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Reaching new heights: RCS earns 'A' on state report card

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

If Russellville City Schools had a refrigerator, Superintendent Heath Grimes could display the system's Alabama State Report Card right on front.

The 2021-2022 state report card scores were released Monday after a two-year absence due to COVID-19 creating challenges including virtual learning, excessive absences and other COVID related factors.

The system received an overall score of 90, a 'A,' and a spot in the

state's top 20 school system scores. This is the first time Russellville City Schools has attained a grade of 'A,' made all the more impressive by the fact that fewer school systems earned an 'A' or 'B' grade this year.

"It's no secret our teachers, students and staff have faced many unprecedented challenges since the last State Report Card was released," Grimes said. "But as they always do, they have risen to meet those challenges head-on and have worked tremendously hard to account for any gaps in learning that the pandemic may have caused.

See 'REPORT CARD,' Page 4

Commission tables Byars' request for second \$1/hr. employee raise

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

In a split vote, the Franklin County Commission voted 3-1 to table a request from Franklin County Revenue Commissioner Stratt Byars for a \$1/hour increase in the pay of all Revenue Commission Office employees.

At the commission's November 21, 2022, meeting, Commissioners Chris Wallace, Joseph Baldwin and David Hester voted in favor of tabling the issue until next summer when the commission begins budget discussions for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Commissioner Jason Miller voted against the measure.

Byars made the request at the

commission's November 14th work session.

All Franklin County full-time employees received a \$1/hour raise that started October 1, 2022, the first day of the new fiscal year.

Additionally, the commission approved a \$1/hour increase to the pay scale for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office in October. At the time the second \$1/hour was approved, Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore said it was an effort by commissioners to make law enforcement jobs in Franklin County more attractive and competitive with neighboring jurisdictions.

Byars, who repeatedly said he supported the second \$1/hour increase for sheriff's employees, also

See 'COMMISSION,' Page 8

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Christy Lynn Aycock Darks, 48, of Lebanon, Tennessee, passed away Thursday, November 24, 2022. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

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Letter to the Editor: Reader questions why letter was published

(Editor's Note: While most of our letters to the editor are written by local residents, we do not require that as a condition to submit a letter. We have run letters to the editor from statewide political candidates, non-profit organizations and other individuals. While we may not agree with Ms. Kirkpatrick's views, we respect the right of all readers to share their opinions.)

Dear Editor:

In reference to the letter from Lynda Kirkpatrick, Chair Marion County Democratic Party, I am very disappointed that this feminist which is not even from Franklin County and lives in Winfield had a article published in your paper.

People will read and believe her inaccurate information. Very disappointed. She has no business saying anything to the voters of Franklin County.

Pam Cannon Taylor
Franklin County

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

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

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

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'REPORT CARD,' from Page 1

"I'm extremely proud of everyone in this district and their determination and drive. This district grade is something everyone should celebrate because it is an achievement everyone played a part in," Grimes added.

There are several criteria used to calculate each school's, and school system's, overall grade. Those factors include: academic achievement, academic growth, college and career readiness, graduation rate, chronic absenteeism, and progress in English proficiency. The English proficiency indicator represents five percent of a system's overall score if at least 20 of its students fall below English proficiency standards.

Additionally, the only students who are included in the English proficiency score in Alabama are those who have been in the United States six years or more.

Overall, Russellville City Schools scored extremely well in academic growth, graduation rate, college and career readiness and chronic absenteeism.

In the English proficiency category, most Alabama schools received failing grades (below 60). In fact, the state average is 43.56. Russellville City Schools had a score of 57.70, significantly higher than the state average, but still below a 60. With 56.22% of its students classified as Hispanic/Latino, Russellville City Schools has one of the state's highest Hispanic/Latino enrollments. The system has received state acclaim for its innovation in helping students attain English proficiency.

Even though the system earned its highest score ever, there were two Russellville City Schools that saw their overall score decrease from three years ago. Those were Russellville Middle School and Russellville High School.

