama-produced agricultural commodities.
5. To promote the preservation, restoration, development and propagation of Alabama's natural resources, recreational facilities, environment, history, culture, transportation lanes, tourism, public safety, and historic landmarks and buildings.

BEGINNING BALANCE FCCDC FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING 10/01/2020		\$61,044.89
TOTAL IN LIEU OF TAXES DEPOSITS FCCDC		\$ 158,630.60
TOTAL INTEREST EARNED FCCDC		\$ 271.39
TOTAL BALANCE DEPOSITS AND INTEREST THIS FISCAL YEAR:		\$219,946.88
GRANTS AWARDED AS FOLLOWS:		
GRANT #	ENTITY:	GRANT AMT:
2029	VHS-ACT prep	\$800.00
2030	RBHS-Interactive Lessons Project	\$800.00
2031	BHS-Archery Project	\$250.00
2032	Vina Rescue-Chainsaw & Supplies	\$800.00
2033	RBHS-Baseball Field Lighting	\$3,000.00
2034	BHS-Door Replacement	\$1,500.00
2035	VHS-Math Class Project	\$800.00
2036	VHS-English Class Project	\$800.00
2037	BHS-Senior Physics Project	\$800.00
2038	East Franklin Jr High-2nd Grade Classroom	\$800.00
2039	RBHS-Science Class 10 Microscopes	\$800.00
2040	PCSHS-English Class	\$800.00
2041	VHS-Softball team JUGS pitching machine	\$1,000.00
2042	RBHS-Cheerleader purchase mascot uniform	\$250.00
2043	RBHS Tip off Club ad purchase	\$250.00
2044	Franklin Co Schools Safer, Smarter Teens curriculm	\$320.00
2045	Red Bay Lions Club-Purchase Coats/Shoes for Kids	\$1,000.00
2046	Franklin Co Economic Dev Authority - Franklin Structures FINAL	(\$25,000.00)
2047	Postage	\$9.00
2048	Tennessee Valley Media - Financial Statement	\$369.20
2049	RBES-Chromebooks	\$1,000.00
2050	BHS-Projection Screen & Supplies for Enrichment	\$1,000.00
2051	RB Tip Off Club-Gym Lighting	\$5,000.00
2052	Pleasant Site Fire - Lighting, Water Sprayer Backpacks, Gen	\$992.30
2053	TES Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2054	BES Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2055	PES Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2056	EF Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2057	RBES Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2058	VES Tracks - Sanitizing	\$250.00
2059	Kinder Vision TEEN PSA Program	\$1,500.00
2060	RB Fire Dept 4 Pagers	\$1,000.00
2061	RB News Annual Report	\$309.60
2062	Postage	\$6.00
2063	THS Scientific Calculators	\$800.00
2064	RB Youth Basketball Height Adjuster	\$2,500.00
2065	THS Chromebooks	\$800.00
2066	RBHS Softball	\$2,500.00
2067	PCES Chromebooks (Ms. Boyles)	\$800.00
2068	PCES Chromebooks (Ms. Cooper)	\$800.00
2069	PCES Chromebooks (Ms. Champion)	\$800.00
2070	BES Tablets	\$800.00
2071	PCHS Purchase of Mower	\$5,000.00
2072	RFD Desktop Computers	\$3,200.00
2073	THS Ice Machine	\$2,500.00
2074	Community Action - Meals on Wheels	\$500.00
2075	BHS Uniforms & Equipment	\$1,125.00
2076	The Place of Grace - Expenses	\$2,000.00
2077	BHS Boys Basketball Final Four	\$500.00
2078	FC Dive Team Equipment	\$1,500.00
2079	RBHS Grant - Reprint Outstanding CK (Replacing Check # 1821)	(\$1,600.00)
2080	VHS Grant - Reprint Outstanding CK (Replacing Check # 1933)	(\$1,500.00)

