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## First lawsuit filed in fatal dog mauling in Red Bay

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A lawsuit has been filed arising out of the Red Bay dog mauling that killed Alabama Department of Public Health employee Jacqueline Summer Beard last April.

The civil action was filed in the name of Max D. Wright, Administrator of the Estate of Jacqueline Summer Beard, on December 15, 2022, in Franklin County Circuit Court.

Attorney Ryan Myers with the Birmingham firm of Belt, Bruner &

Barnett, P.C., filed the case on behalf of Beard's estate.

On April 29, 2022, Beard went to a residence on Crumpton Road near Red Bay to investigate a dog attack that happened the previous day. Red Bay resident Michelle Sheeks was out for a morning walk when she was attacked by a pack of dogs at the home of Red Bay resident Brandy Dowdy.

Sheeks spent more than two months in three hospitals before she died from injuries incurred in the attack. Although a lawsuit has not yet been filed on behalf of Sheeks'

See 'DOG,' Page 9

## Inmate pleads to assault on fellow inmate with broom

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

An inmate at the Franklin County Jail pled guilty last week to felony assault resulting from his attack of another inmate with a broom handle.

Joseph Thomas Postell, 33, pled guilty to the charge of Assault, Second Degree, a Class C felony.

While a Class C felony carries a 1-10 year prison sentence upon conviction, Postell's prior convictions enhanced the range of punishment. Postell was sentenced to a 15-year prison sentence, split to serve 30 months in custody. Postell's application for Community Corrections was denied by Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson, but Thompson told

Postell he could re-apply at the end of January 2023. Thompson was appointed after Franklin County Circuit Judge Brian Hamilton recused himself due to a conflict.

While in jail on a charge of violating Alabama's sex offender registration act, Postell assaulted another inmate with a broom handle.

Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing said the victim was beaten until he was unconscious. After the attack, Postell stole some of the victim's commissary items including personal effects and food.

Postell was indicted in November 2021 by a Franklin County Grand Jury on charges of Assault First Degree and Robbery Second Degree. The plea agreement called

See 'POSTELL' Page 4

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Ricky Dale Sandusky, Sr., 66 of Phil Campbell, passed away on Friday,  
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assisted the family.

Luther Randall "Randy" Quinn, 65, of Phil Campbell, passed away on  
Friday, December 23, 2022. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Kevin Ryan Poston, 42, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Friday,  
December 23, 2022. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Virginia Elsie Smith Skidmore, 81, of Russellville, passed away on  
Saturday, December 24, 2022. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the  
family.

Arnold Gene Prince, 75, of Russellville, passed away on Wednesday,  
December 28, 2022. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Gregory Richard "Buddy" Gray, 64, of Russellville, AL passed away on  
Friday, December 29, 2022. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Carole Ann Sanders 78, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday,  
January 1, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

Samuel Roscoe Stokes, 68, of Russellville, AL. passed away Tuesday,  
December 27, 2022. Atkins Funeral Home assisted the family.

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the web at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)! Send your guest columns,  
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# My Take on This... It is a New Year!

Gail Motes  
Franklin Free Press

Did you stay up to ring in the new year? It's always fun to do when you are sitting with your family or at a New Year's get-together, but being alone doesn't excite me enough to sit up and watch the ball drop or to listen to the crowds count down from ten to zero, and the screaming of 'Happy New Year' and the singing of Auld Lang Syne.



Gail Motes

I was awake this year, with the television on, but I was concentrating so much on a game on my cell phone that I

never noticed when the new year came in. It always hits me when I have to write 2023, instead of 2022, which doesn't



make sense now that I think about it. I usually write 2022 a lot more and it doesn't make me think it's 2022 again.

Every year always has a different style of clothing and hair styles. There will be another popular paint color. Changes will always take place, but we don't always change our personal preferences

to coincide to the changes.

Those types of things are most likely not in our thoughts. Our minds are still wondering about our economy, food shortages and the troubling issues in our government.

