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**CAROL MURPHREE**  
 Board of Education District 4  
 Republican Primary Tuesday, May 24

**Electric board members repay almost \$29,000 in unlawful bonuses**

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

Four members of the Russellville Electric Board have reimbursed the board \$28,800 in unlawful bonuses they received dating back to 2019, the *Franklin Free Press* has learned.

The bonuses were authorized by REB Manager Charles Canida, who began the practice of paying board members 'performance and safety incentive' bonuses in 2013, shortly after he transitioned from Chairman of the Board to Chief Executive Officer for REB.

Board members James McDuffa, Bill Jackson, Nick Willis and Chad

Wells paid the monies back to the Russellville Electric Board in February of 2022. Jackson paid back \$8,600, McDuffa \$7,800, Willis \$7,400 and Wells \$5,000, according to records obtained by the *FFP* through an Open Records Act request.

The Code of Alabama Sec. 11-50-313 sets maximum compensation limits for all electric, water and gas systems across the state. That limit is \$7,200 per year for a board chairman and \$4,800 per year for board members.

Sec. 11-50-313 includes an exception for all Franklin County water or

See 'BONUSES,' page 9

**Absentee voting underway for May 24th primary elections**

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

Absentee voting is underway for Alabama's 2022 primaries, and voters have two options on how to cast their votes prior to the May 24<sup>th</sup> election day.

Franklin County Circuit Clerk Anita Scott is serving as the Absentee Election Manager for the 2022 primary and general election.

Voters who qualify to cast absentee ballots may vote through May 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Franklin County Circuit Clerk's Office in the Franklin County Courthouse. Applicants will need a valid photo identification, either an Alabama driver's license or ID card.

Once their application is completed, voters can request either a Democratic or Republican Primary ballot and complete the ballot and

turn it in to the Absentee Election Manager in a sealed envelope. You must state which primary you choose to vote in, Scott said. This is not an invasion of privacy. Instead, it's exactly how primary elections are conducted.

The May 24<sup>th</sup> primaries are not the same as the November 8, 2022 general election. The May 24<sup>th</sup> Republican ballots contain only contested local, state and federal races among Republican candidates. The same is true for the Democratic primary ballot, which will contain only contested local, state and federal races among Democratic candidates.

There is also a Constitutional Amendment only ballot for any voter not wanting to vote in either party pri-

See 'ABSENTEE,' page 7

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 May 24, 2022  
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**Percy Earl King "Bud" Jr., 45**, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, March 29th. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

**Etta Lorraine Presley, 75**, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, April 2nd. Interment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**Bobby Lindon Taylor, 83**, of Russellville, passed away on Friday, April 1st. Interment at Belgreen Cemetery.

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# TAX LIEN SALE

Franklin County Revenue Commissioner Stratt Byars will be holding the 2021 Tax Lien Auction on May 3, 2022 at 10 am CST on the website [www.govease.com](http://www.govease.com). In accordance with Title 40, Chapter 10, Code of Alabama 1975 (§40-10-180 through 200), the Franklin County tax collecting official has authority to auction and sell tax liens on properties for which ad valorem property taxes are delinquent.

An updated list of delinquent parcels from the 2021 tax year is posted and can be found inside the Franklin County Courthouse on the first floor bulletin board and inside of the Red Bay office.

All potential bidders are required to register at [www.govease.com](http://www.govease.com) before the auction commences.

For more information about the upcoming tax lien auction, please contact the Franklin County Revenue Commissioners Office at 256-332-8841.

## Hamilton swear-in ceremony set for Sunday, April 10th

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

When the governor's office calls, you answer.

And that's exactly who called Russellville attorney Brian Hamilton Thursday afternoon to inform him of Gov. Kay Ivey's decision to appoint Hamilton as Circuit Judge of Franklin County.

Hamilton will serve out the remaining two years of the six-year term of former Circuit Judge Terry Dempsey, who died February 17, 2022, at the age of 55.

Three local attorneys, Hamilton, Jamie Sumerel and former Circuit Judge Sharon Hester, each applied for the vacant position and interviewed with a committee of Ivey's staff last month.