2081	PCHS Grant - Reprint Outstanding CK (Replacing Check # 1936)	(\$150.00)
2082	Postage	\$9.69
2083	VHS - Baseball Equipment	\$2,500.00
2084	Red Bay Police Dept - Patrol Veh Equip	\$2,500.00
2085	PCHS - Volleyball Equip	\$1,000.00
2086	PCHS - Track Team Equip	\$250.00
2087	Red Bay FFA - Air Compressor	\$1,000.00
2088	Big Brothers Big Sisters - Games/Supplies Mentoring	\$800.00
2089	RHS - Tennis Court Garbage Cans	\$575.88
2090	PCHS - Special Ed iPads	\$800.00
2091	RMS - Weight Room	\$2,500.00
2092	THS - Classroom Calculators	\$800.00
2093	Hodges Fire & Rescue - Extraction Tools	\$2,000.00
2094	RHS - Track & Field State Comp Exp	\$250.00
2095	Russellville Dream Center - Kitchen Update	\$2,500.00
2096	Blue Springs VFD - Extraction Tools	\$2,000.00
2097	Franklin County E911 - Comm Ice Maker	\$1,500.00
2098	PCHS - JV Cheer Camp Exp	\$250.00
2099	PCHS - JV & Varsity Cheer Vac & Humidifier	\$600.00
2100	RBHS - Volleyball Equip/Camp	\$550.00
2101	RBHS - Golf Playoff Exp	\$250.00
2102	Franklin Free Press - Annual Report	\$525.00
2103	Postage	\$9.69
2104	RHS Golf Team - State	\$250.00
2105	RHS Baseball - State	\$250.00
2106	PCHS Baseball - State	\$250.00
2107	RBHS Golf	\$250.00
2108	Belgreen Softball	\$250.00
2109	RHS Soccer - State	\$250.00
2110	Belgreen Fishing - State	\$125.00
2111	City of Red Bay - Founders Day	\$1,000.00
2112	East Franklin Vol Fire Dept - Fire Hydrants	\$2,870.00
2113	Red Bay Senior Center - Founders Fest Car Show (Voided)	(\$250.00)
2114	RBHS Football Helmets	\$2,500.00
2115	Red Bay Museum Park Project	\$5,000.00
2116	RBHS Veterans Monument	\$1,115.00
2117	Belgreen High School Special Ed Smart Board	\$800.00
2118	Belgreen High School STEM/STEAM	\$800.00
2119	Franklin County Board of Education Mental Health	\$250.00
2120	Franklin County EMA County Wide Notification System	\$800.00
2121	Russellville Hospital 2 Wheelchair Scales	\$1,250.00
2122	RMS Football Helmets	\$2,500.00
2123	Postage	\$6.00
2124	Red Bay Senior Center Grant-Car Show (Check re-issue. Replacing check # 2113)	\$250.00
2125	Red Bay Junior High Football-Helmets/Shoulder Pads	\$2,500.00
2126	Big Brothers Big Sister - RHS Coordinator Classroom	\$800.00
2127	RCS Education Foundation-Sponsorship	\$1,000.00
2128	Tharptown High School Basketball-Magnetic Dry Erase Bd	\$1,500.00
2129	Vina High School - Repairs to Gym Floor	\$1,500.00
2130	Vina High School - Helmet Reconditioning	\$1,500.00
2131	Tharptown High School Volleyball-Equipment	\$1,000.00
2132	Phil Campbell Elementary School-Neuhaus Program	\$800.00
2133	Belgreen High School Special Ed Sensory Processing	\$800.00
2134	Belgreen High School 5th Grade Classroom purchases	\$800.00
2135	RBHS Baseball Batting Cage Turtle	\$2,500.00
2136	Belgreen High School Reading Intervention	\$800.00
2137	Tharptown Elementary 1st Grade Classroom	\$800.00
2138	Red Bay News Newspapers in Education	\$1,875.00
2139	Liberty Learning Foundation Super Citizen Program	\$6,700.00
2140	Red Bay Elementary School K & 1st G technology	\$5,600.00
2141	Postage	\$8.29
2142	Shoals Sav-A-Life	\$2,112.00
	Transferred to Future Economic Development	\$30,000.00

TOTAL OF ALL GRANTS AWARDED DURING FISCAL YEAR ENDING 9/30/2021: \$160,112.65

TOTAL BALANCE REMAINING AS OF 9/30/2021: \$59,834.23

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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

 Florence Lauderdale Animal Services and local rescues are working with Franklin County to help save many abandoned animals to give them a chance at a new life. Save Our Strays needs donations called into Russellville Animal Clinic, to pay for veterinary services, spay/neuter and medical treatment for everything from heartworms to Parvo. There are also boarding expenses for the animals due to their medical treatment. No amount of donation is too small. This group has saved many cats and dogs, and they need the community's help. Call Russellville Animal Clinic and tell them you're donating to the Save Our Strays Account. Their phone number is 256-332-2254.