We are all hoping for a year of less destruction and progress in positivity.

I wish for you the ability to hope and the knowledge to pray when you feel all hope is gone.

And as always.....until later!

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**Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays from My Family to Yours!**

## Franklin Free Press

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256-332-0255

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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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# ‘POSTELL,’ from Page 1

for Postell to plead to the reduced charge of Assault Second Degree. The robbery charge was dismissed.

The State of Alabama opposed Postell's request for community corrections, and Rushing said the State would oppose any future requests.

“This was a very serious crime that was violent and involved the defendant stealing from his victim,” Rushing said. “It doesn't change the law that he victim was also an inmate, and we treated the case seriously as we do all violent crimes.”



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# MLK Scholarship Committee seeking donations

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The mission of the Franklin County branch of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee is to Keep the Dream Alive, One Generation to Another.

The committee awards scholarships each year to high school graduating seniors in Franklin County who are bright, talented and economically disadvantaged, and exhibit the principles of Dr. King in scholarship, character and who contribute to the Franklin County community.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee of Franklin County is a non-profit organization. Depending on the monies raised, its goal for 2023-2024 is three or more scholarships in the amount of \$1,200 each.

Over the years, residents of the Franklin County community have donated to these funds annually. Student, parent and staff organizations as well as civic, fraternal and charitable associations have included the funds on their donation lists. Businesses with roots in our community have also lent their support.

We hope you will support the Class of 2023. These students need the financial vote of confidence our community can give them.

We are requesting participation from the entire Franklin County community to help support deserving students in achieving their dream of higher education.

Monies from donations, fundraising and sponsorships will stay in Franklin County to support the scholarships awarded by the Franklin County branch of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee. Any questions or concerns please feel free to contact any member of the Franklin County branch of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration March will be held in Franklin County on January 16, 2023, at the A.W. Todd Centre, at 11 a.m.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee is selling MLK shirts to help support its cause of helping children continue their education. Hoodies are \$25. Sweatshirts are \$20. Long sleeve t-shirts are \$15. Sizes 2X and above are an additional \$2.

To order, please call 256-710-6801, 256-460-7502 or 256-366-7265.

We hope to see you there on January 16th! Thank you for your consideration and support. To contribute, mail your check to the Franklin County Branch of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 842, Russellville, Alabama, 35653.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

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 **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 f

 **Y**ou are invited to a special time of musical worship with New Ground, on Sunday, January 8, 2023, at 4 p.m., at North Russellville Baptist Church. The church is located on Waterloo Road before you get to Russellville High School. Pastor Jason Swinney and congregation invite everyone to attend. A love offering will be taken.

 **A** fund-raiser basketball game will be played between the Russellville Police Department and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office on Saturday, January 14, 2023, at 7 p.m., at the Ralph Bishop Center on Ash Avenue in Russellville. Admission is \$1 per person and concessions will be sold. Funds will be used to purchase needed equipment for both departments.

 **T**he Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee of Franklin County is selling MLK shirts to help support its cause of helping Franklin County students continue their education. The committee is a non-profit that provides scholarships to high school seniors in Franklin County. Hoodies are \$25. Sweatshirts are \$20. Long sleeve t-shirts are \$15. For sizes 2X and above, please add \$2.

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# RCS Board honors Racz

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education recognized the accomplishments of a Russellville High School student who won a state theatre competition last month.

The board commended RHS junior Elijah Racz for his first place finish in Comedic Solo Musical Theatre in the Alabama Conference of Theatre's State Trumbauer Festival. Racz attended the December 16th meeting at the request of the board.

In other agenda items, the board:

--approved purchase of nine 72-passenger Type "C" gasoline powered school buses. The buses will be purchased without a bid process through the purchasing cooperative "Sourcewell" for the cost of \$117,283.09 per bus.