Hamilton's appointment is effective immediately, but he will hold a swear-in ceremony Sunday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m., in the large courtroom of the Franklin County Courthouse. The public is invited.

"The responsibility that comes with this appointment is not to be taken lightly," Ivey said in a letter to Hamilton. "I trust that you will rise to the occasion and set a standard for others to follow. I appreciate you serving in this capacity, and I am confident you will render valuable service to the citizens of Alabama."

Hamilton said he was grateful and excited to receive the appointment, but he acknowledged the difficult circumstances under which the appointment was made.

"This is a bittersweet occasion. Judge Dempsey was a good friend and an outstanding judge," Hamilton said. "As a community, we continue to honor and remember him. I do want to thank Governor Ivey for the trust and confidence she placed in me

and I will work tirelessly as your Circuit Judge to ensure equal treatment under the law for all who come before the Circuit Court."

Hamilton, whose father Gene served as a Franklin County Commissioner and whose brother, Greg, is the Franklin County Superintendent of Education, said his interest in politics developed at a young age.

"My father always taught us public service was something to aspire to to help the citizens where we live," Hamilton said. "I've always considered getting involved in public office, but just did not anticipate doing it at this time."

Hamilton said he committed to run for election in 2024 and made that commitment to run as a Republican.

Hamilton previously served as Chairman of the Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee but resigned before his brother ran for superintendent in 2016. Hamilton said his transition to the Republican Party began around that time.

"I've been voting Republican since 2018. Like a lot of people in Franklin County, I previously considered myself a Democrat but things change over the years and I've been a Republican since 2018," Hamilton said.

When Hamilton starts in his new job, he'll face a backlog as Franklin County Circuit Court basically came to a standstill late last year when Dempsey became ill. District Judge Paula McDowell and retired Lauderdale County Circuit Judge Leslie Johnson have presided over some circuit court matters to ease that backlog the last few months.

"As quickly as I get sworn in, we'll go to work. It may mean longer hours than we're accustomed to but the people deserve to have their cases adjudicated as quickly as we can," Hamilton said.

Hamilton said he plans to retain Judicial Assistant Teresa Seal and Court Reporter De McGuire when he takes office.



COURTESY PHOTO  
Hamilton, above, will be sworn in as Franklin County Circuit Judge on Sunday, April 10th.

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# My take on this... Just a day in my life

I don't know about your life, but every time I start to go somewhere, my grands won't even say goodbye to me. I'll say goodbye and see you later and my "I love yous" and they'll say "you will be back!" Do you have any idea why I hear that?

It's the truth! I always come back in to get my car keys, my purse, or my to-do-list. I have even gone back inside to change a shoe and change into jeans. Oh yeah, I'm guilty! A shoe of a different style and my pajama bottoms.

Occasionally, hair rollers. Confusion begins most of my outings. The advantage of starting out far from perfect makes the fun begin early.

A few weeks ago, I was headed to Russellville to pay a few bills, pick up McDonald's for my grands, buy a few groceries and buy pea pebbles. It was raining on and off from a sprinkle to a downpour, but my groceries were loaded and I was on my way to buy pea gravel from Walmart in Russellville and then back home. I was proud of myself. Everything was running smoothly and I was finally going to be home on schedule.

Before going into Walmart to purchase the pea gravel, I had bought plastic to lay in the back of my car. I knew bags of wet pea gravel would be a terrible mess.

By the time I'd paid for it, the rain was intense and the temperature was dropping. I looked outside and asked the young man waiting on me if he had a raincoat. Not a raincoat, but a leather jacket without a hood; he told me. I told him I'd go see if I could load the gravel, some days I'm stronger than others. If I couldn't then I'd come back to get him to do it. That wasn't something he would consider. I even offered him a ride there and back, but he declined and said he would be down there about the time I got there.

He thanked me, smiled, put on his jacket and off he went.

I ran to my car and couldn't find my keys. I didn't see them in the car. I kept digging in my purse with no luck. So, now the young man was standing at the end of the row, near the gas station, in the cold rain, without a hood while waiting on me.

Here I go, where he can see me flailing my arms in the air and yelling like a wild woman that I couldn't find my keys. Needless, to say, he finally saw me and came back drenched, but still friendly and smiling. I kept apologizing



Gail Motes

but he kept reassuring me it was okay.

