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Commission to consider non-binding letter of intent for disposal of household garbage in Franklin County

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

At its February 22nd meeting, the Franklin County Commission was to consider entering into a non-binding letter of intent with Franklin Land Management, Inc., that would allow the company to begin the process of applying for a permit to allow the collection of household garbage and other types of solid waste.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) outlines a five-step process for applicants seeking permits for a Municipal Solid Waste Landfill. A Municipal Solid Waste Landfill is defined by ADEM as one "permitted to accept

household garbage and other types of solid waste."

Franklin Land Management, Inc. (FLM), owned by Neal and Diane Hargett, is the corporate name of the landfill operated by Hargett on Welch Cemetery Road south of Alabama 24 West.

FLM wants to apply for ADEM to extend its landfill's geographic footprint to include the collection of household waste.

Currently, household waste is temporary collected in a transfer station at the Franklin County Landfill on Highway 524. The county landfill is not licensed or permitted to collect household waste, so it's hauled from

See 'COMMISSION,' page 8

REB manager has former employee arrested for trespass after paying bill at office

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A Russellville man was arrested and charged with Criminal Trespass after he went to pay his electric bill at the Russellville Utilities building last Thursday.

Dwight Jackson, a former Russellville Utilities employee who retired from his meter reader position in 2016, turned himself in to the Russellville Police Department Tuesday morning after Russellville Electric Board manager Charlie Canida signed a Criminal Trespass Third Degree complaint against Jackson. Jackson was booked into the jail, signed his bond and was

released Tuesday with a court date set for April 4, 2022, at 10 a.m.

Criminal Trespass Third Degree is a violation that, upon conviction, carries up to a 30-day jail sentence and a fine up to \$200.

Jackson was served with a trespass notice by a Russellville Police officer on August 7, 2019, which stated he was "not allowed to enter or be on the property, premises or out-buildings located at 721 Jackson Avenue South, Russellville..."

This is the address for the Russellville Utilities building and the main office of the Russellville Electric Board. The building also provides for walk-in and drive-thru payments of

See 'REB,' page 9

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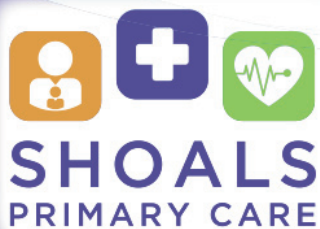
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Terry Lee Dempsey, 55, of Spruce Pine, passed
away on Thursday, February 17th. Interment at
Mtn. Home Cemetery.

Ruth Imogene King Henry, 89, of Russellville,
passed away on Friday, February 18th.
Interment at Colbert Memorial Garden.

Homer Edgar Morgan, 83, of Phil Campbell,
passed away on Thursday, February 17th.
Interment at East Franklin Cemetery.



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Cummins leaving RV library to become head of county library system in Montana

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As a Franklin County native who's lived here all her life, Ashley Cummins has driven by Russellville's Sloss Lake hundreds, if not thousands, of times.

Recently, though, Cummins paused when passing the lake she's considered second nature for years.

"I saw the sunshine reflecting off the lake and I just thought how beautiful it really is," Cummins said. "I was seeing it in a way I've never really looked at it before."

Cummins is feeling a bit nostalgic about her home these days, probably because she will soon be leaving it. She's resigned her position as Director/Librarian for the City of Russellville to become Executive Director of the ImagineIF Library System in Flathead County, Montana.

That's right—Montana. As in 2,167 miles away Montana. It's not just a move for Cummins. It's a giant leap both professionally and personally for Cummins, her husband James and their two children.

Cummins was a Copeland before she married. And there's no shortage of Copelands in Franklin County, so she's leaving a large family behind. But it's an opportunity of a lifetime—a job with increased salary and benefits located in the shadows of Glacier National Park.

Cummins' last day of employment at Russellville Public Library will be March 5, 2022, but with her accrued annual leave, she doesn't have many actual work days remaining.

When she attended a library conference last October, Cummins wasn't looking for a new job or hometown. After the conference, though, a recruiter contacted Cummins and told her about a job in Montana that she was well-qualified for. And even though she's enrolled online at the University of Alabama working toward her Master's Degree in Library Science, the Montana job did not have a Master's Degree as a requirement, unlike so many librarian positions.

Flathead County has approximately 103,000 residents and Cummins will be in charge of the county's four-library system and a staff of 35.

Her family has a passion for outdoor adventure and there's no shortage of it in and around her new home.

"We're right below Glacier National Park and there are great places for hiking, kayaking and those are things we love to do," Cummins said. "There's also a wonderful art culture there and theater groups, so there are a lot of cultural opportunities."

After one year as a volunteer at the Russellville Public Library, Cummins was hired as a part-time assistant librarian in 2010. In March 2014, she was hired as librarian. Her staff of two employees includes Perla Marcelo and Peggy Harrison and Joshlyn Bowen, a volunteer.