 In celebration of the 120th anniversary of Red Bay First Baptist Church, the homecoming committee is seeking 120 people who will commit to reading the Bible all the way through in 2022. Please join us in reading and asking your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join us in this endeavor. Your life will be transformed. There are day-by-day reading calendars for January in the church office. You can also find reading plans on the internet.

 Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Boston Butts for Super Bowl weekend. Butts are \$30 each and may be pre-ordered by dialing 256-810-1970. Pickup is Saturday, February 12, between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.

 The NACOLG SENIORx-Medicine Program is a program for free and low-cost medications for the uninsured, underinsured, Medicare coverage gap or disability waiting period. For more information, contact NACOLG SENIORx today. There is no charge for this service. 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463). Paula Pardue. 256-389-0529. This program is in partnership with the Alabama Department of Senior Services and NACOLG Department of Aging Services.



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'HEALTH,' from page 1

ple tend to run the other way when you bring it up," Pounders said. "They think about it differently than if you were dealing with an injury like a broken arm or broken leg.

"People automatically think you're going to harm yourself when in reality you might just need someone to talk to in a safe place to open up about things. There are multiple reasons why some people don't talk about it because once you do, some people immediately see you differently," Pounders said.

With COVID-19 came school closings and remote learning. That placed more young people at home, often by themselves. And for someone dealing with mental health issues, that can be a toxic environment.

"COVID has been a big factor with how schools have been in and out of class," Pounders said. "Students are home when their parents are at work and they're not able to do many things. That can have a big impact for younger people, especially people who want to have contact with others. They need that social interaction. And once you're not around anyone for so long, it puts you in your thoughts and you get more depressed as a result of being isolated."

According to www.news.yahoo.com, between March and October 2020, the percentage of emergency room visits for mental health emergencies increased by 24% for children ages 5-11 and 31% for those ages 12-17. That also comes with more than a 50% increase in suspected suicide attempts for teens in the 12-17 age range in early 2021, as compared to 2019.

On the positive side, COVID has led to increased federal funding for schools and that's enabled school districts to hire more mental health counselors.

Russellville City Schools Superintendent of Education Heath Grimes said COVID funding enabled his system to hire two mental health counselors. One of those counselors resigned last month, and there is a job posting for a Mental Health Specialist available on the RCS website. Ryan Freeman serves as the system's Mental Health Service Coordinator/Social Worker.

Grimes said all Russellville schools have implemented 7 Mindsets, a social emotional learning program designed to help schools build positive school cultures rooted in healthy relationships.

"The State of Alabama made a huge push in funding mental health," Grimes said. "We're now able to do a better job of reaching everybody, but honestly it's at least a full-time job for two.

"Mental health issues present themselves in middle and high school. That doesn't mean they don't need to be addressed in elementary school, but they are more frequent in the upper grades," Grimes said. "They can become more obvious and more severe as students get older."

Grimes said there is now more awareness of students' mental health, even on social media. RCS teachers have made several posts on the subject. With the mental health professionals in place, students have someone to go to.

"We have a protocol. If someone is referred by a faculty/staff member who sees something, there is a protocol for evaluation. There might not be anything serious there, but this helps realize whether there are issues that need to be addressed," Grimes said.

It's a team effort from the system's mental health specialists, community mental health professionals, school counselors, nurses, school resource offi-

cers and teachers.

When it comes to choosing a counselor or therapist, Pounders said it's important to build a relationship of trust with the mental health professional.

"There is a misconception a therapist is only helping me because they're doing it for the money," Pounders said.

"Not every therapist can help. Try to find one who's best for your situation. Don't just go to the first one you find. Consider your options and see who fits best for your personality.

"Not all of them have the same mindset. You are best to find someone you can personally relate to. If you get off on the right foot, and they understand you and build a rapport asking questions, you can get into a deeper level and that really helps," he added.

As for reaching out to a friend or family member, Pounders said finding someone who's personally dealt with mental health issues can be beneficial.

"I definitely think it helps having gone through the things they are going through, even if it's not the same exact issues," Pounders said. "You can help them on a certain level deeper than most people can. It's definitely easier to open up to people going through those same things."