RHS' score dropped from a 90 to an 82. But Grimes explained that drop resulted from a change in the metrics used for grading.

"The state changed the way it scored the 2019 ELA data from using ACT English to using English, Reading and Writing, which changed the scores significantly for high schools," Grimes said. "Also, the cut scores that were used for academic proficiency in the ACT changed in some categories by two points. That is a major change in ACT scoring."

"While the report card score might have changed for RHS, the level of proficiency really didn't. It's very misleading and shouldn't be reflected as a drop but rather where RHS stands on a new scoring system," he added.

RHS excelled in graduation rate and college and career readiness, but dropped in its academic achievement score.

Russellville Middle School scored an 81 three years ago and saw that number drop to 79 this year. Even with the two-point drop, RMS remains among the top half of middle schools in Alabama and scored above the state average of 77. RMS ranked 121/245 middle and junior high schools.

Russellville Elementary School's overall grade of 86 was boosted by a 100 score in academic growth and a strong score in chronic absenteeism.

West Elementary School also received an 86 and a perfect score of 100 in academic growth.

While Grimes continues to take issue with some of the State Department of Education criteria used to calculate school report card scores, he remains satisfied with the way Russellville City Schools is educating its children.

"Education, especially here at Russellville City Schools, is more than a score and can't be judged by one single letter grade," Grimes said. "When you're at these schools day in and day out, you can see students gaining confidence in what they're learning; you can see English Language Learners finally grasping a completely new language that they're expected to take tests in; you can see students living out the character lessons they're learning on kindness and respect and responsibility; you see students coming out of their shells and making friends or trying new extracurricular activities; you see students persevering and trying their hardest even though life for them outside of school may be challenging.

"These kinds of things are all important to a child's education as well. Well-rounded students are well-prepared students, and we believe that's what we have here at RCS. Our students are seeing growth at all levels, and that's what we're focused on," Grimes added.

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 **T**he Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt Col John W Harris Jr, Camp #1833 will meet Thursday, December 1st, at 6:00PM at Russellville Rec Center on Ash Ave in Russellville. Camp #1833 meets the 1st Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more info call 256-324-2317. Everyone's welcome!

 **T**he Senior Center at Phil Campbell is under new management. The Town of Phil Campbell would like to invite and encourage everyone in our area that is 60 years and older to come be a part of the group. This is for men and women. They meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00. A delicious lunch is served around 11:00 a.m. Come on out and join in on the games or just sit and have a cup of coffee and socialize!! So if you, your parents, grandparents or your neighbor is 60 or older, pass the word and come out and enjoy a morning of fun & lunch!

 **T**he Town of Littleville announces a change in its garbage pickup schedule for the upcoming holidays: They will be picking trash on November 23rd.-28th and on December 2nd. The mayor and council added an extra pickup to give more services to their citizens. They have also added an extra pickup during Christmas and New Years holidays.

 **T**he annual Russellville Christmas Parade will be Thursday, December 1, 2022, at 6 p.m. There are applications available for participation at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. This year's theme is "Christmas Past." Line up will be 5:15 p.m., at Big Star parking lot. Entry deadline is Monday, Nov. 28, at 4 p.m.

 **D**on't miss the 3rd Annual Santa Fly-In and Toy Drive Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m., at the Russellville Municipal Airport. Come experience the magic of Santa's arrival with your family! Bring a toy to donate and your camera for a pic with Santa!

 **T**he East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department will be serving William Earl Bishop's smoked chicken and pulled barbecue pork plates from 4-7 p.m., on Friday, December 2nd. Due to popular demand, they will be smoking even more chicken this time. Proceeds will be used to help pay for their new Engine 1 fire truck. Plates available at EFVFD, 10443 Highway 81, Phil Campbell. Carryout or Dine-In. Plates are \$10 each. Dessert donations appreciated.