I had to use his phone to get a ride home because my phone was locked in my car. After returning to Walmart, I unlocked my car and I couldn't believe it. I couldn't find a key in the car! I searched inside a few times in disbelief and in the trunk. No key!

Then... I looked down. I began laughing because there on the ground, next to my trunk laid my keys.

I laughed to think about all the inconveniences that had taken place while my keys were in reach the entire time.

The next time you wonder why I'm always late... it's simple... my life is never boring. And I seem to meet the kindest people.

Thank you Marcus! You were like sunshine on a cold and rainy day!

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## 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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## Rockin' at the Roxy set to take place Saturday, April 9th with Kerry Gilbert Band

Submitted to the FFP

The Rockin' at the Roxy Show with Kerry Gilbert and the KGB Band will be this Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. Special guest is the Grafted Culture.

Gabriëlle and Michaëlle are the vocalists of Grafted Culture. The Dutch/American sisters were raised the first part of their lives in NL followed by several years in the beautiful jungles of Papua New Guinea before settling in the US where they began writing music that reflects their travels. The young ladies are quickly gaining recognition as their unique harmonies create magical chemistry on stage and their gentle natures are enjoyed off-stage.

They live in Tennessee and have been recording and performing in the Shoals Music Scene.

Their new Album—"Change of Winds"—was released April 8<sup>th</sup> and was recorded at Portside Sound in Sheffield. The latest single release is "Ivory Stands"

Their service mission is the SDG arts. It is a community initiative started by Gabriëlle and Michaëlle along with their family. The sisters use their music to fund the community project. The purpose of SDG arts is to

build community relationships by offering lessons in various areas such as painting, guitar, piano, and more. The lessons are all free of charge and it gives young and old alike an encouraging environment to get creative.

SDG arts also offers private art and music sessions for those struggling with Dementia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, PTSD, ADHD and other cognitive impairments and disabilities.

For more information visit their website [www.graftedculture.com](http://www.graftedculture.com)

The doors open at 6 p.m. and tickets may be purchased at the Roxy's ticket booth for \$10 or online at [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com)

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# JOB OPPORTUNITY

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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; 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 complains, 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 April 22, 2022 by U.S. Mail to:

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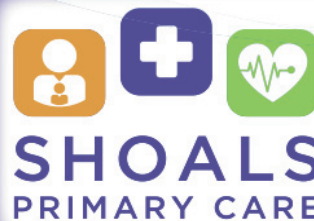
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# What's Happening


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 **O**sborn Hill Cemetery -Decoration Day will be on May 7, 2022. The first Saturday of May has been observed as Decoration Day for well over 100 years. All old flowers will need to be removed off the graves. Please make plans for that special day to come to the cemetery. Also its time again for annual donations. If you would like to donate to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, please send your donations to: Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674.


 **B**ethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, 305 Bethlehem Road, Russellville, has changed its Decoration Day to the first Sunday in May. This year that date will be Sunday, May 1st.

 **T**he 13th annual Coats Farm Benefit Trail Ride and Auction will be held on Friday, April 8th and Saturday, April 9th at Coats Farm at 1458 Co. Road 298 in Florence. Yard sale begins Friday at 8 a.m. in the barn with the trail ride beginning on Saturday at 9 a.m. There will be no silent auction. However, there will be restaurant, hotels and business gift cards sold at a discount. Chicken and goat stew, hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ, and ham and beans will be served beginning at 11 a.m. Homemade peach and apple fried pies will be sold as well. There will be a big auction held outside beginning at 12:15. New & used furniture, sports memorabilia, antiques, tools, appliances, horse and horse tack, grass seed and much more will be auctioned off. For more information, call NACCH Director Don Williams at (256)-366-3327. All proceeds go to North Alabama Christian Children's Home.

 **R**ussellville Masonic Lodge #371 is selling Smoked Hams for Easter. Hams are \$35 each and may be ordered by dialing 256-810-1970. Pickup is Saturday, April 16, between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.