This was not Pounders' first post where he encouraged those facing depression to reach out to him. He's heard from friends and a few folks he didn't know, and he welcomes both.

"Usually when I post things, if I get a response I expect it to be a friend or someone close to me but I have on occasion heard from people I don't know wanting to talk about things," Pounders said. "No matter if you know the person or not, if someone is struggling, they should be able to talk with someone.

"And if the person you reach out to is willing to talk, listen and help you work it out, you should do that. With any post I make, I always keep in mind anybody could respond, and that's fine with me," he added.



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After more than three decades, Hester retiring from Franklin County Schools

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When the Franklin County Board of Education met for its January business meeting, there was one agenda item no board member wanted to approve, yet each voted in favor, albeit reluctantly.

Among the many personnel moves approved by the board was the retirement of Kathy Hester, secretary to the superintendent, after more than 30 years of service to Franklin County Schools.

Hester's final day will be February 28, 2022. She will attend her final board meeting later this month. Her career has carried through five superintendents of education, including the current one, Greg Hamilton, who will always appreciate Hester's assistance and guidance as he transitioned into the office five years ago.

"Mrs. Kathy has been a tremendous asset to the Franklin County School System for a very long time," Hamilton said. "I cannot thank her enough for her professionalism and hard work as my secretary. I couldn't have made a smooth transition into the position of superintendent without her help.

"Professionally, I wish her many happy days of retirement. But for me personally, this is a sad day," he added.

Hester's career with Franklin County Schools started on October 1, 1991, when she accepted a temporary receptionist job after Marilyn Keelon took a leave of absence. When the position came open permanently, Hester stayed on in what was officially the position of computer specialist/secretary/receptionist.

She transferred to secretary to the superintendent on July 17, 2002. Hester has worked for superintendents Hoyt Dillard, Wayne Bolton, Bill Moss, Gary Williams and Hamilton.

Working for an elected official, Hester's rule about politics has always been the same—stay out.

"I've never been real politically minded even though (her husband) Gerald's been in politics. I try to mind my own business and not get too involved in that," Hester said. "You never know who's coming in next, so I go with the flow and try to be nice to all the people I work with.

"I've worked for five different superintendents. They're all different but were always nice to me. I never had trouble dealing with any of them.

"Now, with Greg as superintendent, he's super nice to work with and he really has done a lot for our school system. He cares about all our schools, not just one particular one," she added.

Once retired, Hester said she has a lot of items on her 'to do' list at home. Gerald will continue to work at CB&S Bank, but the couple plans to spend more time in Birmingham where their two children and three grandchildren live.

"I feel like it's time for me to work at home. I've put off doing some things and I hope to spend more time with my grandchildren," Hester said. "We love to go watch them compete in sports and visit them as much as we can."

Gerald's tenure with Franklin Federal/Citizens Bank/CB&S Bank is more than 40 years. Kathy said she's often asked if Gerald will retire when she retires, but that won't happen for a while, she said.

"He's not planning to retire until he cannot go in anymore. He's got some health issues but he loves his job and they've always been good to him," she said. "It's good for him to be active and have someplace to get up and go to

and interact with people."

Hester enjoys painting and arts and crafts, and she plans to do more of that now. Additionally, she and Gerald have a small vegetable garden and she enjoys the annual job of canning and freezing.

When Hester started with Franklin County Schools, accounts payable were still done by hand. Checks were hand written. Computers were used primarily for word processing.

Today, all that has changed.

"One person does accounts payable. I don't have to do that. The main thing I help with is certification. Teachers have certificates that need to be renewed and I key in that information. When the state opens it up, we do online certificate renewal," Hester said.

"Last year we had tremendous turnover. Over the entire year I posted more than 100 positions. There's lots of work involved but it's not hard. Like everything else, it's time consuming and there are parts you really enjoy and some you don't enjoy as much. With the State Department of Education, there's always change. There's no getting used to doing something one way and thinking it's not going to change," she added.

Hamilton said Hester's position has not yet been posted. He wants this month to be focused on Hester and not her replacement.

"She's such an icon for our school system I want this month to really be about her. It's going to be a daunting task to fill her position, especially with how the certification has changed with the State Department of Education," Hamilton said. "That's one of the big things she does, and probably one of the more time-demanding things."