Cummins and her staff have worked to build the base of residents who use the Russellville Public Library. They have organized and hosted unique activities and events designed to introduce the library to more people. Sometimes it's worked. Sometimes it hasn't.

"When I first started, I was always amazed how many people come into the library but also how many people told me they didn't even know Russellville had a library," Cummins said. "It shocked me that so many people didn't even know we exist, so that's something I worked really hard to try and change."

Cummins said the library's growth was boosted by Russellville Mayor David Grissom's and the Russellville City Council's support.

"When I started in 2014, our annual operating budget was \$75,000. We've seen that increase to \$135,000 so that has helped," Cummins said.

Cummins hopes to see the city move forward with plans to build a new library and media center on the property behind Russellville City Hall that was donated to the city.

"We have so many people come in to use our computers and internet because that's not available to them at home. They have doctor's forms, marriage licenses and other documents they have to send online and we're the only way they can do that," Cummins said. "I'd like to see the city grow with a new library building, more computer and internet access for residents and a larger staff so the people of Franklin County's needs are met in the way they deserve."

Grissom said he appreciates Cummins' service and dedication to her job and the lasting impact she's going to have in Russellville.

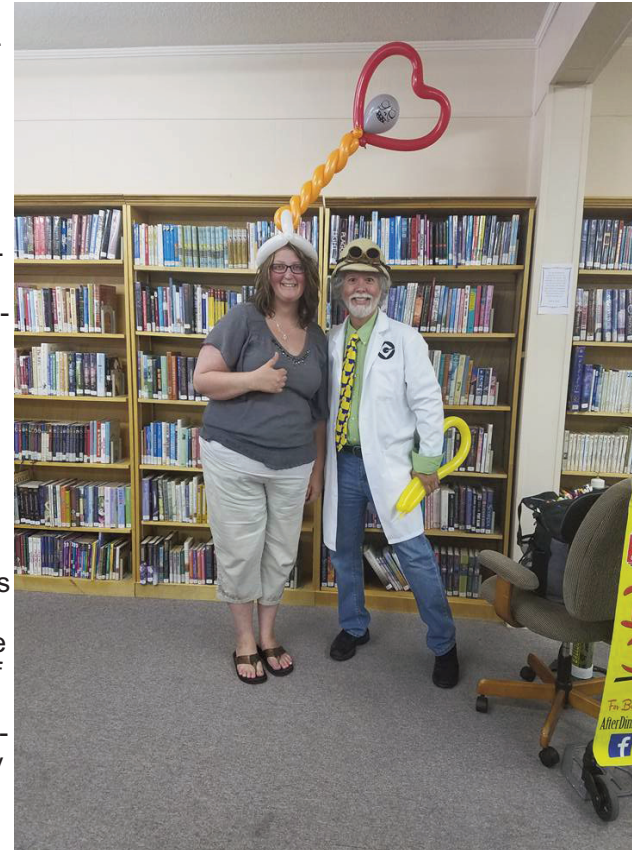
"Ashley has worked so hard to increase the footprint of the Russellville Public Library in our community. She's extremely dedicated to her job, her staff and the people of Russellville and she's going to be missed," Grissom said.

Cummins is excited about moving, her new job and new opportunities for her family, but there's also some anxiety as she deals with the emotion of leaving.

And she'll miss the people she served every day in this community.

"I am supremely grateful to have had the privilege to work for the citizens of Russellville and Franklin County and I've been blessed beyond measure to have such an amazing, talented and gracious library staff and board," Cummins said.

"I'm also very grateful to the Library Board and the City of Russellville for taking a chance on me when I was still very much a kid and allowing me the opportunity to grow this library to the best of my ability," she added.



COURTESY PHOTO

Ashley Cummins during the Summer Reading Program a few years ago.

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Applications may be picked up at Russellville City Hall in the Office of the Mayor, 304 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, Alabama. Applications must be returned no later than March 7, 2022 by U.S. Mail to:

The Russellville Civil Service Board
P. O. Box 308
Russellville, AL 35653

The average pay for this position is \$31,948.80 – 49,275.20.

The successful candidate will be required to successfully complete a complete physical examination including drug screening prior to employment.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR II

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: Drives and operates equipment to accomplish a full range of assignments and tasks. Operates heavy equipment on job sites, such as, but not limited to: back hoe, bobcat, loader and knuckle booms.

QUALIFICATIONS: The completion of High School Diploma or GED. Two years of work experience maintaining or constructing roads. Two years of work experience as an Equipment Operator I. The possession of a current and valid class B CDL. Work experience in the operation of knuckle boom truck.

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The *Franklin Free Press* is published weekly by
Pilati Investments, Inc.
Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

Publisher

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Graphic Design

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All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, political affiliation, disability, or any other non-merit factor. The city of Russellville encourages applications for positions in all protective service departments from women in an attempt to increase their representation in protective service departments.