--approved temporary employment in position of Jessica Gipson, Chris Boatwright and Carol Fretwell as 21st CCLC Teachers (part-time and as needed), Alia McCollister, Katie Morrow Hines, Jennifer Willis and Taylor Royce as Champ's Camp After-School Learning Program Teachers (part-time and as needed).

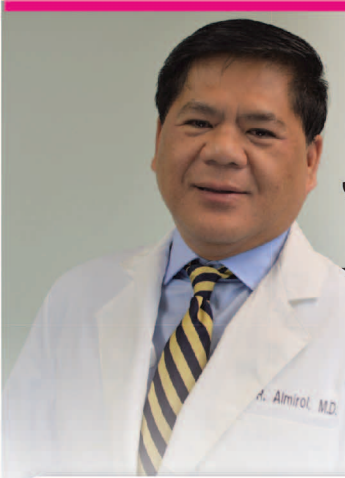
--approved leave of absence requests for Kayla Thorne, from January 25, 2023, through May 26, 2023, Diane Maddox, from December 6, 2022, through December 16, 2022, and Sandra Kennedy, from December 19, 2022, to December 30, 2022.

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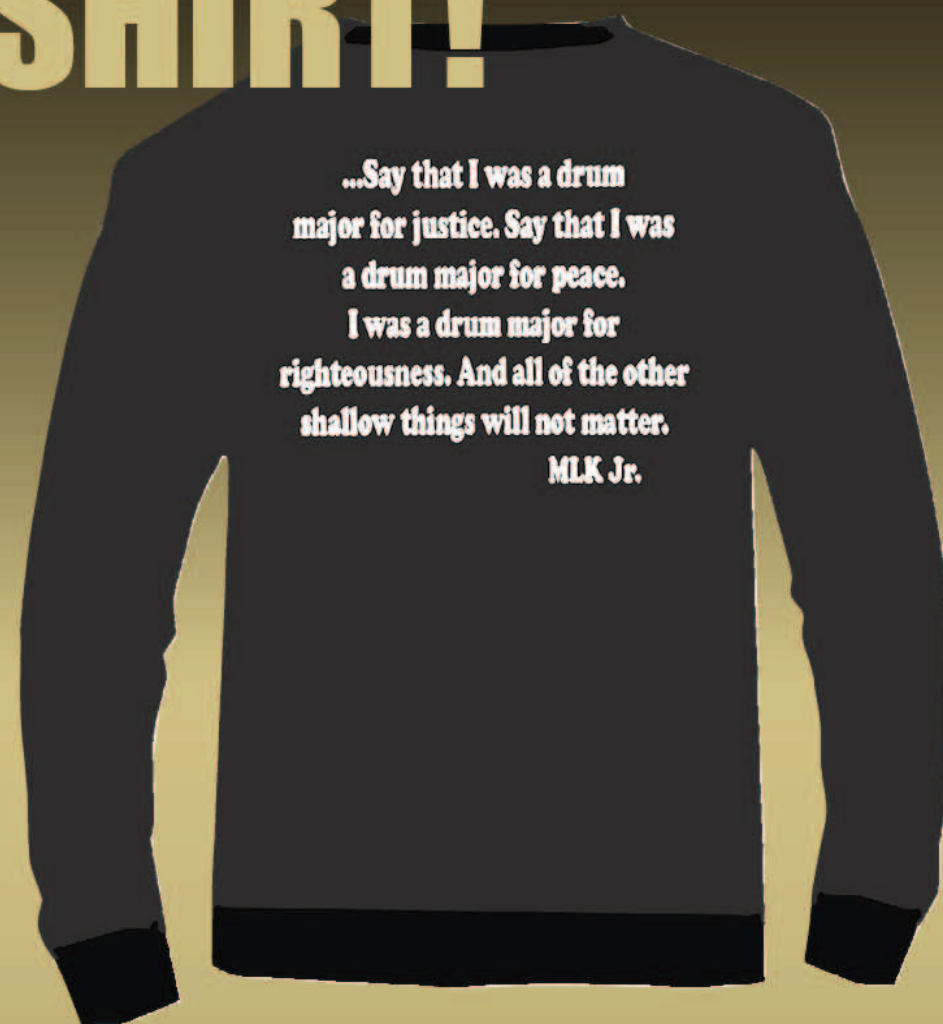
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# ‘DOG,’ from Page 1

estate, Myers said he is representing the estate and a civil action will be filed soon in that case.