Hester said she's 'working on' cleaning out her office, but she's not quite done yet.

"I have one more drawer to clean out in my desk," Hester said.

Until the last item has been removed from that desk drawer, it will officially remain Mrs. Kathy's office. And unofficially, that may not change for a long time to come.



COURTESY PHOTO

Hester's career with the Franklin County BOE has spanned five superintendents as she retires at the end of February.

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Pilgrim's to pay for employee, dependent tuition at NW-SCC thru Better Futures Program

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Officials from Northwest-Shoals Community College and Pilgrim's Russellville announced a partnership that will see the company pay for tuition of employees and their dependents who want to further their education at the college.

The announcement was made at a Tuesday morning press conference held on the school's Phil Campbell campus.

The partnership is part of JBS USA's (Pilgrim's parent company) Better Futures Program, which provides Pilgrim's team members and their dependents the opportunity to pursue Associate Degrees and/or Trade Certificates tuition-free.

Although the public announcement was made Tuesday, Pilgrim's Russellville has seen more than two dozen prospective students already sign up and company officials expect that number to grow rapidly.

Pilgrim's Russellville Complex Manager Jamie Young called the partnership a 'huge deal' for the Pilgrim's team.

"We employ more than 1,000 team members, 49 percent of which are from Franklin County. The fact that we are able to keep this opportunity here in the community is wonderful for our partnership," Young said.

Participation in the Better Futures Program is limited to one team member or dependent from each employee's family at a time. Dependents under age 26 are eligible. Employees must have worked for the company for the preceding six months, have a base salary of \$130,000 or less and have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, or have been approved for an accommodation to participate in the program.

Participants in the Better Futures Program will have their tuition paid by JBS USA and Pilgrim's, but will be responsible for general fees and/or books. The program is tax-free for team members, according to the company's website, but employees are encouraged to consult their tax preparation professional to determine any tax liability for dependent benefits.

Corey Friend, JBS USA's Better Futures Program Manager, said the partnership is a benefit not only for Pilgrim's but for the college as well.

"We are presenting Northwest-Shoals Community College an opportunity

to boost enrollment with highly motivated students. By partnering with a hometown community college we're able to provide an educational experience that's geographically convenient to students and use resources already available in our community," Friend said.

"Team members can go back to school or help their children go to school without having to sacrifice their careers. We're always looking for ways for the company to give back to the community, our team members and their children and that's how the Better Futures Program came to be," Friend added.

For more information on the Better Futures Program, visit <https://better-futures.jbssa.com>.



COURTESY PHOTO
NW-SCC President Dr. Jeff Goodwin (left) and Pilgrim's Russellville Complex Manager Jamie Young (right) sign Pilgrim's Better Futures Agreement.



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Bulldog boys, girls split final regular season series against Red Bay

Staff reports

BELGREEN - In their last regular season matchups of the season, and a final tuneup for the area tournaments which tip-off on Monday, Belgreen and Red Bay squared off for the final time in the 2021-22 season.

Belgreen's boys were able to come away with a win to cap off their 24-3 season. While the Red Bay Lady Tigers knocked off Belgreen on the night.

Belgreen 44 Red Bay 26 (Boys)

Last time these two teams faced one another, it was for the county crown. And overtime was needed to determine a winner.

While overtime wasn't needed this time around, it wasn't smooth-sailing for either side.

Both Belgreen and Red Bay scored seven points in the first quarter to enter the second quarter tied up.

Paden Allison scored five points for the Tigers to lead all scorers in the quarter. Andrew Ray had two points for Red Bay in the first quarter as well.

Collin Bonner scored four points in the first quarter to lead the Bulldogs as Carson Cox (two points) and Will Bonner (one point) chipped in.

The Bulldogs were able to break away in the second quarter as they outscored Red Bay 12-3 to give Belgreen a 19-10 lead headed into halftime.

Will Bonner scored four points in the second quarter while Austin James, Adrian Reaves, Canaan Stough, and Collin Bonner each scored two points.