Applications may be obtained at the Russellville City Hall, Office of the Mayor, 304 North Jackson Avenue. Applications must be returned no later than March 7, 2022 by U.S. Mail to:

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Franklin Free Press February 16, 23, 2022

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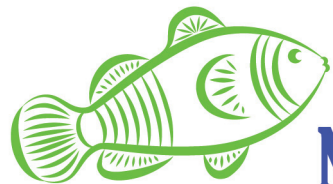
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What's Happening

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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.

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HOPE's organized effort draws favorable response from Franklin commissioners

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

For years, Franklin County Commissioners have heard concerns from citizens about the problem of stray pets in Franklin County.

But there was no organized effort behind the concerns. The need was there. The concern was there. But the organization wasn't.

Now, there's hope, thanks to HOPE.

HOPE stands for Helping Our Pets Everyday. HOPE Director Laura Bonn addressed commissioners at their February 14th work session to update them on progress made since the formation of the non-profit group last fall.

"We are working to get stray dogs out of Franklin County," Bonn said. "We get help from Florence and Colbert County but they are overrun. We've shipped 25 dogs so far in 2022. They've been taken care of by vets, spayed/neutered all through donations. And now, we're asking Franklin County for help."

Bonn's stop at the commission work session was her first of several around Franklin County. The organization will reach out to each municipality for assistance because the massive problem of stray and abandoned pets is a county-wide concern.

"We need land to build a shelter. And we're asking for help from the county and each city," Bonn said. "We are trying to go into local schools and help teach children how to take care of an animal."

HOPE has sent Franklin County strays to adoptive homes in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and several other states, with the goal of no Franklin County dog being euthanized, except in situations where further medical treatment would not be warranted.

There are multiple ways Franklin County residents can help the new organization. First, they are encouraged to join. Visit the group's Facebook page, HOPE in Franklin County, for information on meetings and group activities.

Second, local volunteers are needed to foster stray dogs in their homes until such time as the animal is ready to be shipped to his or her new home. Bonn said there are around two dozen dog foster homes in the county, but many more are needed.

When HOPE is contacted about a stray dog and takes custody of the animal, the first step is finding a local foster home until an adoptive home is found.

Donations are also needed to pay for vet bills and spaying/neutering of the animals taken in by HOPE. Donations may be made to *Save Our Strays*, and

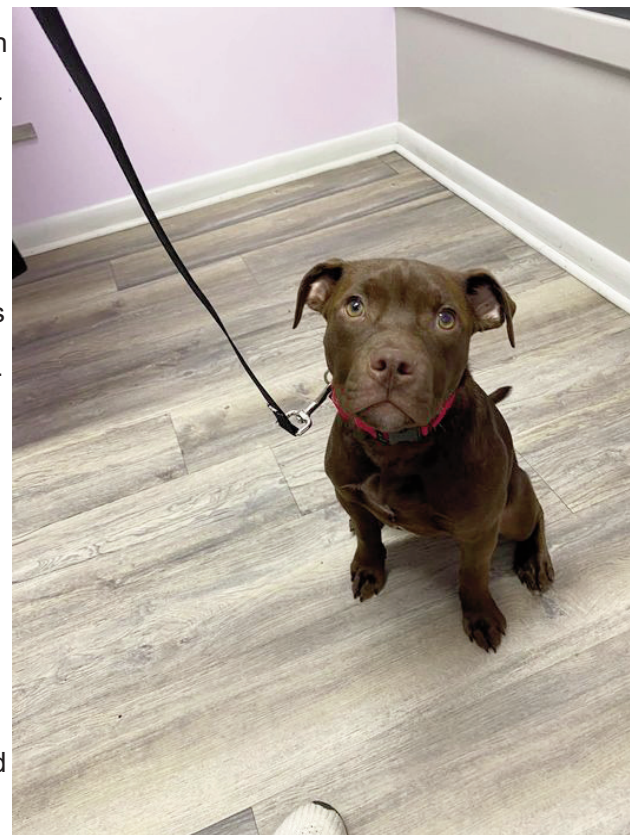
will be used to pay for veterinary care. You can donate through Pay Pal and using the email friendsofflas@gmail.com, or directly by calling Russellville Animal Clinic at 256-332-2254.

Bonn told commissioners HOPE plans to create a volunteer program for local high school students where they can help care for sick or injured animals and understand first hand about this problem right in their community.

Bonn said her group also wants to partner with Franklin County Animal Control, working together to solve this long-time issue.

The county has land available behind the Franklin County Jail, at the Walnut Gate Road/Herring Crossroads intersection, and there has been preliminary discussion about that land being used as a shelter location. The county's animal facility, located at the Franklin County Landfill, is in need of replacement, according to some commissioners.

"In my nine years on the commission, we've had many people come in wanting a solution but nobody was as organized as you are," Commissioner Chris Wallace said. "We definitely need some help and count me in when it comes to supporting this effort."