 **I**t's that time again—Mowing Season. Time to remove all old flowers from graves and headstones at the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on Highway 724, Newburg. Donations are needed for the upkeep of the cemetery. If you have a loved one buried in this cemetery or want to help by contributing, please send contributions to: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, 941 Highway 87, Russellville, Al, 35654.

 **J**errred Price will return to Russellville's Roxy Theatre for his Almost Elton John concert on Saturday, April 23 at 7 p.m. Reserved tickets are \$35, \$30, \$25 and \$20 and may be purchased by calling 256-577-9932. Proceeds benefit the Historic Roxy Theatre.

 **F**irst Baptist Church College Avenue Russellville is celebrating its Pastor Appreciation Service on Sunday, April 10, at 10 a.m., during the morning service. Our pastor and first lady, Rev. B.J. Bonner and Josephine have been faithful to our church through 32 years of service. "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jeremiah 3:15. We appreciate your faithful service. Thank you for leading our congregation, being dedicated and involved in community service. Guest speaker will be Rev. Lamar Baker, Hopewell Baptist Church in New Market, AL. There will be a fellowship luncheon after the service.



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## 'ABSENTEE,' from page 1

mary. The amendment, which will appear on all primary ballots, calls for voters to decide whether to authorize \$85 million in bonds to be issued to maintain and renovate public historical sites and parks across Alabama.

Voters may also request by mail to vote absentee. A recent Alabama law now requires applicants to include copies of their photo ID with their application, rather than with their ballot, as was the case before 2020.

Absentee ballot applications must be received through the mail no later than May 17<sup>th</sup>. The last day to return applications in person is May 19<sup>th</sup> and the last day to return absentee ballots by hand is May 23<sup>rd</sup> or May 24<sup>th</sup> by noon through the mail.

Absentee ballot applications may be downloaded online at the Alabama Secretary of State's website, or by calling the Secretary of State's Elections Division at 334-242-7210.

For more information, visit <https://www.sos.alabama.gov>.

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# Beason, Bonds named Educators of the Year for 2022

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

For Phil Campbell High School AgriScience teacher Caleb Beason, agriculture isn't just a school subject—it's a way of life.

Beason's work to build Phil Campbell's FFA (formerly the Future Farmers of America) chapter has led to tremendous growth in the organization, as students learn the importance of agriculture in today's society.

Beason's dedication to his students formed the foundation of his receiving the Franklin County Schools Educator of the Year Award at the recent Franklin County Partnership Awards Banquet.

Russellville High School 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher Jill Bonds received the Russellville City Schools Educator of the Year Award for 2022.

Beason is active in taking students on trips and visiting working farms to show them that careers in agriculture are attainable and can help them make a comfortable living.

"Mr. Beason is an outstanding educator with a passion for his profession. He is truly an asset to our school system and worthy of the Educator of the Year Award," said Greg Hamilton, Franklin County Schools Superintendent of Education.

Beason and his students are involved in greenhouse projects, including planting and growing vegetables and flowers, and are learning fundamentals of agriculture as well as greenhouse design and production.

"I really desire for students, when they leave my program, that they are what I describe as a well-rounded student," Beason told [www.floraldaily.com](http://www.floraldaily.com) recently.

Phil Campbell's greenhouse was reconstructed in 2015 and is an integral part of Beason's AgriScience program.

He is also active in the Franklin County Cattleman's Association and Beason coordinates the annual Beef Cook-Off for area students.

Bonds, according to RHS Principal Jason Goodwin, is a perfect example of an educator who has good character and passion for her students.

Bonds, whose husband Tony is the Russellville Middle School Principal, recently earned her National Board Certification, one of the highest certifications an educator can earn.

She serves as the Christian Students United sponsor for RHS and is a strong supporter of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital through participation and promotion of various fundraisers.

"I could talk for days about Jill. She is an amazing educator who loves kids," Goodwin said. "She's passionate about it. It doesn't matter their level, she gets them to where they need to be and beyond.

"When Mr. Bonds interviewed with Russellville City Schools, Jill wanted to make sure she would be putting her kids in a place to be proud of where they would receive a quality education. I talked with her for hours about our curriculum, faculty and facilities. And we're very proud we got her and the Bonds family. She's been a rock star," he added.