See 'BULLDOGS,' page 14

Putting pen to paper

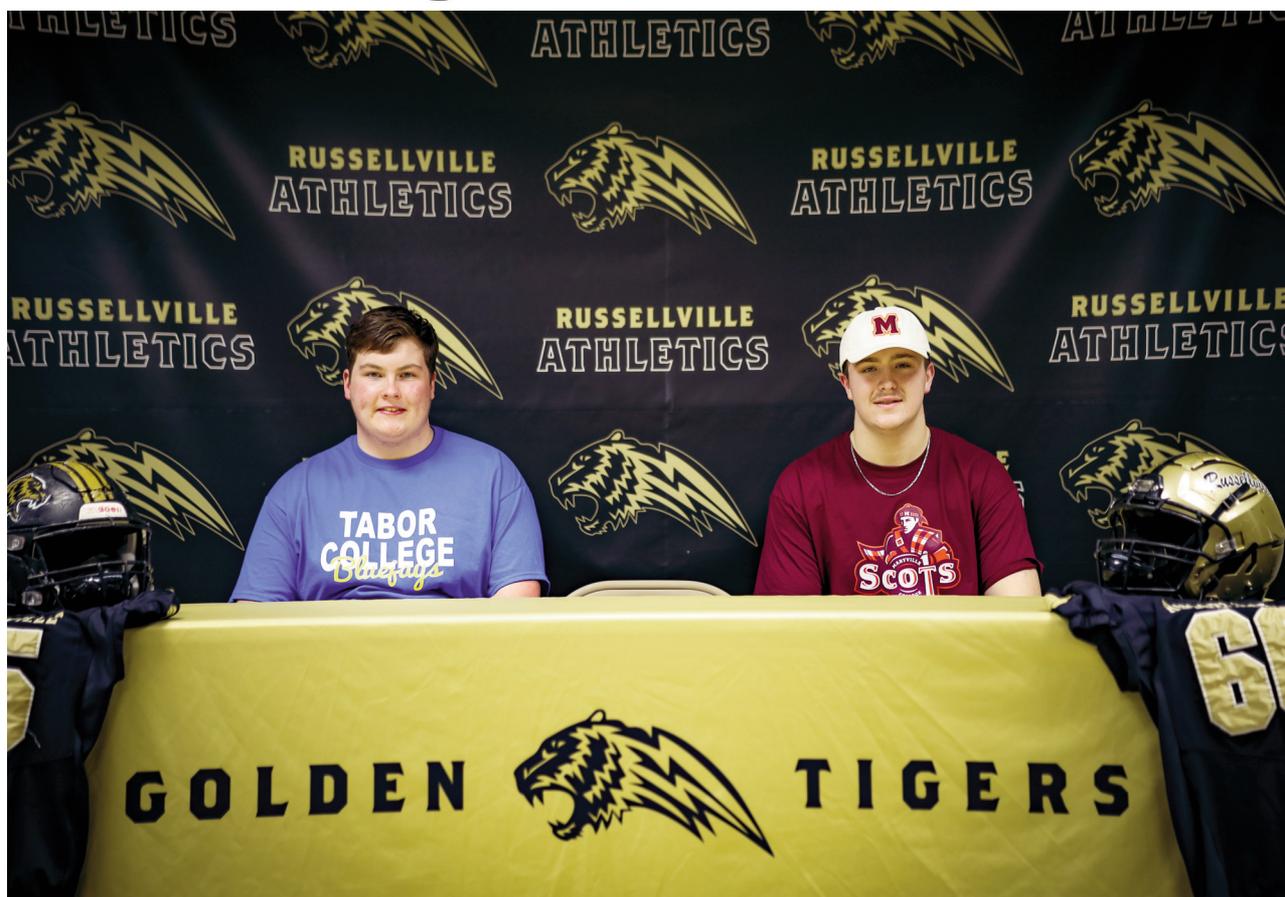


PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Franks, left, and Montgomery, right, both signed on to continue their athletic and academic careers last week with Tabor College and Maryville College.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - Oftentimes in football, it's easy for the spotlight to go to the skill guys. Quarterbacks, receivers and other skill positions typically get most of the attention during the game.

While the attention for those positions is understandable at the time, ask any coach around about the secret to building a "successful" team and more often than not, their answer will revolve around those players in the trenches.

And for Russellville, Dallon Montgomery and

Seth Franks, both of whom were offensive linemen for the Golden Tigers, embodied the "winning in the trenches" saying for the Golden Tigers.

Both Franks and Montgomery signed last Thursday to continue their football careers at the next level as Franks signed with Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas while Montgomery signed with Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee.