COURTESY PHOTO

Miles is one of the 25 dogs rescued and saved by HOPE for Franklin County so far this year.

Willodean's
on WGOL

Tune in to WGOL 100.7 FM to hear "Real Estate Tips with Willodean" weekdays at 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. Davis is the owner/broker of Davis Realty & Associates in Russellville.

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'COMMISSION,' from page 1

the transfer station to Morris Farms Landfill in Hillsboro. Franklin County is charged \$39/ton for household waste to be trucked to Hillsboro.

Hargett is working with LaBella, Inc., a corporation that works with public and private solid waste clients to help them navigate through the complicated web of environmental laws and regulations to remain compliant.

Engineers with LaBella have inspected Hargett's landfill and performed a site assessment as to what would have to be done for the landfill to qualify for household waste collection.

Hargett attended the commission's February 14th work session, along with Russellville attorney Bob Rogers, to explain to commissioners what they are trying to do and why they believe it would be beneficial from a cost perspective to Franklin County and its residents.

"I think it's a real good thing for Franklin County," Rogers said. "(If approved) nothing would go into Franklin Land Management's landfill that's not already collected and going into the Lawrence County Landfill. But the transportation all the way to Hillsboro would not be necessary. Obviously, there would be significant savings from the ability to just pull out turn left off Highway 24 and unload directly into the landfill," Rogers added.

Rogers stressed to commissioners that if they approve signing the letter of intent, it would be a non-binding action and would not obligate the county in any way. It's simply the first step of a lengthy ADEM application process, that would open negotiations between Franklin County and Franklin Land Management, Rogers said. Rogers and Franklin County Attorney Roger Bedford, Jr., have been working together on language for the proposed letter of intent that would satisfy both parties.

Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore asked Rogers if the commission signs the letter of intent, would that action start some sort of 'time clock' that would trigger deadlines for future steps of the process.

Rogers said if commissioners sign the letter of intent, Hargett's consultant will submit a plan to Franklin County within 60 days. County officials will review that plan and the next step would be for Franklin Land Management to file its permit application.

After that application is filed, it would come back to the Franklin County Commission and the next step would be comments and a public hearing where citizens could ask questions and speak for or against the application.

Rogers said the application process would be around 120 days, plus or minus, and the permit procedure with ADEM would have a longer time frame of 12-18 months.

Site preparation for an existing landfill to convert to household waste collection is a lengthy, and expensive process. Among state and federal guidelines, the landfill must include:

- an impermeable liner underneath the landfill to protect groundwater.
- leachate collection system to insure collection, treatment and proper disposal of leachate. Leachate is water that has percolated through a landfill and extracts and deposits potentially environmentally harmful substances in the process.
- compaction and cover requirements to insure maximum operating efficiency.
- record keeping to document the amount of solid waste disposed of.

In the past, garbage has been a dirty word for Franklin County Commissioners. From the early 1990s when residents began paying for garbage collection and could no longer dispose of their own garbage, all the way to 2008, when some local farmers started using biosolids containing human waste as fertilizer.

Franklin County residents approved an amendment in 2010 that outlawed the use of biosolids.

That's one reason it's important for residents to realize the letter of intent will not obligate the county to do anything. And citizens will have opportunities to ask questions and voice their concerns as part of the process of Franklin Land Management's application.

If Franklin Land Management successfully obtains a permit for a Municipal

Solid Waste Landfill, county officials would have several options related to the Franklin County Landfill.

It could continue to remain open for industrial waste and/or construction and demolition waste collection or it could be closed completely. Franklin County Solid Waste Department employees would still collect garbage from county addresses, though, as garbage collection in Red Bay and Russellville would continue.

The difference would be where that household waste is disposed of.

For many years, household waste in Franklin County was placed in the old landfills behind Town Hill Truck Stop and at the current county landfill. That household waste was capped and covered up. When regulations for solid waste landfills changed, the county began storing it in a transfer station before it was transported out of county.

"Everyone knows it's cheaper to dispose of something locally than to haul it to nearly Decatur," Rogers said. "It's something we already have here. It's not like the human waste coming in unapproved and being handled with no oversight.

"We already have our household waste. We're already dealing with the exact same waste. It won't be anything new as to what's being handled. And it has to be disposed of according to strict state and federal regulations," he added.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

GENERAL NOTICE ANNOUNCEMENT
CITY OF RUSSELLVILLE

PATROL OFFICER – POLICE DEPARTMENT

DEFINITION OF JOB: Patrols a designated sector of the city of Russellville and responds to complaints. Serves warrants and subpoenas and testifies in court. Provides traffic control assistance. Performs dispatching duties. Performs other police related duties as required.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

Knowledge of: the city buildings and street system of Russellville; city, state and federal laws; court procedures; department rules, regulations and procedures; maintenance and use of weapons; radio codes, surveillance equipment and legal procedures involved with illegal drug cases.

