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Icon to Eyesore: Memories abound as College Avenue School comes down

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

College Avenue Elementary School, or Russellville Grammar School as it was known when constructed in 1931, has seen its share of history.

From being the site of a movie filmed by the Lions Club in 1940 to hosting a 'Bond Banquet' to raise money for World War II bonds to hosting programs from WSM and the Grand Ole Opry in 1946, College Avenue School was a central part of the Russellville community from

1931 through 1999.

The school was constructed in 1931 for \$51,055, the low bid submitted to the Russellville City School Board by F.D. Kimbrough of Monroeville, Al.

92 years alter, the cost to demolish College Avenue Elementary (along with 10 other structures in the city) totaled \$268,000.

Demolition began last Wednesday by R. Baker, Inc., which submitted the low bid to the city to demolish and haul off debris for 11 properties, including the two structures behind Russellville City Hall and the old

See 'COLLEGE AVE,' Page 7

Phil Campbell 6 and Under finishes third in Dixie Youth World Series

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Phil Campbell 6 and Under All-Stars' quest for a world series title fell two games short as the team lost in the semifinals to Montgomery, Al., 17-6, Sunday afternoon.

Coach Matt Waid's team reached the Dixie Youth Regional World Series in Center, Texas, after finishing second in the Alabama Dixie Youth State Tournament last month. The tournament is played with coaches pitching to their own team.

Phil Campbell opened pool play in the nine-team tournament July 20th. Over the next three days, the team went 3-1, good enough for a number three seed moving into the single

elimination championship bracket.

On Saturday, Phil Campbell handled Oakdale, La., easily with a 14-6 win that moved the team into the final four.

Interestingly, three of the final four teams were from Alabama, including Montgomery, Mims and Phil Campbell. Lincoln County, Miss., was the other semi-finalist. Montgomery defeated Mims later Sunday to win the World Series.

Against Oakdale, Zander Maddox got three hits in three at bats, as the team won by the seven-run mercy rule after four innings.

Big innings for Phil Campbell came in the first and second. Trailing 3-0 after the top of the first, Phil Campbell scored six runs on

See 'WORLD SERIES,' Page 5

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See official Russellville Electric Board Documents at NO COST to YOU! A public service from Russellville City Councilman Darren Woodruff

Letter to Editor: Groce still a RV resident

Dear Editor

I am good with the (Russellville City) Council deciding to remove me from the School Board because that is their prerogative. I am really grateful to the people of Russellville for allowing me to serve.

I have known Mr. (Howard) Hillman for a long time. He is a good guy and I am convinced that he will do a great job.

But, I just wanted to mention that I still have a home in Russellville and split my time between places. Also, my homestead is still in Russellville and that is where Benetia and I vote.

It is my understanding that Greg Batchelor's homestead and voting box are also still in Russellville. I just wanted to clarify this.

Thank You,
Jerry Groce
Russellville



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Carolyn "Sue" Cooley, age 74, of Russellville, passed away July 18, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Martha Geneva Allen, age 85, of Phil Campbell, passed away at her home on July 19, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Delia Bunch Collins, passed away July 22, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Shirley Faye Britnell Bingham, age 81, of Russellville, passed away July 11, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

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Miller announces candidacy for Franklin County Probate Judge/Commission Chair

Submitted

Russellville resident Jason Miller, Franklin County Commissioner for District Two, recently announced his intention to seek the office of Franklin County Probate Judge/Commission Chair in the March 5, 2024, Republican Primary.

Miller, who is serving his second term as commissioner, said it's been a great experience representing his constituents and it's a job he has never taken lightly.

"I've always answered my phone and tried to help people any way I could. When it comes to meetings and representing the people of Franklin County, some of the decisions I've made have not been easy, but at the end of the day, I just want to be able to have a clear conscience and be comfortable with the decisions I've made," Miller said.

As the campaign continues, Miller will release details of his purpose and vision for Franklin County. But concurrent with his candidate announcement, Miller announced five immediate steps he would implement upon taking office.