Dowdy, who lived in the residence with her father, Billy Joe Crumpton, and three other adults, was charged with two counts of manslaughter as well as felony charges under Alabama’s ‘Emily’s Law,’ which provides criminal penalties for an owner not controlling dangerous dogs when the dogs cause serious physical injury.

Those cases are pending in Franklin County Circuit Court and Dowdy remains in the Franklin County Jail after her bond on the manslaughter charges was revoked when she was arrested for illegal drug possession.

The civil action names a number of different defendants, including Dowdy and her father, along with Franklin County (served through the Franklin County Commission), the Franklin County Emergency Communications District, Franklin County Animal Control Officer Joey

Wingo, Deputy Animal Control Officer Matt Mayfield, Franklin County Deputies Clint Holcombe, Chris Hill, Kyle Palmer and Colt Montgomery.

The lawsuit also names several fictitious party defendants, whose names are unknown to the plaintiffs at the time of filing but may be supplemented at a later time once their identities are known.

As of December 30, 2022, none of the defendants had filed answers to the lawsuit. Defendants have 30 days from the date they are served with the complaint to respond.

The lawsuit alleges two different legal claims against the defendants. First, the allegation is that Franklin County had a more than 20-year history of “unjustifiable inaction,” that dates back to 1997.

The second count alleges negligence and/or wantonness against each defendant.

The 51-page complaint details allegations of the pack of seven to nine dogs “terrorizing the community” for more than a year. That includes, according to the lawsuit, unsuccessful attempts by Dowdy to find a shelter or pound to accept the dogs and multiple attacks by the dogs, including two instances of killing livestock that were reported to Franklin County officials, along with two attacks that resulted in physical injury to Dowdy’s neighbors within seven days of the day Sheeks was attacked.

Beard went to the residence to investigate whether the dogs were vaccinated against rabies and whether Dowdy or Crumpton had vaccination records, which the complaint alleges they did not.

On April 23, 2022, the dogs allegedly bit the child of one of Dowdy’s neighbors. The following day, the dogs bit another neighbor who was mowing his grass.

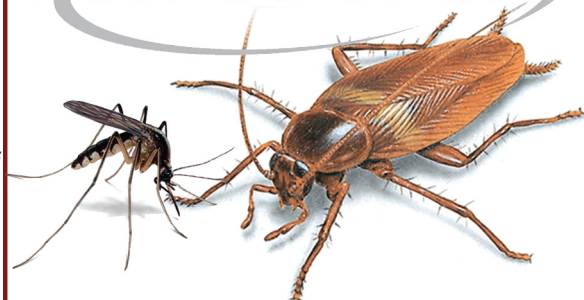
The complaint seeks an unspecified amount of punitive and compensatory damages as a result of the alleged “negligent, wanton, reckless, willful, wrongful and/or unlawful conduct of the defendants.

It is important to note the civil complaint presents allegations that must be later proved by a preponderance of the evidence in a courtroom. Each defendant will have the opportunity to defend the claims and present evidence that contradicts the plaintiff’s claim.

Alabama law provides that a wrongful death lawsuit be filed by the personal representative of the decedent’s estate. If a jury finds in favor of the plaintiff in a wrongful death civil action, punitive damages, meaning damages designed to deter and/or punish conduct, shall be awarded.

It will be months, and possibly years, until the matter comes to trial in the courtroom of Franklin County Circuit Judge Brian Hamilton. The lawsuit requests the case be tried to a jury, which is the right of a plaintiff in a wrongful death case.