Bonds' passion for teaching is obvious, but what she cares about even more is the students she's privileged to educate.

"While I absolutely love what I teach, I love who I get to teach even more. I have always strived to put relationships before rigor long before it was the trend," Bonds said. "It has paid off in dividends. I get to keep my amazing students so much longer than they have to stay in my classroom.

"We rejoice together in their successes and life events and we sometimes cry together when life doesn't go as they had planned. They are my reward and what an honor it is to have had the opportunity to gain so many friends along the way," she added.



COURTESY PHOTO

Sherye Price with the Franklin County Development Authority presents Caleb Beason with his Franklin County Educator of the Year Award.



COURTESY PHOTO

Sherye Price presents Jill Bonds with her Russellville Educator of the Year Award.



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# 'BONUSES,' from page 1

sewer board or utility systems with a director's fee not to exceed \$600/month (\$7,200 per year). There is an additional provision allowing the board to raise the director's fee to \$750 per meeting by a majority vote. A review of the minutes of REB meetings show no such action was ever considered or approved by the board.

While the board annually approves 'performance and safety incentives' equal to one and a half weeks' pay for REB employees, there has never been a vote to approve bonus payments for board members, as no such action appears in any board meeting minutes.

Performance and safety incentives are often used by companies as reward programs for employees and are based on meeting company performance and safety thresholds.

The only other compensation allowed for board members is *reimbursement for actual expenses incurred in and about the performance of their duties pursuant to this article*. Code of Alabama Sec. 11-50-313.

In spite of the \$7,200 maximum annual compensation limit, REB records show McDuffa was paid \$10,800 in 2021, and Jackson, Willis and Wells each received \$9,800.

Former board member Arthur Elliott also received \$9,800 in compensation last year. Elliott's term expired in December 2021 when he was replaced by Leamon Mosley.

Elliott said he had concerns about the 'performance and safety incentive' checks being paid to board members after a comment he said Canida made to the board about the checks.

"Charlie said he was going to give them out but he told me not to mention the checks to the board attorney," Elliott said. "That's what he told me."

As chairman, McDuffa received \$450/month in 2021, totaling \$5,400 and two bonus checks, each for \$2,700, in April 2021 and September 2021. Jackson, Willis and Wells each received \$400/month in 2021 plus two bonus checks in April and September, each for \$2,500.

In 2020 and 2019, board members received a \$2,400 bonus check each year in addition to the \$4,800 paid to board members and the \$5,400 paid to the board chairman.

Tax records received pursuant to an Open Records Act request show Jackson's 2020 REB compensation to be \$8,800, McDuffa's \$7,350 and Willis's \$7,200. Wells was appointed to the board in 2020 and received \$1,200 in compensation.

In 2019, Willis and McDuffa received \$7,200 in compensation and Jackson, who was board chairman, received \$9,000.

McDuffa said the bonuses were paid back to REB because the board did not approve the expenses at a meeting.

"The reason was we realized we did not make proper motion to do that. We've been doing it in the past but were not making a motion to approve it at meetings," McDuffa said.

Jackson said the pay backs were made after an auditor recommended the board do so.

"Our auditor recommended we pay them back. I'm not sure why. It's been a year or so," Jackson said. "It was brought up in error and it was refunded. Some of the other board members who were previously on the board did not come across with paying it back."

At the board's March meeting, Jackson brought up the possibility of the board giving itself a raise to \$600/month per member. That amount would total \$7,200 per board member, per year.

"I just heard a rumor another board had gone up and I don't think we are any different than they are. I've not verified that yet. I just want to look into it,"

Jackson said. "I don't think it's fair for one to be drawing more than the other," he added.

The legality or illegality of board members receiving bonuses is not a new issue for the Russellville Electric Board.

In 2019, former board chairman Darren Woodruff filed a complaint with the Alabama Ethics Commission about Canida paying board members bonuses in violation of Alabama law.

Woodruff's complaint addressed the 'performance and safety incentive' bonus checks paid by Canida to board members.

"Mr. Canida informed and indicated to the board on numerous occasions that he had checked on the ethical legality of this type of payment and that it could be done as long as it was not called a bonus," Woodruff said.