Miller's Fast Five:

1. State of the County Address every year to review annual audit and plans for the county commission in the coming year.
2. Change meeting formats to TWO meetings each month, on the second and fourth Monday, beginning at 6 p.m., with a 30-minute work session, then meeting to follow. This will cut down on last minute agenda additions during the Public Comments portion of meetings and he will eliminate retroactive hires.
3. Live stream all Franklin County Commission meetings on Facebook.
4. Overhaul the Franklin County website and create a website and Facebook page specifically for the Probate Office.
5. Recognize excellence in county employee performance and student achievement in all Franklin County Schools.

Miller's Five Core Values:

1. Integrity—know and do what is right all the time.
2. Respect—treat others the way you want to be treated.
3. Accountability—take ownership of your actions and results.
4. Responsibility—embrace opportunities to contribute.
5. Servant Leadership—serve the common good.

"As a lifelong Franklin County resident, I really do care about what happens here. Being a commissioner is so much more than just politics—it's a way to have an active role in making our county a better place to live and work. With three children and one on the way, I'm personally invested in the betterment of our community," Miller said.

Miller and his wife Belinda have been married 11 years. They have three children, Hunter, Jaxon and Eliza, and one due in February. They attend Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and are involved in their children's sports activities and other community activities.

Miller is a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association and he represents Franklin County on the Alabama Republican Executive Committee.

"I am excited about what the future holds for Franklin County and I want to continue working for our citizens as Probate Judge/Commission Chair," Miller said. "I would appreciate your support and vote on March 5, 2024, in the Republican Primary."



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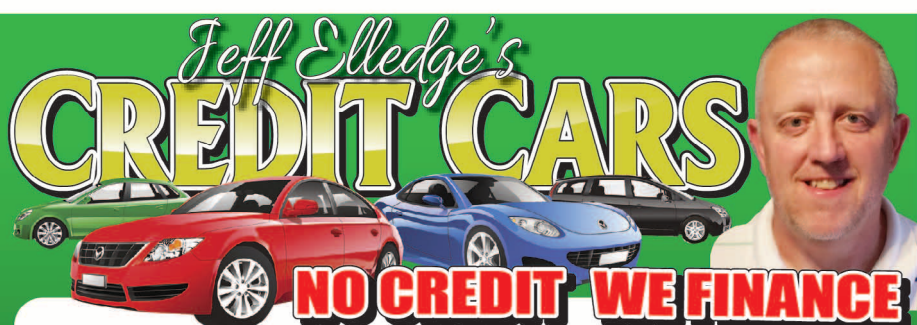
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Notice is hereby given that on August 5, 2023, from 9 a.m. To 12 p.m., units will be sold by sealed bid.

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All units have miscellaneous items, furniture and boxes.

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Units located at 524 St. Clair:

- (23) Destiny Murray
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- (26) Cinderella Borden

Units located at 900 Scotty Moore Drive:

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Franklin Free Press July 19 and July 26, 2023

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'WORLD SERIES,' From Page 1

seven hits in the bottom of the inning. Carson White's two-RBI single was the key hit.

The scoring barrage continued in the second inning, as the PC All-Stars scored seven times on eight hits.

Beau Harris, Zander Maddox, Carson White, Beck Waid, Kenden Snider and Lawson Hamby each had run-scoring singles in the frame.

The team had 19 hits in only four innings, as Phil Campbell defeated Oakdale for the second consecutive day.

Phil Campbell's journey to Center, Texas, started in the District II All-Star Tournament, where the team went 5-0 and outscored its opponents 84-22 in those games.

At last month's state tournament, Phil Campbell easily defeated Cottonwood and Cottondale, edged Moundville 13-12, and lost twice to Mims, 18-11 and 8-7. As the second place finisher, the team was invited by the state director to take part in the Regional World Series in Texas.

A lot of time and hard work was given by the coaching staff of Waid, Tanner Maddox, Eli Snider and Ron Harris.

Team members included: Zander Maddox, August Hamlet, Beau Harris, Beck Waid, Ben Duboise, Bentley Franklin, Carson White, Ellie Williams, Gunnar Rambo, Jacob Adams, Kenden Snider and Lawson Hamby.