Ability to: operate a motor vehicle; read; safely fire a weapon; communicate on telephone and radio; generate written documents such as reports and tickets; bend, crouch; stretch; walk; run; respond to emergency situations on short notice when off-duty; and do the essential functions of the job as directed in this description.

Verbal skills to communicate factual information to co-workers, supervisors, general public and court personnel. **Reading skills** to read and understand rules, regulations policies and procedures, writing skills to clearly, accurately, and neatly complete routine reports and other paperwork. **Math skills** to perform basic calculations. **Listening skills** to receive radio call, take complaints, and interview witness.

Ability to use a computer as needed for data entry, word processing reports and investigative strategies.

Willingness to: work overtime, irregular hours, weekends and holidays; travel and attend seminars and workshops.

Ability to do the essential functions of the job as directed in this description.

QUALIFICATIONS and SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Possession of a high school diploma or GED

Minimum of 21 years of age

Must meet or exceed the minimum requirements established by the State of Alabama

Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission

Possession of a valid Alabama Drivers License

Possess the ability to obtain an Alabama Police Academy diploma or its equivalent

Ability to wear appropriate uniforms and safety equipment.

Ability to work nonstandard hours and emergency call-backs.

Ability to travel as required.

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Applications and copies of the Job Descriptions may be obtained at the Russellville City Hall, Office of the Mayor, 304 North Jackson Avenue. Applications submitted to the Russellville Civil Service Board less than one year ago remain active. Those individuals need not reapply in order to receive consideration for this appointment. Applications must be returned no later than March 7, 2022 by U.S. Mail to:

Pay Range is from \$31,948.80 - \$49,275.20.

The Russellville Civil Service Board
P. O. Box 308
Russellville, AL 35653

The appointees will be required to successfully complete a physical examination including drug and alcohol screening prior to employment.

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 April 13, 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.

2004 Dodge Intrepid SE
vin 2B3HD46R44H637979

'REB,' from page 1

utility bills.

The trespass notice also stated Jackson was "not to have any contact with any employee of the Russellville Electric Board, Russellville Gas Board and Russellville Water and Sewer Board," and that any violation of the notice would result in Jackson being criminally prosecuted.

The notice, signed by Canida and the managers of the Gas Board and Water and Sewer Board, directed Jackson to "make provision to remit payment for your utility service via electronic transmission."

Russellville Utilities charges customers an additional \$12.80/month to make payments online, something Canida did not address in the trespass notice to Jackson.

Jackson, along with a friend who recorded their entry into Russellville Utilities, went Thursday morning and paid his bill without incident. Jackson said he did not see Canida while he was there.

Jackson, who contends the trespass notice was unlawful because it bans him from a public building where Russellville residents go to pay their utility bills, said he had not been in the building since he retired so there was no reason he should have been banned from entering it.

Jackson acknowledged an incident with Russellville City Councilman Gary Cummings 'a day or two' prior to his being served with the trespass notice, where Jackson made some comments to Cummings about the city council's decision to transfer management of the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department to Russellville City Schools. The council took that action in late July 2019.

Jackson said the conversation took place at the Chevron on Highway 24 West, which is not in the Russellville City limits.

"I told him that he sure made a lot of people happy when they turned over park and rec to the schools," Jackson said. "There was no argument between us and that's all that was said."

A records check with the Russellville Police Department shows there was no incident report filed that related to Jackson until September of 2019, when Cummings filed two reports with RPD. No criminal charges came out of those reports.

The *Franklin Free Press* spoke with a witness to the incident at the Chevron and that witness 'did not recall any heated or threatening words' being

exchanged.

Jackson ran for Russellville City Council District Three, Cummings' seat, in 2016, but Cummings won the election over his two challengers without a runoff.

The *Franklin Free Press* attempted multiple times to contact Cummings Tuesday for comment, but efforts to reach him were unsuccessful.

The criminal charge against Jackson was initiated by Canida, and Cummings had no involvement in that process.

In December, a RPD officer came to Jackson's home after Canida filed a police report alleging Jackson came onto private property to take photos of him and REB employees cutting trees at a residence on North Jackson Avenue.

RPD Investigator Jake Tompkins looked at the photos Jackson had taken and determined they were taken from the roadway and not on private property. Therefore, there was no evidence of Jackson harassing anyone and no charges were filed.

After that incident, Jackson said he believed Canida was targeting him with harassment.

"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," Jackson said in December.

A records check with the Franklin County Sheriff's Department showed that no report was ever made about any alleged incident involving Jackson at the Highway 24 Chevron.

Jackson said he's never been arrested before Tuesday and his only involvement with the court system was a traffic ticket. A records check of Alabama state courts showed no criminal history for Jackson.

Jackson said he has contacted an attorney about representing him in the criminal trespass case as well as looking into whether his civil rights were violated.