Woodruff also said the board never voted to approve bonuses for board members. Woodruff said he told Canida he was concerned about the bonus checks not being approved by the board but Canida said it was not a problem.

"He said the bonus checks were paid at the manager's discretion and by doing it that way, it takes the board out of it," Woodruff said. "Not only do I believe these payments were illegal and unethical. But they were never disclosed to the citizens of the community served by the Russellville Electric Board. That's why I requested an investigation."

Woodruff said he was contacted by an employee of the Ethics Commission and told they were not going to prosecute the matter, but he did not receive an answer as to the legality of the incentive checks.

Woodruff said Canida received a 'performance and safety incentive' equal to 1.5 weeks' pay along with other REB employees each time they were approved by the board. During his tenure on the REB, Woodruff received approximately \$20,000 in 'performance and safety incentive' bonuses, he said.

"I was ready to pay mine back and was advised not to. I filed an ethics complaint about it," Woodruff said. "I wanted to stop the practice and terminate Charlie Canida. The board did not want to terminate him. They wanted to reprimand him, so we did that and then they rescinded it from the minutes the next month."

Canida was contacted for comment by the FFP but did not respond.



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## Baker pitches Bobcats past Hatton for seventh win in last eight games

Staff reports

Phil Campbell got a complete game three-hitter from Hunter Baker and three hits apiece from Sage Raper and Mason Swinney on Saturday, cruising to an 11-1 rout of visiting Hatton.

The Bobcats (15-6) jumped out to an early lead with three runs in the bottom of the first. Raper led off with a double and scored on Swinney's single to center. One out later, a single by Kyle Pace and a hit batter loaded the bases. Swinney and Pace both scored on a wild pitch, pushing the lead to 3-0.

Baker worked around an error and a single in the top of the second, and Phil Campbell put up three more runs in the bottom half. Raper drew a one-out walk, and Swinney followed with his second hit of the day. Cam Habada drove in a run with a groundout, and Swinney scored when Kyle Pace reached on an error. After a single by Baker and a walk to Cole Pace, Kyle Pace came home on a passed ball to make it 6-0.

The Bobcats added to their lead in the bottom of the fourth. Habada doubled, moved up on a single by Kyle Pace and scored on Baker's sac fly. Bryant Hyde came through with an RBI single to drive in Pace and make it 8-0.

Hatton broke up Baker's shutout bid in the top of the fifth, scoring one run on a triple and a groundout. Phil Campbell answered right back with two runs in the bottom half, getting an RBI double from Swinney and an RBI groundout from Kyle Pace to make it 10-1.

The Bobcats finished off the win in the bottom of the sixth, loading the bases on three walks and getting an RBI single from Raper to make it 11-1.

See 'BOBCATS,' page 13

# Franklin Free Press 2021-22

## All-County Boys Basketball



**Bonner, left, led the county in scoring with 21.6 points per game for the Belgreen Bulldogs as they captured the area title. Gipson, right, scored 19.1 points per game for the Golden Tigers in his senior season.**

Brady Petree  
Franklin Free Press

PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

cemented himself as one of the best all-around players not only in Franklin County, but in Northwest Alabama as well.

Bonner was no stranger to the big stage, as two of his best games in his senior season came against an eventual state champion and state champion runner-up.

Against Covenant Christian, Bonner scored 33 points in a win for Belgreen, going 11-11 from the charity stripe. Then against 2A Mars Hill, Bonner dropped 32 points while going 12-17 from the field.

**First Team (in no particular order)**  
**Eli Gipson, Senior Guard, Russellville**

Gipson came on strong as a Junior for the Golden Tigers a season ago.

Then, in his senior season playing for head coach Patrick Odom, Gipson took his game to an entirely new level, leading the Golden Tigers to an area title.

A Union University signee for baseball, Gipson averaged 19.1 points per game, good for second highest among all county qualifiers, which includes a 37 point scoring outing against Colbert County.

Across 27 games played for the Golden Tigers, Gipson scored in double digits in 24 of those

Another memorable season of boys basketball has come and gone, and with its ending, we say goodbye to a few notable players who have left their mark on the high school basketball scene in Franklin County.

However, before they depart for the college ranks and younger players turn the page and look towards a new season, it's time to unveil our 2021-22 all-county boys team.