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'Great Pretenders' set for Thursday at Roxy as part of W.C. Handy Week

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The 22nd annual W.C. Handy Festival is underway, and once again, Russellville will be a part of the celebration, as the Franklin County Arts and Humanities Council will host the Evening at the Roxy: The Great Pretenders on Thursday, July 27th.

The show begins at 7 p.m. Admission is \$10 and children under six are admitted free. Entertainment will be provided by local talent featured as 'The Great Pretenders,' performing music celebrating W.C. Handy's contributions to the music world.

The Arts and Humanities Council will feature the names of businesses and individuals who support the W.C. Handy Festival and the annual Russellville event throughout the evening.

The Arts and Humanities Council is constantly working to support restoration and maintenance of the historic Roxy Theatre.

"We want to present quality, wholesome programs the entire family can enjoy," said Arts and Humanities Council President Susie Malone. "The Roxy's restoration has provided a venue in which many types of entertainment can be performed for school children and the general public. It provides a stage for our citizens to perform and to display their talents."

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 The Foster Grandparent Program is seeking volunteers ages 55 and older to help tutor and mentor children in day care, head start and schools. Volunteers will receive a tax-free stipend and travel reimbursement. We have openings for several schools for the coming school year. Please call 256-332-6800 for an application.


 AshaKiran serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking across Alabama. Their vision is to be a 'ray of hope' by bridging the gap between service providers and culturally diverse communities. Their 24-hour crisis line number is 1-800-793-3010. Learn more about AshaKiran by visiting www.ashakiranonline.org. Consultations are free and confidential, and available in 45 different languages.


 The Senior Center of Phil Campbell is under new management. Everyone age 60 and over are invited to come join us and be part of the group. This is for men and women. We meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8-noon. A delicious lunch is served at 11 a.m. Meals are \$1 donation. Some come and play Rook. We also do Bingo when we have enough people. There are several games to play or just sit and socialize with other seniors.


 Christmas in July: The residents of Terrace Manor Nursing Home are asking for toy donations for Christmas in July! These toys will be donated to the Dream Center in Russellville for their annual Christmas give away in December. Please donate your unwrapped gift for a boy or girl by August 1st. The drop box is located in the front lobby of Terrace Manor Nursing Home, 390 Underwood Road, Russellville. Thank you so much!

 The Long Term Care Ombudsman's job is to protect the rights of Residents of long term care facilities, including Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, and Specialty Care Assisted Living Facilities. The Ombudsman works to ensure that the Residents receive fair treatment and quality care. Anyone can contact the Ombudsman to report long term care problems or to request information about long term care facilities in Franklin, Colbert, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston Counties. For more information please contact Tina Pitt, local Ombudsman, at 256-389-0533.

 LifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on THURSDAY, AUGUST 10TH, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at deborah.lindsey@russellville-hospital.org. Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive a free T-shirt, an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, a free cookie dough card from Papa Murphy's and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. All donors will receive a free cholesterol screening. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES!

 Pastor Bro. Eric McKinney and the congregation of Crestview Missionary Baptist Church, 24131 Hwy. 24, Russellville, invite you to worship with them. Sunday morning Bible Study is from 10-Noon and Sunday morning worship from 11-Noon. All are welcome to our services! Call 256-324-0179 for more information.

 The Franklin County Branch of the MLK Memorial Scholarship will host a fish fry on Friday, July 28, starting at 11 a.m., at the Reedtown High School Back to Basics Building. Plates are \$15 and include 2 fish filets, slaw and baked beans. For more information, or advance large orders, call 256-412-3566.

 A free Basic Computer Training #101 Course will be offered August 16 and 17 at the Chucky Mullins Center, 814 Hamilton St., in Russellville. The class is from 1:00-2:30 p.m., August 16 and 10a.m.-Noon on August 17. Registration is required to attend. To register or learn more about the program, call 256-320-8051 or email oppia.burke@aamu.edu. The course is offered by Alabama A&M University Small Farms Research Center in collaboration with Fort Valley State University. Learn the basics of working a computer. Computers are available on site. Don't worry if you've never used a computer. We can help!

'COLLEGE AVENUE,' From Page 1

florist building on South Jackson Avenue.