Canida has alleged Jackson to have threatened prior managers, pulled a gun on a co-worker in the utility office parking lot and brought a rattlesnake into the office when he was an employee.

Jackson denies these allegations, other than admitting he once drove through the drive-thru at Russellville Utilities with a dead rattlesnake that he showed to employees inside the building.

There were no police reports, arrests, suspensions or disciplinary actions taken against Jackson by Canida for any of his alleged conduct.

"If I pulled a gun on a co-worker, I would have been arrested and fired. They have video outside the building. If I had threatened a manager, I would have been fired. That never happened," Jackson said.



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Two women's bicycles, rode very little. \$40 each for them. (256)-324-2407

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Golden Tigers open 2022 season with rout of Randolph

Staff reports

After losing perhaps their three biggest bats (including Class 5A Hitter of the Year Jackson Lindsey) from last year's state championship team, Russellville seemed destined to take a step back at the plate in 2022.

Evidently, someone neglected to tell the Golden Tigers.

Russellville banged out nine extra-base hits (including home runs by twin brothers Casen and Brayden Heaps) on Saturday afternoon at Randolph, rolling to a season-opening 16-5 rout of the Raiders.

Seven different players had at least one extra-base hit for the Golden Tigers (1-0), and ten different players scored at least one run. Casen Heaps, the team's junior centerfielder, led the way with a career day at the plate, finishing 4-for-5 with a two-run homer, two doubles, four RBIs, three runs scored and two stolen bases.

Brayden Heaps added a three-run homer, his first as a varsity player, and senior shortstop Eli Gipson went 2-for-4 with a double and three RBIs.

Russellville shared the load on the mound as well, where six different pitchers worked one inning apiece and combined for 11 strikeouts and only one walk.

The Golden Tigers got things going at the plate in the top of the first, jumping out to a 3-0 lead on RBI doubles by Casen Heaps, Canyon Pace and Ethan Oliver. Randolph responded with a pair of RBI doubles off Russellville ace Emitt Green in the bottom half, trimming the lead to 3-2. Green struck

See 'GOLDEN TIGERS,' page 13

Signs of success



Gaston, left, and Cameron, right, joined Gracie Montgomery last week as the latest Wildcat athletes to put pen to paper and sign athletic scholarships. Gaston will continue her volleyball career with Pearl River Community College while Cameron will play softball for Meridian Community College.

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

THARPTOWN - Most smaller schools might have one or two athletic scholarship signees in one calendar year. But to have three in one week? That's virtually unheard of.

But for Tharptown High School, last week was very fruitful for the athletic program as three seniors put pen to paper to extend their academic and athletic careers at the next level by signing scholarships.

Taylor Cameron, Jaiden Gaston, and Gracie Montgomery each signed a letter of intent with three different community colleges in Alabama and Mississippi as their time as Wildcats draws to a close.

For Cameron, who signed on to play softball with Meridian Community College in Meridian, Mississippi, the opportunity to continue playing the game that has become such a major part of her life is the dream of a lifetime.

"I visited many other colleges but when I visited Meridian I immediately felt welcomed and appreciated. As soon as I stepped foot on campus, I knew it was the one. Then when I met the coaches and teammates and saw how amazing the program truly was, that really drove it home for me," Cameron said. "Playing college softball is actually a dream come true for me. After all the freezing cold games, blood, sweat, and tears it finally paid

off."

Cameron, who plays third base and also pitches for the Lady Wildcats, has been a staple of the Tharptown softball program since her seventh grade year.

And as her final year donning the white and blue uniforms begins to come to a close, the coming weeks and months are sure to be filled with bitter-sweet moments along the way.

"Honestly on signing day, I had many mixed emotions. I was happy and sad but I knew that this would be the start of my new, exciting journey," Cameron said. "And being able to sign in the same week with girls I have known since I was young, was a really emotional thing for me. But I cannot wait to see them succeed in their new journeys."

As for Gaston, she became the first student-athlete to sign a volleyball scholarship in Tharptown history. After she graduates, Gaston will head to Pearl River Community College in Poplarville, Mississippi to continue her volleyball career.

While she knew that she wanted to continue playing volleyball at the next level, Gaston initially wasn't sure that Pearl River was where she wanted to call home next year.

But after meeting her future teammates and coaches, everything eventually fell into place for the senior Wildcat.

"When I first went down to visit the campus, I

See 'SIGNS,' page 14

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Chucky Mullins scholarship camp to be held March 12

Submitted to the FFP

The 2nd Annual Chucky Mullins Scholarship Committee Football Camp will be held Saturday, March 12, 2022, at Russellville High School Stadium.

The event is organized and sponsored by the RHS Class of 1988, the year Mullins graduated.

Age divisions include Youth Camp (ages 8-12), from 9-11 a.m., Football Camp (ages 12 and up) from 1-3 p.m., Special Olympic/Field Day for Students with Disabilities, 11:30-12:30 p.m.