With their signings, the two seniors join a long and impressive list of Golden Tigers in recent years to go on to play at the next level.

After transferring in from rival Lawrence County, Montgomery immediately became a force to be

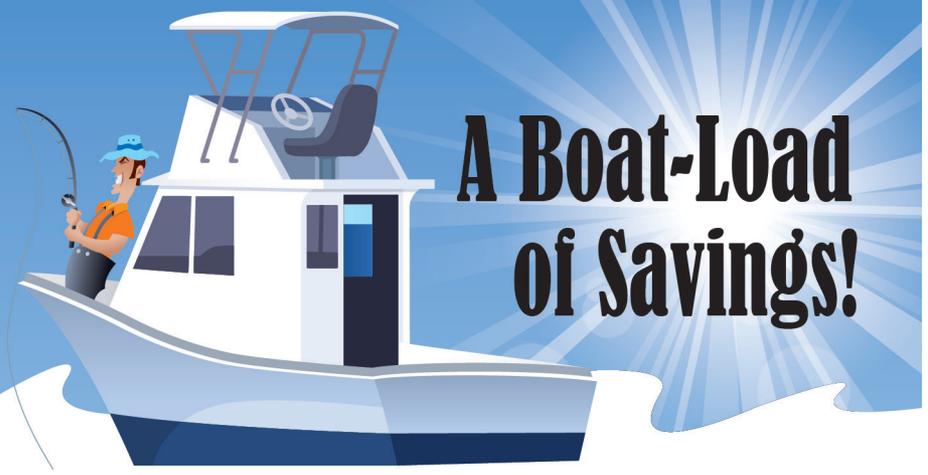
See 'PAPER,' page 13

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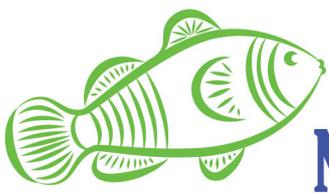
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'PAPER,' from page 11

reckoned with on the defensive line for head coach John Ritter and his staff.

For Montgomery, the recruitment process was something that he was appreciative for, but also the relief that comes with knowing where he will continue his athletic and academic career in the fall means that a huge weight is off of his shoulders.

"It was a sigh of relief. I was proud of myself for getting through the recruitment process and it just felt good because it is a huge goal that I've wanted to accomplish. Plus to have my family there with me was just awesome," Montgomery said.

The offers for Montgomery didn't begin to roll in until *after* his final season, which allowed for some nervousness to set in over the past few months.

And once the offers started to roll in, all that's left for Montgomery to do was make a decision. All it took was a visit 230 miles north to Maryville, Tennessee for him to realize that Maryville College was the place he wanted to call home for the next few years.

"I always wanted to play college football but I didn't get my first offer until after the regular season. I got a few other offers and then I applied to Maryville because they're a good school academically," Montgomery said. "Then after that the coaches contacted me and told me that they were really interested in me. So then I took a visit up there and the school was just great and so was the city around the school. It's just got everything I wanted in that one spot."

Making the transition from one school to another, especially in one's senior year, can often be a difficult one.

But thanks to the persistent coaching and care from the Russellville coaching staff, Montgomery was able to realize his full potential - and his dreams - both on the field and in the classroom.

"Once I started practicing here at Russellville, it was a competition every day. And as we kept practicing, I just felt like I kept getting better and better. Then once our first game against Decatur rolled around, I just felt like I was moving so much faster and just more aggressive than I used to be. So that's when I started thinking that I might could play in college," Montgomery said. "The coaches helped me during practice continue to get better every day. Off the field they were always making sure we got our grades up. So it was just a great experience going to Russellville and having great coaches like that."

As for Franks, once he visited Tabor College, the senior Golden Tiger says

See 'PAPER,' page 15

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'BULLDOGS,' from page 11

Scoring in double digits for the second straight quarter, the Bulldogs were able to extend their lead over Red Bay after outscoring the Tigers 10-6, giving Belgreen a 29-16 lead into the final quarter.

Will Bonner scored eight of the Bulldogs' ten points in the quarter while Adrian Reaves scored two points.

Andrew Ray, Cody Carnes, and Landon Glover each scored two points in the quarter for Red Bay.