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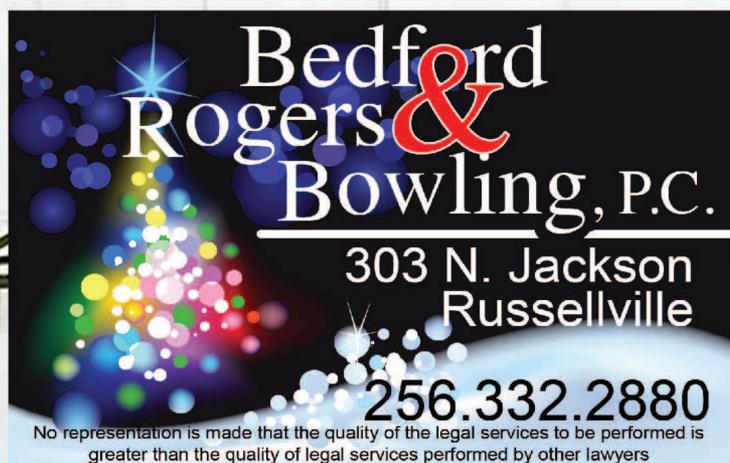
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‘COMMISSION,’ from Page 1

requested the same \$1/hour additional raise for his office staff, saying he believed any raise should have been across the board for all county employees.

After commissioners tabled the request until budget consideration time, Byars asked for the issue to be placed on the December 2022 meeting agenda, but Moore said the commission's action meant the request would not be discussed until summer 2023.

The Sheriff's Office sees more employer turnover than any other county department, so Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver came to commissioners this summer and asked for the \$1/hour pay scale increase as a way to bring hourly wages to the level of Colbert and Lawrence Counties, as well as the Russellville Police Department.

According to Moore, the commission supported the request, which was independent of the \$1/hour across the board raises for all county employees, but the State of Alabama Auditors said the commission could not include the \$1/hour pay scale increase for one department in its budget.

Auditors said the commission would have to do it at a business meeting after the FY 2022-23 budget was approved, so that's what happened in October, he explained.

Oliver, who rarely addresses the county commission, spoke at the November 21st meeting to clear up what he called 'some issues and misconceptions' about his department.

“During the budget process in August, I asked for a raise for my employees and ultimately, I asked for a change in the pay scale,” Oliver said. “We were so far off other pay scales. And the men and women in our department do a lot for the people of Franklin County.”

“What ended up happening is they got a \$1/hour raise that all employees got and the pay scale change of \$1/hour, and I'm here to say I appreciate it. Right now, my employees feel like they are being attacked and feel like people don't think they deserve (the raise). We did a lot of research to see what similar departments are paying and I appreciate what you have done. But I wanted to publicly clear this up and clarify exactly what was done,” he added.

The Sheriff's Office has a pay scale that's different from other departments because of the unique hierarchy of the department, with sergeants, captains, etc.

Oliver also said there were some reductions in other areas of his office budget to help compensate for the \$1/hour pay scale increase. With the total of a \$2/hour increase, Oliver said the pay is now competitive with neighboring departments.

“Our biggest turnover now is in jail staff. It's not the most ideal work environment, and it's not a job everyone can do,” Oliver said. “Our training for a new deputy is about eight months before he completes it and gets on the road by himself.”

In other agenda items, the commission:

--accepted a \$500 bid from Taylor Weclowski for the purchase of a 2007 Nissan Titan and \$451 from Jamie Medley on a 2008 Dodge Durango. Both vehicles had been declared surplus property.

--accepted the retirement of Steve Pounders from the Franklin County Highway Department, and approved the hiring of Mickey Montgomery to fill the Certified Construction Manager position.