Fees are \$65 per child through March 1, and \$75 until March 12. Special Olympic/Field Day cost is \$20 per child.

The price includes a dri-fit shirt, photos, lunch and camp participation. Prizes will be awarded in each group.

For tickets visit www.cms1988.com/football-camp.

Guest athletes taking part in the camp include former Alabama running back Bo Scarbrough, former Auburn wide receiver Sammie Coates, and former Ole Miss players Jerrell Powe and Jamarca Sanford.

Funds from the camp will go towards the scholarships given out to RHS graduates to continue their education.

Following the camp, the committee will host an evening of Forever Golden, where community members and Ole Miss alumni will share stories of Chucky and what he means to our community. This event will be at Doe's Eat Place in downtown Russellville, beginning at 6 p.m.

To RSVP, visit tinyurl.com/CMS1988 or call Deedra Moore at 256-412-5659 or Skye Hamilton at 256-398-0186.

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'GOLDEN TIGERS,' from page 11

out two and walked none, allowing three hits.

The Golden Tigers came right back with three more runs in the top of the second. Andrew Hatton was hit by a pitch and scored on a double by leadoff man Grayson Thorpe. Casen Heaps then delivered his second RBI double of the day and later scored on the back end of a double-steal attempt to make it 6-2.

Junior Banks Langston (1-0) breezed through a one-two-three bottom of the second on just six pitches, and Russellville broke open the game with four runs in the top of the third. Gipson drove in a run with a double, and Brayden Heaps launched a three-run homer to right to stretch the lead to 10-2.

Senior Samuel Pace struck out two batters in a one-two-three bottom of the third, and the Golden Tigers tacked on four more runs in the top of the fourth. The inning was highlighted by Gipson's two-run single and Karson Hyde's RBI double.

Randolph scored two runs (one unearned) in the bottom of the fourth off junior lefty Logan White, who recorded all three outs on strikeouts. The Raiders scored their final run of the day on a solo homer by John Michael Schmitz in the bottom of the fifth, but reliever Brayden Spurgeon retired the other three batters he faced, including two on strikeouts.

Casen Heaps capped off Russellville's big day at the plate in the top of the sixth with his third career varsity homer, a two-run shot to center that made it 16-5. Heaps' first two career home runs came last season in the playoffs.

Brayden Heaps finished off things on the mound with a scoreless bottom of the sixth, striking out one and allowing one hit.

Gipson's multi-hit game on Saturday was the 13th of his Golden Tiger career. Hyde also had two hits, going 2-for-2 with an RBI double and a run. Thorpe was 1-for-3 with an RBI double and two runs scored, and Oliver went 1-for-2 with an RBI double, two walks and two runs scored.

Shayden Romans was 1-for-3 with two runs scored, and Pace, Hatton and Brayden Heaps also had one hit apiece. Reed Hill and Nathan Brockway each walked and scored a run. The Golden Tigers finished with 14 hits as a team.

Swinney, strong pitching power Bobcats to opening day sweep

Staff reports

Coming off a dominant 40-win season that culminated in a Class 3A state championship, Phil Campbell picked up where it left off with a pair of blowout wins over Lamar County and Colbert County in Saturday's 2022 Opening Day doubleheader.

Senior shortstop Mason Swinney, a University of Alabama signee and the state's No. 3 overall prospect according to Perfect Game USA, started things off with a bang in the opener against the Bulldogs—well, make that two bangs. Swinney launched a pair of two-run homers (the 10th and 11th dingers of his varsity career) and finished 3-for-3 with five RBIs and four runs scored as the Bobcats cruised to a 15-1 rout.

In game two against Colbert County, Swinney and Hunter Baker each had a two-run double to key a nine-run fourth inning as Phil Campbell (2-0) broke open a tight game and rolled to an 11-1 win.

Senior pitcher Cole Pace was sharp on the mound in game one, holding Lamar County to just one hit in four scoreless innings. He struck out four and walked none, throwing 36 of his 56 pitches for strikes.

Swinney was one of three different Bobcats to collect three hits against the Bulldogs. Senior leadoff man Sage Raper went 3-for-4 with three runs scored, and Kyle Pace was 3-for-4 with a double, an RBI and two runs scored.

After Cole Pace notched a pair of strikeouts in the top of the first, Phil Campbell went right to work with three runs in the bottom half. Raper singled, Bryant Anthony drew a walk, and Swinney delivered his 102nd career RBI with a single to center. Kyle Pace added an RBI single later in the frame, and Cole Pace drove in a run with a groundout to make it 3-0.

Pace struck out two more Bulldog batters in the top of the second, and the Bobcats took control with four runs in the bottom half. Anthony, a second-team All-State selection at catcher by the ASWA as a sophomore last season, delivered an RBI single to make it 4-0. Swinney, who blasted eight home runs in 2021 on his way to earning Class 3A Player of the Year honors, followed with a two-run shot to left to make it 6-0. Kyle Pace later doubled and scored on an RBI single by Eli Taylor.