By Monday afternoon, all that remained from a school that once had more than 600 students was a large pile of debris. Work crews will begin breaking up and removing the concrete around the former school and it will be hauled off as well.

Asbestos inside the old school was removed pre-demolition, according to Justin Baker, who's leading the demolition job.

The property is owned by the Russellville City Board of Education after the City of Russellville deeded it to the school system several years ago. The building ceased to operate as an elementary school in 1999. The Special Program for Achieving Network (SPAN), which educates at-risk students referred by the school or the court system, was housed at College Avenue until 2018.

That was the final date the building was used for any productive purpose, as it would soon be condemned.

The past five years have seen the old school building littered with gang signs and graffiti. The floors were scattered with old mattresses, used syringes and other trash as the building became a trap house for illicit drug users.

Few could argue with the decision to demolish the dilapidated school with the condition it was in. But some residents believe plans to save the school building should have been put into place many years ago.

Russellville resident Tammy Jackson is one of those who believes the demolition was a 'waste' of a building that could have been saved.

"I'd like to see the response from the people of Russellville about what happened to College Avenue School," Jackson said. "It had beautiful old doors and floors and the fact that is all piled up by a dozer is just a waste.

"A lot of people like me would be interested to hear about the history of it and why it wasn't saved?," she added.

Russellville District Two City Councilman Darren Woodruff, whose district includes the College Avenue property, said there was a time he would have agreed with Jackson.

"There was certainly a time when some of the building contents could have been saved and used in a new construction but unfortunately, that time passed a long time ago," Woodruff said.



A corridor at College Avenue Elementary riddled with graffiti and trash.

It's been more than 18 months since the city was awarded \$300,000 through a Community Development Block Grant to demolish 11 properties, each with the owner's consent.

That process was held up for more than a year as city officials waited on the Alabama Historical Commission to complete historical studies on the properties.

"This project could have been completed a long time ago if not for the delay of the Alabama Historical Commission's study," Woodruff said. "That put a halt on moving forward on any demolition for more than a year."

Last week, the Franklin Free Press asked its Facebook followers to share their favorite memories about College Avenue Elementary. More than 175 responded, as they recalled their favorite teachers, sledding off the hill behind the school when it snowed, playing games with the big parachute in the school gym/auditorium, feeling the fall breeze blowing through the halls and many more.

Once demolition is complete, a historical marker will be erected at the site to recognize the historical significance of College Avenue Elementary School.

The Alabama Historical Commission's study included many significant events that were part of College Avenue's lore.

In 1941, a Homemaker's Defense Clinic was held at the school to train local women for what they could do during the pending emergency as the country entered World War II.

An April 1943 meeting raised \$293,000 as part of Franklin County's share of a \$13 billion second war loan.

And in 1946, WSM radio and the Grand Ole Opry staged several programs at College Avenue, including shows by Forty Nine Minners, the Bailes Brothers and Robert Lunn and the Talking Blues Boys.

Beginning in 1968, desegregation started in the Russellville City Schools system, when the 10th-12th grades at Reedtown School moved to Russellville High School.

Two years later a court order mandated immediate disestablishment of the dual school system, as Reedtown School was permanently closed as the dual school system concept ended.

So what happens next with the property? That decision rests with the Russellville City Board of Education.

Board member Greg Trapp said the board has not made that decision yet, but he expects the board will work with city officials to determine its best use.

"Building some sort of multi-purpose building would make sense. The Parks and Recreation Department could manage it and use it for classes. It would be a good location for that. There are lots of ideas, but there's been no decision yet," Trapp said.

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Johnson brings wealth of coaching experience to Tharptown

Michael Rice
 Franklin Free Press

After the Tharptown Wildcats were coachless one month before the football season begins, Tharptown High School Principal Tyler Berryman has selected John Johnson as their new head coach.

Johnson graduated from Lawrence County High School in 1999 and continued his education at the University of North Alabama.

After playing two seasons of college football, Johnson started volunteer coaching at Bradshaw High School in 2001.

Johnson did his student teaching at Russellville High School and was an assistant coach in 2004 when the Golden Tigers reached the Class 5A championship game against Homewood.

Johnson was last at Danville High School where he served as an assistant to Coach Andro Williams' 2022 team.