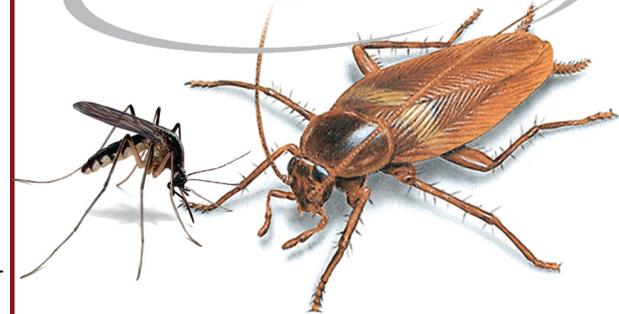
--approved the termination of Michael Harris from a Corrections Officer/Dispatcher position, approved the promotion of Brent Wells to deputy and the employment of Samuel Allen Cosby as Sheriff's Office Clerk.

--approved an allocation for \$7,250 for gutter repairs and wood work at the Franklin County Department of Human Resources building.

--set Friday, Dec. 23 and Monday, Dec. 26, as holidays for Christmas. The courthouse will be closed both dates.

--appointed Commissioner Joseph Baldwin as Chairman Pro Tem of the Franklin County Commission.

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City of Russellville targets Oct. 2023 start for commercial solid waste operations

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved the purchase of more than \$1 million in vehicles and dumpsters that will allow the city to begin commercial solid waste operations next year.

The council unanimously approved the purchases at its November 21st meeting.

There will be two 2024 Mack TE64 Heil Front Loader garbage trucks purchased from Ingram Equipment for \$686,376.34, one 2023 International CV515 Galbreath CH800 Container Handler truck purchased for \$106,988.23, also from Ingram Equipment.

The city council authorized the purchase of up to 230 commercial front load garbage dumpsters, not to exceed \$214,550. Russellville Mayor David Grissom said there is a possibility the city may purchase used dumpsters from the Franklin County Solid Waste Department at a later time.

With order delays on the vehicles, it is not expected that the city will begin commercial solid waste operations until October 2023.

In other agenda items, the council:

--awarded a bank bid for financing four 2023 Kenworth T880 dump trucks for the Russellville Street Department, in the amount of \$900,226.16, to be used for paving jobs.

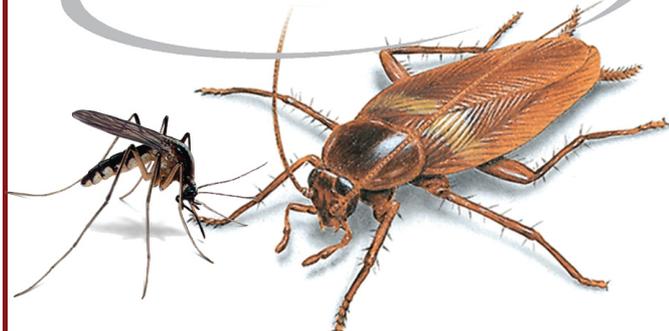
--authorized City Clerk Belinda Miller to open a bank account for the city's Opioid Settlement Funds.

--accepted a letter of resignation from Officer Kyle Knight in the Russellville Police Department and declared a vacancy for Patrol Officer.

--corrected the pay scale for Randall Jacob Vandiver, hired October 17, 2022, in the RPD to Grade 6, Step 2, based on experience.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be December 5, 2022, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

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Shepherd's album launch held at Alabama Music Hall of Fame

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When acclaimed Shoals songwriter/musician Earl 'Peanutt' Montgomery began a 25-minute music set Sunday evening at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, the capacity crowd not only enjoyed his music, but also the legendary songwriter's stories.

Montgomery penned 73 songs recorded by George Jones, 31 recorded by Tammy Wynette and 44 released by his sister, Melba Montgomery.

He's shared the stage with musical legends including Etta James and Patsy Cline, and Montgomery had a lengthy stint as lead guitar player at Fame Recording Studio in Muscle Shoals.

But as talented as Montgomery is, the more than 200 in attendance weren't there just to hear his music and stories. The star of the night was Montgomery's great nephew, Luke 'L.A.' Shepherd, who debuted his new EP *Blue Collar* at the November 20th event.

Shepherd, a Russellville High School alumnus, hosted an evening of music that included the six songs off his new EP and a steady diet of cover songs that kept the crowd engaged during his two sets.