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## Belgreen 4-0 in area

Michael Rice  
Franklin Free Press

The Belgreen varsity girls basketball team is dominating 1A Area 14 play and having fun doing it.

The Belgreen Bulldogs are 13-6 overall with all six of their losses by less than a combined 20 points.

"I've got great kids. They hustle, they're quick. Now we're small, but I can't ask any more of them. They hustle on and off the court and make great grades," head coach Chad Green said.

The Bulldogs are 4-0 in their area with two wins over Bear Creek, one win over Hackleburg and another win over Vina.

In all the storied years of Belgreen basketball, the 2022-23 Bulldogs have a chance to set a record for total steals. Three Bulldogs have amassed some incredible steal totals so far this season.

Noelle Willingham has 70 steals, BB Scott has 60 steals, and Isabella Tate has 50 steals. Combined, those three Bulldogs have 180 of the 269 total team steals.

The season steals record is 307, well within reach for this year's group.

The young Bulldog team is led by Willingham, its senior leader.

"Willingham has been around the program for a long time and she leads by example," Green said.

This Thursday, January 5th, the Bulldogs will travel to Hackleburg to battle the Panthers for the second time this season.

The Franklin County Tournament for ninth grade, B-team and varsity girls and boys is set for January 9th-14th.

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## Rare triple header tests Vina girls

Michael Rice  
Franklin Free Press

The Vina varsity girls basketball team played three games in one day over the Christmas break in the Waterloo Tournament.

Coach Richie Hester's team defeated Cherokee 57-27 to win the first of the tripleheader. Senior Kaitlyn Athey led the Red Devils with 24 points, including seven three-point field goals. Sara Harper added 10 points and nine assists. Kaley Attaway and KK Mitchell scored seven apiece and Khylee Brooks added five.

Later that day, Vina lost to



Kaitlyn Athey drives to the goal for a basket.

Woodville 59-35. Woodville was led by Jessica Sirten's game high 25 points. Vina's top scorer was Athey, who

had 18 in the losing effort. Harper scored six, Mitchell had four, Kenzie Elrod three and Attaway and Brooks two

## RV girls start 9-7 after holidays

Michael Rice  
Franklin Free Press

After the Christmas break, the Russellville varsity girls basketball team is going into area play ready to dominate.

The Golden Tigers have faced tough opponents the first 16 games of the season.

Having played only one 5A Area 15 game, the Golden Tigers still have an opportunity to position themselves for a post-season run.

Over the Christmas break, the Golden Tigers played in the West Morgan Christmas Tournament and went 1-2.

"We have a funny way of being up and down. The team we beat was the best team in the tournament and the two teams we lost to had the worst records," head coach Jermaine Groce said.

Laila Hill had two games during the Christmas break where she scored over 20 points and had multiple rebounds, catching the eye of her coach.

apiece.

In the night-cap, Vina fell to host Waterloo 61-14. Harper again led the Red Devils with 19.

The team has an 8-6 record as it rolls into 2023.

Vina traveled to Hackleburg Tuesday night, and has road games at Waterloo

January 5th and Phillips on January 6th, before it begins play in the annual Franklin County

Tournament next week.

for updates on sports throughout the week, check out our website!

Check out [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)!



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## 'RV GIRLS,' from Page 11

"I hope Hill's improvements carry over into area play," Groce said. The Golden Tigers are 9-7 overall this season. Russellville was set to face Colbert County Tuesday, January 3rd, and will host West Point Friday, January 6th and will host Brewer Tuesday, January 10th.



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The Franklin County Commission is accepting applications for the following position(s):

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Deputy Sheriff for Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Friday, January 6, 2023.

Heavy Equipment Operator for Franklin County Solid Waste

Assistant County Engineer

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until the position has been filled.

An application and job description may be picked up, faxed or emailed upon request from the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N Jackson Avenue, Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM or applications are available at [www.franklincountyal.org](http://www.franklincountyal.org) under the Careers tab.

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