Johnson has high expectations for the Tharptown Wildcats. And Berryman was impressed with his combination of coaching and playing experience.

"Coach Johnson brings several years of football experience to the table. That experience includes playing at Lawrence County High School and the University of North Alabama," Berryman said.

"He has a significant amount of coaching experience at small and large schools.

See, 'JOHNSON,' page 12

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Two Russellville athletes shine at North-South All-Star Week

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Each year the Alabama High School Athletic Association's North-South All-Star Week features top rising seniors from eight different sports coming together for a week of competition and fun in Montgomery.

And Russellville High School was well represented at this year's North-South All-Star Week, with Brian Lara selected to the North Boys Soccer Team and Peyton Parrish among the 10 girls selected for the North Girls Tennis All-Stars.

Belgreen High School was honored as one of 82 AHSAA schools which received the Sportsmanship Award. Schools who were ejection and sportsmanship fine free for 2022-23 were honored.

All-Star Week includes competition against other top athletes, but also serves as a showcase for players to catch the eye of college recruiters, who come to Montgomery each year en masse.

Lara, a midfielder/forward for Coach Trey Stanford's Golden Tigers, earned second team All-State honors last season.

Russellville won another area championship and a playoff game in the spring.

18 players were selected for the North team. The North All-Stars defeated the South All-Stars 5-3 to improve to 14-4-1 in the series history.



COURTESY PHOTO

Peyton Parrish at the AHSAA North-South All-Star Week with Coach Charlotte Dollar.

See, 'NORTH-SOUTH,' Page 12

Vina alum Renfrow tabbed as new varsity football coach

Michael Rice
 Franklin Free Press

After two years of building the Vina baseball program, Cody Renfrow has been named the school's new varsity football coach.

Renfrow graduated from Vina High School in 2013. He attended Northwest Shoals Community College and transferred to Athens State where he graduated this year.

Renfrow has shaped Vina's baseball team back into a solid program that fields a competitive team expecting to win every game.

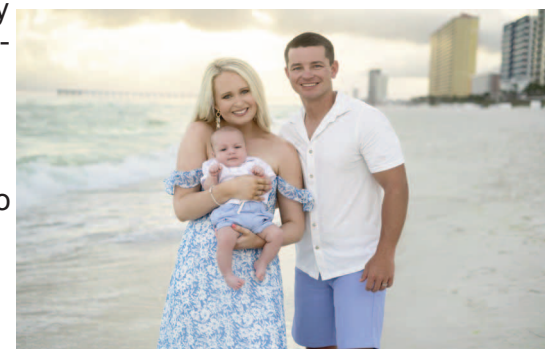
"I love Vina and I've lived here most of my life. There's nothing I want more than to see the kids be successful. I have a great relationship with these kids already," Renfrow said.

With that experience, Renfrow has high hopes he can bring that type of success and mentality to the football program as well.

"We're gonna take pride in the process of

what it takes to be a successful. The majority

of my baseball guys will be out to play football so they



COURTESY PHOTO

Cody Renfrow with his wife Holly and their son, Miles.

already know what I expect," Renfrow said.

Renfrow's hire was announced last week by Franklin County Schools Superintendent of Education Greg Hamilton and is expected to be approved by the board of education at its next meeting.

See, 'RENFROW,' page 12



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'NORTH-SOUTH,' From Page 11

Parrish won her singles match against Reilly Taylor of St. James, 6-1, 6-3.

Parrish, who reached the semifinals of 5A girls No. 1 singles this spring, also paired with Sofia Tiffin to reach the finals of No. 1 doubles.

Parrish said being named to the North All-Stars was a longtime dream of hers after she started playing competitive tennis.

"It's just an honor to be chosen," Parrish said. "There are a lot of different college coaches down there and I got to talk with several of them I met some new friends and this was one of my goals since I was a young kid to make it to the North-South Week."

Parrish said being part of Coach Charlotte Dollar's successful girls' tennis program will help her as she goes through the recruiting process.

"She's one of my biggest supporters. She'll send me texts of encouragement before my matches and she's just the best," Parrish said. "And I think with Russellville being such a strong team that's so close, we really help each other. All the girls on the team are so good. It's like a family."