Blue Collar was recorded at City Lights Studio in Decatur. It includes six original songs, several written by Shepherd, including *Cold Like Home*, an emotional ballad about moving on, quite literally, from a lost love.

"In a beat up Dodge Durango, I'll be heading out for Colorado.

Ever since she called it quits, I need somewhere I know nobody will follow.

Cause if I have to live this life alone, I'm gonna hit the highway.

And do my best to find somewhere out there for this old heart to break."

Shepherd's *Alabamer Queen*, the song he is promoting for his first radio release, tells the story of a 'Birmingham princess, makin' me speechless, every time she walks in a room...She ain't afraid to raise a little cain on a weekday. She ain't ashamed if her twang is a little too yee-hah! She can handle a shotgun, shotgun a cold one, hotter than the cotton pickin' heat. She gets it good and honest from her momma's daddy's momma. She's a home sweet Rammerjammer, Yellowhammer, Alabama queen."

Shepherd's EP is available on iTunes for \$4.99. Spiked by downloads from those in attendance at his album release party, *Blue Collar* soared to the #72 most downloaded country album the day after his show.

When you reserve the Alabama Music Hall of Fame for your debut album release party, it



Shepherd, left, with Earl "Peanutt" Montgomery.

can be a roll of the dice to see how many folks show up. By all accounts, though, Shepherd could never have envisioned the turnout.

"I didn't know tonight if this place would be near empty or near full, so I really appreciate y'all being here tonight," Shepherd said.

As the 81-year-old Montgomery concluded his set, he had some words of praise and encouragement for his great nephew.

"I think Luke, if he stays on the right road and the straight and narrow, and keeps on pushing, working together with honest people, I believe this boy will be a star one day," Montgomery said. "I wish him the best and I may even put him in my will a little."

Shepherd promised to 'work til I get this right or it will all be for naught,' saying that's something 'Peanutt' taught him.

As he neared the end of his final set, Shepherd sang his favorite George Jones song, *Loving You Could Never Be Better*, written by Uncle 'Peanutt,' his wife Charlene and Betty Tate.

He followed with a tribute to his father, Paul Shepherd, who also plays keyboard in Shepherd's band, his mother, Debbie Nale and his grandmother, Carol Frederick. Shepherd then performed an emotional tribute of Dillon Carmichael's *Son of A*.

I'm a son of a momma, a son of a dad,
Who will never stop loving me and being there
And giving me everything they have.
Let me tell you that I get it now, I'll admit it now,
Why I am the man I am.

I'm the son of a momma, a son of a dad who give a damn.

Before finishing with *Amazing Grace*, Shepherd talked about the past 12 months, a period he described as 'a long hard year,' and some of the personal struggles the 29-year-old has faced recently.

I've recently rededicated my life to the Lord and I'm thankful for his *Amazing Grace*,?Shepherd said.

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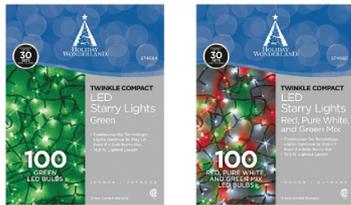


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Fast start has Golden Tiger varsity girls off to 4-2 record

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville High School varsity girls basketball team has started the year 4-2 after beating Central and Tharptown for their first two wins.

Head RHS girls basketball coach Jermaine Groce is entering his fourth year as coach and is looking to see progress after rebuilding the school's girls varsity basketball program.

"We're establishing a winning culture," Groce said.

The Russellville Golden Tigers' main objective this season is to remain competitive and stay free of any injuries, Groce said.

The Golden Tigers are returning their top five scorers from last season to ?

The top scorer from last season was a three-way split among Ella Copeland, Jenna Whitfield and Jacey Moore, who all averaged 10 points per game.

Copeland started the year off strong and was a candidate for the Times Daily Player of the Week. She scored 24 points in the Golden Tigers' win over Central.

"Moore has always been tough and is great at figuring out how to score inside. She also led the team in rebounds last season," Groce said.