So without further ado...

**Player of the Year**

**Will Bonner, Senior Guard, Belgreen**

A mainstay of the *Franklin Free Press*' all-county team for most of the duration of his time at the varsity level, Bonner wrapped up his stellar career with the Bulldogs crossing several milestones in his senior season.

Most notably perhaps, was the 2,000 point milestone that Bonner crossed in January for his career.

Scoring 21.6 points per game (518 total points) in his senior season, Bonner led the charge for the Bulldogs en route to yet another area title.

Pulling down 87 rebounds (3.6 per game) and dishing out 76 assists (3.0 per game), Bonner

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## 'BOBCATS,' from page 11

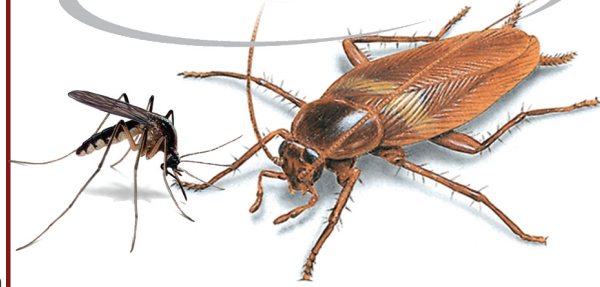
Baker (1-0) held Hatton to just three hits and one earned run in six innings. He did not issue a walk and struck out four, getting 11 groundball outs and throwing 57 of his 84 pitches for strikes.

Swinney finished 3-for-4 with his seventh double of the season, two RBIs and three runs scored. He's now 9-for-10 at the plate over the past three games, raising his season average to .508 (30-for-59). Swinney now has 42 multi-hit games in his varsity career, including 22 games with at least three hits.

Raper recorded his third three-hit game of the season on Saturday, finishing 3-for-3 and reaching base all five times he batted. He drove in a run and scored three.

Kyle Pace was 2-for-4 on Saturday with an RBI and three runs scored. Hyde went 1-for-1 with an RBI and a walk, and Baker was 1-for-2 with an RBI. Cole Pace walked three times and scored a run, and Habada went 1-for-4 with a double, an RBI and a run.

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# 'TEAM,' from page 11

games.  
In addition to his scoring, Gipson also contributed with 3.6 rebounds per game and 2.6 assists per game.

### **Collin Bonner, Senior Forward, Belgreen**

Part of a dynamic 1-2 punch for the Bulldogs along with his brother Will, Bonner provided a variety of skills needed for the Bulldogs to compete across the season.

The slashing forward for head coach Marty Cooper and the Bulldogs eclipsed the 1,000 point mark for his career while scoring 14.5 points per game (349 total points) in his final year.

Bonner also contributed 98 rebounds (4.0 per game) and totaled 50 assists (2.0 per game) for Belgreen.

The best performance of the year for Bonner came across state lines at the Hotbed Classic against Mississippi 1A powerhouse Ingomar where he scored 30 points en route to a win for Belgreen.

Against 4A Wilson, Bonner picked up 29 points and added seven rebounds and three blocks on the night to his total as well.

### **Cam Habada, Junior Guard, Phil Campbell**

The only non-Senior to make our first team, Habada led the Bobcats in scoring with 13 points per game across 27 total games played in his junior campaign.

Habada, one of two Bobcat juniors to make our all-county teams, led Phil Campbell in scoring on the season while also chipping in with 4.1 rebounds per game and 2.6 assists per game.

From the free throw line, Habada shot 78 percent in addition to shooting 43 percent from the field.

Defensively, Habada led the Bobcats with 2.1 steals per game as well.

### **Cayden Lawler, Senior Guard, Vina**

Much like his female counterpart Sara Scott, Lawler also wrapped up his career with the Red Devils averaging a double-double on the season.

The Senior leader for the Red Devils, Lawler averages 16 points per game and ten rebounds per game, the only boys player across the 2021-22 season to average a double-double for the entire season.

### **Second Team (in no particular order)**

### **Dylan Valdez, Sophomore Forward, Tharptown**

The only underclassman to make either of our teams is the sophomore from Tharptown, Valdez.