Although the school's season doesn't begin until the spring, Parrish will be busy this fall playing in USTA tournaments. She also enjoys giving tennis lessons and has 15 or so girls she works with.

"One thing I love about tennis is you can play the rest of your life. And by giving lessons to young girls, I can help them learn about tennis and help them develop a love for the sport," Parrish said.

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'RENFROW,' From Page 11

"Cody is a hard worker. He does a good job of relating to the kids. He is a young coach with a bright future in football," Hamilton said.

Renfrow will teach special education at Vina.

Renfrow and his wife Holly have one son, Miles

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'JOHNSON,' From Page 11

I believe that Coach Johnson was the best candidate for Tharptown due to his experience and vision of building a program rather than simply coaching football," Berryman added.

Johnson has coached for another notable coach in Franklin County--Russellville High School football coach John Ritter--when he was on the West Morgan High School staff.

Johnson's philosophy is to prepare his team to not make mistakes and do the small things on every play that can make a difference.

"We're going to take care of the little things and that will take care of all the big things," Johnson said.

Johnson and his wife Taffy have four children: Tristan, Blitz, Knute and Charlie Kate

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Council approves purchase of 27 new Glock pistols for RPD

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved the purchase of 27 Glock pistols for the Russellville Police Department at the council's July 17th meeting.

The 27 Glock G47 Gen5 pistols came with a price of \$13,396, less trade-in value of \$7,018.50 for handguns, less \$2,500 received from the Franklin County Community Development Commission.

The remaining balance of \$3,877.50 will be paid from the city's Project Star Fund. The guns are being purchased from GT Distributors, Inc., in Pflugerville, Texas.

The council also approved a resolution to

City Board of Education, to complete the terms of former board members Jerry Groce and Greg Batchelor.

--approved a claim from Carl David Pierce in the amount of \$1,079.27, for property damage resulting from an incident with a Russellville Fire Department fire truck.

--approved renewal of Air-Evac memberships for 72 civil service employees in the amount of \$4,680.

--approved the hiring of Cody Lee Price as a Police Officer with the Russellville Police Department.

--declared a vacancy for Dispatcher with the RPD.

--contracted with the Russellville City Board of Education for School Resource Officers Rick Itter and Rodney Belue, with annual compensation of \$28,000 for Belue and \$30,000 for Itter.

--approved removing the temporary Sergeant status of fire fighter Shane Mansell, to return to status of fire fighter at his previous step and grade. Mansell's appointment as Sergeant was temporary, made during a time when the department was short three employees. RFD Chief Joe Mansell said Shane Mansell did an outstanding job in his temporary Sergeant appointment.

The next meeting of the Russellville City Council will be August 7, 2023, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.



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In other agenda items, the council:

--approved a resolution to award the sealed bid received from Hovater Metal Works for the construction of a ramp and steps at the stage at Sloss Lake. The bid was \$26,000.

--appointed Howard Hillman, Jr., and Ike Rogers to the Russellville

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RMS student sprinting his way toward an AAU national title

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Ryland Calvert says his best sport is football. If that's true, Russellville Middle School Coach Brett Voss has a future star on his hands.

Calvert, a seventh grader at RMS, is traveling to Des Moines, Iowa, this week to compete in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Junior Olympic Games, after he qualified for both the 100-meter dash and 200-meter dash by finishing first and second respectively in the AAU Region 6 Track and Field Event held last month at Hardin Valley Academy in Knoxville, Tenn.

In his first year of competitive track and field, Calvert will run for an AAU national championship in his 'second-best' sport.

In Knoxville, Calvert competed with the Cosey Elite AAU team. His time of 12.56 in the 100-meter earned him a Region 6 first-place finish and his 26.54 in the 200-meter was good enough for second. The top eight finishers from each region event advance to the AAU Junior Olympics.

The son of Jonathon and Tiffany Calvert, Ryland's track career began last year when he competed as part of the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department team at three meets. After winning those, he moved up to AAU competition where he faced the best of the best in the 12 and under division.

His reason for signing up for rec league track and field? He thought it would be good conditioning for middle school football.