The Golden Tigers return Anna Beth Oliver and Avery Watts who can each score 10 points on any given night.

Russellville will compete in 5A Area 15 this season and next. Lawrence County and West Point both return to Area 15 and Brewer High School is the lone newcomer in the four-team group.

Golden Tigers loaded with experienced junior talent for 2022-2023 campaign

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With five seniors on the roster, Russellville High School boys varsity basketball coach Patrick Odom would seem to have a team loaded with experience. And he does, but not in the way you might think.

"It's a little misleading in that we really have only two seniors with varsity experience," Odom said. "For Randall (Johnson), it's his first time playing basketball. Conner (Warhurst) and Tilman (Baker) are our main experienced guys among that senior group. Our juniors as a whole have more experience as far as playing on the varsity."

That group of six juniors is expected to contribute heavily this season. And in the Golden Tigers' season opener, junior Amir Williams led the team with 21 points as Russellville rolled over Central, 73-51.

With eight of his 12 players playing varsity football, it wasn't until last week that Odom had the entire group together for practice. But that's not a problem at all, he explained.

"That's pretty common to have guys playing football as well as basketball, and that's the way I like it," Odom said. "I love our guys being out there helping us win in football."

In addition to Warhurst, Johnson and Baker, the other seniors include EJ Jones and Malachi



ODOM

Gholston. Juniors include Williams, Mike Young, KJ Murray, Gavin Hyde, Braylin Vincent and Malachi Duncan. The lone sophomore is Jai Williams.

The Golden Tigers improved to 2-0 November

See, 'RHS,' page 15

Bobcats off and running to 5-1 start

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

Now into his fourth year as the Phil Campbell Bobcats' boys varsity basketball coach, Shane Clay has seen his team start fast with a 5-1 record.

After last season's playoff loss to Danville, Clay immediately began focusing on this season.

The Bobcats will miss last year's leading scorer, Cam Habada, due to surgery he recently underwent, as well as two senior players who were key contributors in 2021.

"We're losing Blaine Goodson, a three-year starter, and Seth Hutcheson, who both graduated last year," Clay said.

"Blaine did well for us and Seth was more of a role player that we could play anywhere we needed him."

The Bobcats' roster might look a little strange to most, with 10 seniors and two juniors.

"This senior class I have now was 9th graders when I got here. They've improved tremendously over the years and are bought into my system," Clay said.

Last week, the Bobcats had the opportunity to play a 6A team and a 7A team in a Thanksgiving tournament.

"We had a surprising amount of success against the larger schools," Clay said.

The Bobcats played Lamar County first and Bryant Hyde and Canaan Clay both scored 16 points each.

"We did a great job finding out their shooters early and putting pressure on their shots and boxing out well," Clay said.

In the second round of the tournament, the Bobcats faced a well coached and very athletic Addison team.

"We ended up playing zone because a lot of their guys were tall and lanky and I didn't think we matched up with them well if we played

See, 'PC,' page 16

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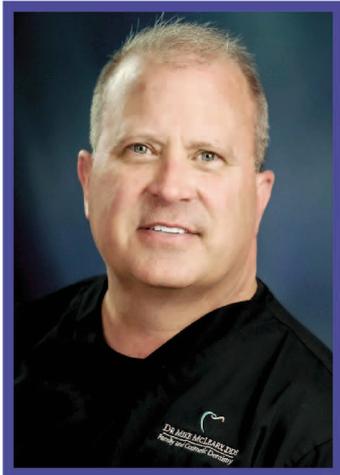
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'RHS,' from Page 13

21st with a 67-58 road win at Colbert County. Russellville traveled to Jasper the next night, and returned home with a 84-52 loss, to fall to 2-1.

Russellville returns from a Thanksgiving break with a November 28th road game at Deshler, followed by a home contest the next day as the Florence Falcons come to town.

The Golden Tigers will take part in the Times Daily Tournament in mid-December, and the annual Bracy Invitational after Christmas.