Phil Campbell broke the game wide open with six runs in the third. Anthony and Cole Pace each drew a bases-loaded walk in the inning, and Jacob Barnwell drove in a run with a sac fly.

See 'BOBCATS,' page 15

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'SIGNS,' from page 11

was a little nervous because it was so far away from home. But once I met the players and my coaches, I knew that it was the place I wanted to be," Gaston said. "They really welcomed me with open arms and made me feel at home."

During her time on the court for the Lady Wildcats, Gaston mostly suited up as the middle hitter for the volleyball team.

Notching the first scholarship in program history, Gaston will be what Tharptown hopes is the first in a long line of future collegiate volleyball players coming up in the program.

Gaston hopes that by setting the benchmark as the first scholarship volleyball player for Tharptown, will start a trend and serve as an inspiration for future players and generations to come.

"It's kind of crazy to me to be able to be the first player to sign a volleyball scholarship in our history. It means a lot to me and I just want other people and younger players to realize that it is possible as long as you try your hardest," Gaston said.

To the casual sports fan, Gracie Montgomery is probably best known for her contributions on the basketball court.

Serving as the veteran leader for a Wildcat team that this year brought home the first county title in program history, Montgomery has left her mark on a rather solid Wildcat basketball program.

But basketball takes a backseat when it comes to which sport she'll be playing collegiately.

A decorated cross country runner, Montgomery will continue her running career at Calhoun Community College this fall.

The cross country program at Tharptown is a relative new one and before last week, had yet to produce a college runner.

Montgomery suited up for the team in its first season and after hitting some bumpy spots and ironing out the kinks, she slowly started realizing her talent for the sport.

But it wasn't until her final season where she realized her true running potential.

"Coach Brown talked to the cross country coaches at Calhoun before I could. And then they invited me later on they invited me to the campus and offered me a scholarship when I came down there," Montgomery said.

"I didn't realize that I actually had the potential to run in college until my senior year. My first year was the first year that Tharptown actually had a cross country program. So that first year, none of our times were right. But as we went along, we started getting more accurate times and my slowest time was 27 minutes and then I got my time down to 22 minutes this year. And that's when I realized I could do it."

To be a part of the busiest signing week in Tharptown athletic history, Montgomery says that it is a moment that will leave a lasting impact for both the girls and the school as well.

And for her, the hard work and dedication that she has put in over the course of her high school career has finally come to fruition.

"Jaiden and I are the first scholarship recipients for our sports and then to be able to sign with Taylor, that's pretty special for us and the school too," Montgomery said. "It's surreal. I didn't think that I would be able to do something like this. But I put in the work and thankfully, I'm getting to live my dream."



COURTESY PHOTO

Montgomery, above, is primarily known for her athletic achievements on the basketball court. But after whittling her race time down to 22 minutes, she was able to secure a cross country scholarship to Calhoun Community College.

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'BOBCATS,' from page 13

Swinney capped off the scoring in the bottom of the fourth with his second home run, following up a single by Raper with a two-run blast to center to make it 15-0. Swinney, who entered this season sporting an eye-popping 1.211 career OPS, recorded his 15th three-hit game as a varsity Bobcat.

Anthony finished Saturday's opener 1-for-2 with two walks and two RBIs. Taylor was 1-for-2 with an RBI, and Cole Pace drove in two runs. Baker walked twice and scored twice, and Noah Raper scored three runs.

Senior left-hander Cam Habada dominated Colbert County in game two, needing just three innings to match his career-high with eight strikeouts. Habada (1-0) held the Indians to just one hit and no runs, walking three. Taylor worked the final two innings in relief, allowing one earned run on three hits. He struck out two and walked one.

Habada recorded two strikeouts in the top of the first, three more in the second and three more in the third, working around a walk and a single to keep the game scoreless. The Bobcats got on the board in the bottom of the third, taking advantage of a hit batter and three walks to take a 1-0 lead.

Colbert County stranded two runners against Taylor in the top of the fourth, and then Phil Campbell put together six hits and four walks to score nine runs in the bottom half. Sage Raper had an RBI single and a sac fly in the big inning, and Swinney and Baker each had a two-run double.

Swinney finished 1-for-2 in game two, also drawing a walk and getting hit by a pitch. He went 4-for-5 on the day with two homers and a double, boosting his career triple-slash line to .436/.540/.704 (batting average/OBP/slugging).

Baker was 2-for-3 against Colbert County with two RBIs, and Habada went 1-for-2 with two walks and two runs. Anthony also walked twice and scored twice, and Cody Quinn drew three walks and scored two runs.

Taylor was 1-for-2 with an RBI and a run, and Sage Raper was 1-for-3 with two RBIs and a run. Kyle Pace went 1-for-3 with a walk.

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