"His success has been a real surprise," said Tiffany Calvert. "We were just shocked. He just did the rec league to help with running during football season. He got into this and it just took off."

Athletes taking part in the AAU Junior Olympics are seeded by their times from regional AAU events. Calvert is seeded 11th out of hundreds of runners based on his impressive time of 12.56 in the 100.

Although this will be Calvert's first year taking part in RMS athletics,

his conditioning and hard work caught the eye of RMS Principal Tony Bonds. Bonds, a former Golden Tiger standout and offensive lineman at Ole Miss, knows a thing or two about conditioning.

"Regardless of whether they compete on school teams or in AAU events, we celebrate any success our students have," Bonds said. "Ryland is a great kid, and a very intelligent student and a hard worker as far as athletics."

"You can tell he works very hard on conditioning. He's a stout looking kid and he's put a lot of work into strength and conditioning. He's one of those kids who's been gifted a gift. He's committed to what he's doing and Ryland is very deserving of his success," Bonds added.

Last year, in Calvert's final season of Peewee football, Calvert scored an amazing 48 touchdowns in 10 games to help his Colbert Heights team win the league championship. He is expected to play running back and inside linebacker on the middle school team.

Calvert said he realized he was a pretty good sprinter after doing so well in the Parks and Recreation events, but never imagined he'd be competing in Iowa for an AAU championship. And his conditioning has definitely paid off. He's a young athlete who looks like a bull, but runs like a gazelle.

"I felt like running might take me somewhere, but not this far," Ryland said. "It was something I did to help with football conditioning, but I like running too. The sprint events (like the 100- and 200-meter dash) are competitive and very quick, which I like. I just have the dedication to win and want to be the best in what I do."

More than 14,000 young athletes will converge upon Des Moines for the 2023 AAU Games. They will compete in sports as diverse as twirling, fencing, field hockey, jump rope, karate, swimming, taekwondo and trampoline and tumbling, along with track and field.

Calvert said he's looking forward to this spring, when RMS has a middle school track program for the first time, led by Coach Chris Boatwright.

Calvert's advice to anyone wanting to start a conditioning program mixed with running? Be patient.

"You just have to take it slow and ease into it. It might take some time to get better at it," Calvert said. "And it's going to be hard but you have to push through it. Not everyone is good at everything, but you can always improve your own skill level."



COURTESY PHOTO

Ryland Calvert with his two medals from the AAU Region 6 Meet.

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PC Council hears report on new fire department progress

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Phil Campbell City Council heard a lengthy report on the town's reorganized volunteer fire department at the council's July 18th meeting.

Last month the council voted to disband the Phil Campbell Volunteer Fire Department and hand over the reorganization process to the Phil Campbell Rescue Squad.

That led to the creation of Phil Campbell Fire & Rescue. Andy Marbutt was appointed Chief, with Phil Campbell Mayor Mike McQuary to serve as Assistant Chief, Nick Marbutt as Captain, First Lieutenant Joe Margocs and Second Lieutenant Dennis Williams.

The newly-formed Phil Campbell Fire & Rescue began the process earlier this month of accepting applications from citizens interested in becoming a member.

Before it was disbanded, the Phil Campbell VFD was led by Chief Mike Rice who, along with his brother Eric, served the town for more than 20 years. The council's decision to disband and reorganize the department was not without controversy.

Rice asserts that his department answered all calls with a sufficient number of responders. But council members cited concerns about calls being answered with not enough personnel trained and certified to enter a structure fire. Other issues, including cleaning and organizing the fire station, were not addressed more than 18 months after they were presented to Rice, according to McQuary.

The council plans to review the status of the department at year's end to gauge the progress made before deciding whether to continue with the combined department or to take a different approach.

The new chief has taken a 'look forward' strategy focused on building the PCF&R's membership and repairing vehicles so the department will have enough pumpers and emergency vehicles to respond to different types of calls.

As of July 19th, the new department has 22 members, and Marbutt told the council his goal is to have 30, with half of that number certified and trained.

"We have 22 members, and are expecting to add one more this week, and 11 of our members are experienced and/or trained and certified firefighters," Marbutt said.