The lone Franklin County opponent on this year's schedule is Red Bay. Russellville will travel to Red Bay on December 10th and the Tigers will come to Russellville on January 30, 2023.

So far, so good, Odom said. He likes his team's toughness and intensity, but that's tempered by the need for improvement in other areas.

"I thought we got off to a good start, but we're nowhere where we need to be overall," Odom said. "But we've played really hard and that will be the identity of this group. If you play hard and with a lot of toughness, those two things take care of a lot of mistakes.

"We're playing well defensively and we hang our hat on that every night," he added.

With a full-court pressure defense from start to finish, the team must rely on every player to contribute, and Odom said his team realizes that defensive intensity allows each of them to have their opportunity on the court.

"It's a full-court 100 percent pressure defense with all kinds of variations where we pick you up all 94 feet," Odom said. "We've got a lot of guys with experience who can play and all 12 played in our first game. We'll rotate nine or 10 guys pretty consistently and that's a benefit to have that experience.

"We've got a lot of guys with interchangeable parts and it's probably the deepest roster I've had since I've been at Russellville," he added.

Odom's style of play turns pressure defense into offensive opportunities.

"Turnovers can create easy baskets at the other end so we try to play with an uptempo pace and force the other team to run with us," Odom said. "Our motto is 'relentless.' If you're on the floor, we expect a relentless effort and it's each player's job to bring that energy."

In his 8th season as boys varsity basketball coach, Odom's teams have excelled in area play. This year's 5A Area 15 includes Russellville, Lawrence County, West Point and Brewer, the one newcomer.

The Golden Tigers finished last year with a 16-11 record and a second consecutive area title.

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'PC,' from Page 13

man defense," Clay said.

The Bobcats beat Addison 60-44.

In the championship game, the Bobcats faced the Shoals Christian Flames and lost 51-49 in a last second battle where the Flames shot two free throws in a row with 10 seconds left on the clock.

"It was a very back and forth game where neither team had a lead greater than five points," Clay said.

The Bobcats' area changed this year and they picked up Colbert Heights and Colbert County in area play.

"Both Colbert Heights and Colbert County are on our radar this year. Both schools have great teams and always have an athletic bunch," Clay said.

The Bobcats' point guard is Bryant Hyde who was injured last year after Christmas.

"Hyde is really athletic and gets down the court as fast as you can. He's the guy who takes control of the game for us," Clay said.

Guard Gage Baker averages eight points a game and is a big help on defense.

"We ask Baker to do a lot. He was very instrumental on defense in our win over Bear Creek this year," Clay said.

Top Scorer Kyle Pace is a two-year starter and is a big guard standing 6'2".

Pace handles the ball well and is the third best shooter on the team averaging 11 points a game, Clay said.

"Pace is by far our best player when it comes to driving the ball to the basket," Clay said.

Canaan Clay is a three-year starter and has committed to Welch College in Gallatin, Tenn.

"I'm excited for my son and he's really come along developing his handling skills, driving to the inside and in his shooting ability," Clay said.

Clay is the Bobcats' leading scorer averaging 15 points a game and leading rebounder with eight a game.

Quentin Hyde is a first year starter who worked hard in the off season to earn a starting position this year.

"He's a 6'5 outside shooter and that creates a problem for a lot of defenses because who are you going to put to defend him? Bigger guys he can drive in around and smaller guys he can shoot over.

"We're improving each game and I really like specifically the areas in which we have improved, but we have a whole season to go," Clay said.



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Commission approves 'ridiculous' deposit demand from REB

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

After receiving a bill from the Russellville Electric Board demanding payment of more than \$25,000 in additional deposits, the Franklin County Commission approved a letter of credit to be submitted in lieu of an actual cash payment for the deposits.

In recent months, the REB has sent out letters (in some cases) demanding an additional deposit or proof of payment of a deposit, to numerous businesses and non-profit groups, including churches.