Under first-year head coach Sonny Conwill, Valdez led the way in scoring for a young Tharptown squad with 14.5 points per game, good for a tie of fourth-highest in the county (Collin Bonner).

Scoring wasn't the only way that Valdez contributed for the Wildcats as he also tallied 2.3 assists per game for Tharptown as well.

### **Arrien "Boots" McCulloch, Senior Guard, Russellville**

Arguably one of the best defensive guards around, McCulloch terrorized defenses all season long for the Golden Tigers on both sides of the ball.

A staple of head coach Patrick Odom's lineup for a majority of his varsity career, McCulloch averaged 9.8 points per game, 2.9 assists per game and defensively averaged 1.7 steals per game.

### **Carson Corum, Senior Guard, Red Bay**

Leading a regional tournament team in scoring is no easy task but Corum managed to find a way to put up respectable numbers all season long.

The 5'9 guard averaged 11.3 points per game for head coach John Torisky and the Tigers in leading Red Bay back to the regional tournament in Hanceville.

What is most notable about Corum's scoring output, is that 267 of those points came from beyond the three-point line which accounted for 69 percent of his total scoring output for the season.

Corum also totaled 1.9 assists per game on the year for Red Bay as well.

### **Canaan Clay, Junior Guard, Phil Campbell**

Clay made significant strides in his junior season for the Bobcats as he and Habada - along with Kyle Pace who just narrowly missed our team this season, but will be a player to watch moving forward - will lead the Bobcats next season as seniors looking to return Phil Campbell to Hanceville.

Clay shot an extremely efficient 43 percent from beyond the arc en route to an 11.7 points per game tally. In addition, Clay also averaged 5.6 rebounds per game while contributing in the assist game with 1.6 per game.

The junior Bobcat also averaged 1.5 steals per game.

### **Nathan Brockway, Senior Center, Russellville**

After rehabbing a knee injury last season, Brockway returned in style for his senior season.

Across an area title winning campaign for the Golden Tigers, Brockway averaged 10.1 points per game and was extremely reliable on the glass with 5.1 rebounds per game for Russellville.

### **Honorable Mentions**

### **Amir Williams, Sophomore Forward, Russellville**

Williams will be a player to keep a close eye on next season for the Golden Tigers as they graduate multiple seniors and will be in need of some of the younger players to step up.

And Williams could very well be the answer to that issue if he continues working on his game. In his sophomore season, Williams averaged 10.7 points per game while hauling in 3.8 rebounds per game and adding 1.2 assists per game to his credit.

### **Landon Glover, Senior Forward, Red Bay**

Glover was a force to be reckoned with both on offense and defense for the Tigers.

Scoring 8.6 points per game, Glover did an impressive amount of damage on the defensive end as well.

Through 32 games played, the 6'5 forward blocked 45 shots, good for 1.4 per game.

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## 'TEAM,' from page 14

In terms of rebounding, Glover hauled in 193 rebounds (6.0 per game) in his senior season.

### Andrew Ray, Senior Guard, Red Bay

The final piece of a formidable trio of seniors, Ray was a bit of a spark plug both on offense and defense for the Tigers as they made the return to Wallace State for a berth in the regional tournament.

Offensively, Ray scored 252 points (7.4 points per game) with 68 steals (1.6 per game) on defense.

### Coach of the Year

### John Torisky, Red Bay

Franklin County is rich with worthy head coaches for our coach of the year award. One could easily make the case for Marty Cooper at Belgreen, Patrick Odom at Russellville, among others.

However, we'll hand it off to John Torisky at Red Bay who led the Tigers to an area title and a northwest regional playoff berth at Wallace State.

After losing the likes of Braden Ray, Jalen Vinson, and Lane Shewbart, one might have figured that the Tigers might have to sit back and re-tool a bit before returning to aspirations of making it back to the regional tournament.

But Torisky and his staff knew that they still had something special despite the departure of the three players mentioned above.

Led by the trio of seniors we have already named to our all-county team, the Tigers managed to go 20-10 en route to the 2A area 13 title and met up with the Sheffield Bulldogs in the regional semifinals at Hanceville, the only program in Franklin County to secure a berth.

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