Several new PCF&R members are taking the 160-hour firefighter course

being offered through the Russellville Fire Department, Marbutt said.

Of the 11 not certified, Marbutt said several have Traffic Incident Management Systems, or TIMS, training. The department will have some members in a new TIMS class that begins in September.

"To have 11 of 22 ready to go into a burning house we are very fortunate," Marbutt said. "We hope to get 30 members, with at least 15 trained and experienced firefighters. If we can do that, we'll be in real good shape."

Marbutt updated the council on the status of the department's vehicles and repairs that have been and/or need to be made. There are two working pumpers along with a truck equipped to respond to grass/brush fires with a LUCAS chest compression system on it and another truck with chains/chain saws for road blockage.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Philip King thanked Marbutt for his detailed report and the progress the new department has made in just a few weeks.

The other members of Phil Campbell Fire & Rescue are: Jacob Stidham, Amber Motes, Brad White, Lisa White, Damien Reeves, Dylan Haney, Anthony Green, Coda Minor, Jacob Pena, Christen Woodham, Marlena Mather, Pam Williams, Eddie Marbutt, Virginia Burks, Walter Evans, Chad Casey and Candace Riddle.

In other agenda items, the council:

--approved the purchase of two extendable barrel fans and a high-velocity stand up fan for the fire department building.

--heard a report from Councilwoman Lynn Landers about efforts to book the Velcro Pygmies for the 2024 Downtown Hoedown.

--heard a report from Councilman Eddie Marbutt about progress on the walking track being constructed on the property purchase by the city at the intersection of Hwy. 237 and College Road. There are two culverts that must be installed to complete the track. Lighting is already in place. Plans also call for a basketball court to be built on the property, which extends north to the Phil Campbell Splash Pad.

--tabled a request to bring back the Friday night dance to the Phil Campbell Community Center.

--approved a motion to rename the PCHS baseball field at the Roger Bedford, Jr., Complex to Jonathan Raper Field.

--approved a bid from Eagle Pro to provide two cleanings each year of four HVAC units for a cost of \$478/year.

--approved a donation of \$250 per team to the two Phil Campbell Dixie Youth All-Star teams competing in the World Series (6 and Under and 12 and Under).

We love to hear from you! Please send your guest columns, cartoon panels, letters to the editor, recipes and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

Homeland Security grant awarded to Russellville FD

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Fire Department will soon have a new mini pumper truck thanks to a federal grant through the Department of Homeland Security.

Rep. Robert Aderholt announced the grant from the Department of Homeland Security's FY 2022 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.

The \$362,857.14 grant will be used to buy a new Quick Attack truck that will replace a 1989 truck used to respond to brush fire calls.

Aderholt said the grant will have lasting positive impact for Russellville residents.

"These funds were allocated in the Fiscal Year 2022 Department of Homeland Security budget, which I gladly supported with a yes vote," Aderholt said. "This type of funding has a direct impact on people in my



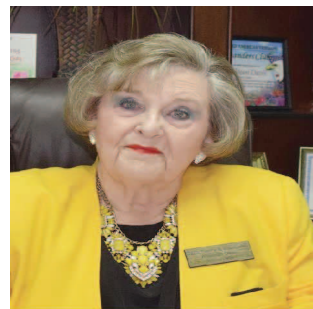
A Homeland Security grant will allow the Russellville Fire Dept. to buy a Quick Attack truck similar to this one.

district, from helping to lower homeowner insurance costs, to most importantly, helping to save lives and property."

Russellville Fire Marshal Justin Green said the grant addresses a specific need the department has faced for several years.

"The maintenance and cost of operating our current brush fire truck become cost prohibitive and this will move forward our ability to respond to those types of calls," Green said. "This new vehicle will comply the NFPA standards for these type of vehicles."

The other department in the Fourth Congressional District that received a grant through the program the Adamsburg Volunteer Fire Department on Lookout Mountain in Fort Payne.



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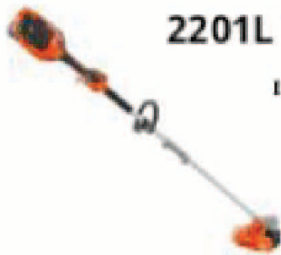
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