In the case of the Franklin County Commission, which has 10 accounts with the REB, no letter was ever received making the request for additional deposit payments. Instead, deposit amounts demanded by the REB were added to the commission's November 2022 utility bills.

Those deposit charges totaled \$25,125.

Franklin County Administrator Leah Mansell confirmed that the county never received a letter explaining REB's actions or reasons for the large deposits. Mansell said the \$25,125 letter of credit cost county taxpayers \$451.25 this year and an additional \$325/year moving forward.

The Russellville Electric Board's 'Rules and Regulations' expressly state that no account will be opened until a deposit has been paid, so the question of why an additional deposit was required did not escape Commissioner Chris Wallace.

"Did we look to see if we paid deposits on these accounts or is it too far back to check the records? I know deposits had to be paid on these accounts. It's kind of ridiculous to have to pay that again out of public funds," Wallace said.

Some of those accounts in the name of the Franklin County Commission are for the Franklin County Courthouse, Courthouse Annex, Solid Waste Shop, Highway Department, Franklin County Jail and Franklin County Archives. An unannounced deposit was added to each of the county's 10 electric bills.

Red Bay to host Christmas Open House Sunday

Submitted

The City of Red Bay will host a Christmas Open House Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022, from 1:00-4:00.

Before that, the Senior Citizens will be having a soup lunch starting at 11 in the Senior Citizens Building. The cost is \$5 per person and includes homemade soup, crackers or cornbread, dessert and a drink. Music will be provided by Joe King. The Senior Center is located at 115 5th Ave SE.

All proceeds will help fund activities at the Senior Center. Come out and enjoy good food, music and fellowship! Local businesses will be open that afternoon also.

At 5:00 there will be a Christmas Tree Lighting in Bay Tree Park with a new large tree and live music. For more information on the open house, you can contact the Red Bay City Hall at 256-356-4473.

The Red Bay Museum will be open that day also with no admission charge. Exhibits consists of recreations of Red Bay Landmarks with the actual items including the Hotel Red Bay Lobby, soda fountain, dry good stores, Bay Theater, farm and country store display, old bank cashier windows and vault door from the Bank of Red Bay, medical from medical clinic and hospital, church, Native American, Red Bay City Hall, military, homelife, depot, Red Bay Schools, Red Bay Hotel room, small businesses and ends with a display on Tammy Wynette. This is the largest display on Tammy Wynette at this time.

Born, raised and schooled in Itawamba County half way between Red Bay, and Tremont, MS, Tammy would refer to Red Bay as her hometown, as this is where she went to shop, to the doctor, to the movies, visit friends and family. She also performed at 5 benefit concerts that benefited Red Bay School, as well as the Grand Marshall for the Christmas Parades in the 1980s. A television series based on the book by Georgette Jones will premiere on Sunday December 4, 2022, on Showtime, starring Jessica Chastain and Michael Shannon. Some items used in the series were loaned to the museum by Georgette Jones and are now on display.

The museum also has many items for sale that make perfect Christmas gifts including the Red Bay History Book, ornaments of local landmarks, biography of Tammy Wynette, Tragic Country Queen, pottery, books by local authors, Alabama Dirt Shirts dyed with red clay, Tammy Wynette Tee shirts, Hatch Print celebrating 80 years of Tammy Wynette and more.

(For more information on the Red Bay Museum contact Scotty Kennedy at 256-356-8758.)



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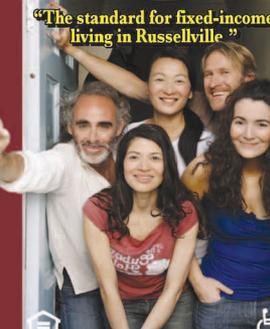
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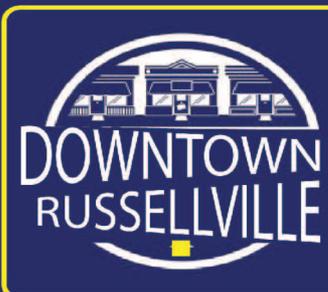
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