The Tigers weren't able to cut into Belgreen's lead in the fourth quarter as the Bulldogs rode eight points, capping off a 21-point night, from Will Bonner in the quarter. Canaan Stough, Austin James, and Adrian Reaves each scored two points.

Holden Inmon scored five points in the fourth quarter while Carson Corum and Andrew Ray scored two points each.

Bonner's 21 points led all scorers while Collin Bonner and Adrian Reaves each scored six points on the night for Belgreen. Canaan Stough and Austin James both scored four points for the Bulldogs.

Andrew Ray, Paden Allison, and Holden Inmon each scored six points on the night for Red Bay.

Belgreen will take on Vina in the first round of the 1A area 14 on Tuesday. Red Bay will take on Lamar County on Tuesday in round one of the 2A area 10 tournament.

Red Bay 37 Belgreen 32

The Lady Tigers jumped out to an early 16-10 lead over their county rival, Belgreen in the opening quarter of their final regular season thanks to five points each from Kaylie Lindley and Emma McCollister. Shelby Nichols and Jaycee Vinson each scored three points in the quarter for Red Bay as well.

Dacota Green knocked down a pair of three-pointers in the first quarter while Carson Hovater and Noelle Willingham each scored two points for the Lady Bulldogs in the first quarter.

Belgreen was able to cut into the Red Bay lead in the second quarter as they outscored Red Bay 10-6 to make it a 22-19 lead for the Lady Tigers heading into halftime.

BB Scott scored four points from the free throw line in the quarter while Dacota Green and Noelle Willingham each scored two points in the quarter.

Red Bay got two points each from Sarah Eaton, Jaycee Vinson and Amber Mason in the quarter.

Outscoring Belgreen 8-4 in the third quarter allowed Red Bay to extend their lead over Belgreen to 30-23 entering the fourth quarter behind four points from Kaylie Lindley and three points from Sarah Eaton.

Carson Hovater (two points) and Noelle Willingham (two points) accounted for all of the scoring for Belgreen in the third quarter.

Belgreen attempted to make a run at Red Bay's lead but couldn't make up enough ground despite outscoring the Lady Tigers 9-7 in the final quarter to seal the 37-32 win for Red Bay.

Dacota Green, who led all scorers with 15 points, scored seven points in the fourth quarter for Belgreen as Carson Hovater accounted for the other two points in the quarter.

Kaylie Lindley led all Red Bay scorers, scoring 12 points in the win with three points coming in the final quarter. Emma McCollister, Jaycee Vinson, and Sarah Eaton each scored five points in the game for Red Bay. Amber Mason scored four points for the Lady Tigers as Madeline Ledbetter and Shelby Nichols scored three points in the game.

Carson Hovater scored seven points for Belgreen while Noelle Willingham (six points) and BB Scott scored four points.

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 March 30, 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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'PAPER,' from page 13

that he felt as though all the pieces were falling into place. However, there was one aspect that won Franks over. A family feeling, one that has resonated with Franks during his time at Russellville, stood out the most during his visit and ultimately won his decision.

"There were a couple of colleges that had some interest in me from the start. But where they won me over, was when I was able to go up and actually visit the college," Franks said. "And on the visit, they just had more to offer than most other schools and they just felt like a close family."

Much like his teammate Montgomery, Franks says while that the recruitment process was an interesting experience, it wasn't without its stress along the way.

Once that pen hit the paper on the scholarship offer last Thursday afternoon at the top floor of the Russellville football field house, that nervousness slowly slipped away.

"I was a little nervous at the start of the recruitment process, especially with the transfer portal and how that was sort of changing things around," Franks said. "But when I finally put pen to paper, all of those nerves finally went away and it was a huge relief."

What makes a good player great, is often times the coaching along the way. Of course its ultimately up to the players to take that coaching and use it to the best of their ability, but the coaching that players get through the years typically ends up molding players into what they eventually become.

And for Franks, that statement could not ring anymore true as he credits the coaches that he has had over the previous four years with helping him become the player, and the person, that he is today.

"Russellville has a great coaching staff. My freshman year, we had coach Black, coach Bonds, and coach Ritter that helped out with the offensive line. And as we went along, they all helped me with each passing year and continue to develop in my game," Franks said. "They never stopped believing in me and they never let me give up on anything and pushed me every day."

Don't forget to visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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