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Jolly remembered as faithful servant of God as well as outstanding jurist

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

John Jolly guarded his privacy. During his tenure as Franklin County Circuit Judge and Franklin County District Attorney, Jolly, always professional to those who he dealt with, kept his private life at a distance. But those select few who Jolly interacted with away from his office knew a man who was a dedicated Christian with a servant's heart. It's often said those who are God's



most dedicated servants are also the least-known servants. And that defined Jolly. Jolly's service to his community and his church (First Presbyterian Church Russellville and later First Presbyterian Church Tuscumbia) often 'flew under the radar.' If left up to Jolly, though, the

See 'JOLLY,' Page 3

No turnover for Franklin County BOE with three unopposed incumbents

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press


There's an old Latin adage that says familiarity breeds contempt. In the case of the Franklin County Board of Education, though, familiarity breeds progress. And that familiarity among board members and Franklin County Superintendent of Education Greg Hamilton will continue, as Hamilton and board members Ralton Baker and Kacey Johnston will each serve another term after qualifying without opposition for the March 5, 2024, Republican Primary. With no Democratic qualifiers in any of those races, Johnston and Baker will serve another six-year

term and Hamilton will serve his third four-year term. For District One Board Member Baker, this will be his seventh term—40 years of service on the Franklin County Board of Education when his new term ends in 2030. Baker, Johnston and Hamilton each approached the Franklin County Republican Executive Committee about running in the Republican Primary. The GOP's Steering Committee approved their requests to qualify as Republicans. Baker, who announced his change to the Republican Party in 2020, has previously run as a Democrat. Hamilton and Johnston were elected as independent candidates. As she nears the end of her first

See 'BOE,' Page 4

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**Carolyn Ann Bryant Jones, age 74, of
Phil Campbell, passed away on
Thursday, November 23, 2023. Spry
Memorial Chapel assisted the family.**

**James Ray Frederick, Sr., age 68, of
Russellville, AL, passed away on Friday,
November 24, 2023. Spry Memorial
Chapel assisted the family.**

Franklin County Commission
P.O. Box 1028• Russellville, AL 35653
Phone (256) 332-8850• Fax (256) 332-8855

NOTICE OF INVITATION TO BID

The Franklin County Commission is accepting sealed bids for the sale of
the following:

2008 Ford F250

Vehicle(s) sold “as is”.

Bids will be received until 4:00 PM on Friday, December 1, 2023, in the
Franklin County Commission Office. Bids may be delivered to the
Franklin County Commission Office at 405 North Jackson Avenue
between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, or mailed to P.O. Box 1028,
Russellville, AL 35653.

Bids should be marked “Bid on Ford F250”.

Use attached tabulation sheet.

If you wish to view the items or have any questions, please contact
Gene Ward at (256) 460-9697.

Truck is to be removed within fourteen days from the date the bid is
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Franklin County reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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'JOLLY,' From Page 1

plane would never have left the hangar.

Jolly died November 21st at his Russellville residence at the age of 86, just five days after Jeanette, his beloved wife of 54 years, passed away.

To Russellville attorney Bob Rogers, Jolly wasn't just a friend, he was a mentor.

"As a young lawyer, Judge Jolly, then District Attorney, and Circuit Judge Kennedy Williams were great mentors in my new profession and in my life," Rogers said. "I recall an early criminal trial that I lost to DA Jolly and I was incensed over some legal trivia.

"Calmly, both (Jolly and Williams) listened to my tirade, then (Jolly) quietly told me 'the mail leaves for Montgomery twice a day,' which meant shut up and file an appeal. He was a Southern gentleman with integrity, morality and Christian values he relied on when applying the law and living his life. Both he and his lovely wife Jeanette will be sorely missed," Rogers added.

Jolly was the first in his family to graduate from high school and college. After graduating from the University of Alabama School of Law, he moved to Russellville in 1967 and served as District Attorney of Franklin County from 1967-1983.

He became Circuit Judge in 1983, a position he held until his retirement in 2001.

An avid runner, Jolly began jogging in the 1980s. That soon turned into long-distance running. He completed 32 marathons before he retired from running at the age of 67. As with his professional life, Jolly fully dedicated himself to running until he was no longer able. But he was far from being ready to ride off into the sunset after his retirement in 2001.

Jolly created There's a Way, a non-profit foundation that awarded both need-based and merit-based scholarships to Franklin County high school seniors and monetary awards to teachers to use in their classrooms. Once again, Jolly poured himself into the cause, even setting up an office inside the CB&S Bank headquarters to conduct foundation business.

Russellville attorney Danny McDowell said the foundation was particularly important to Jolly and his wife because of her 44-year career as an educator, with 32 of those as a science instructor at Northwest-Shoals Community College.

"John and Jeanette, both very private individuals, nevertheless had a positive impact on the Franklin County community that few, if any, other couples have had," McDowell said. "They alone knew how many tens of thousands of dollars were given away through There's a Way and what most people

didn't know is a substantial portion of that money came from John and Jeanette's personal funds.

"They were devoted to their daughter, Ginger, and were hard-working, independent and faithful to their God and church. They will both be fondly remembered and missed. It was my honor and privilege to have them as my friends," McDowell added.

Former CB&S Bank President Dennis Upchurch was also among Jolly's small circle of friends. But Jolly never crossed any blurry lines, whether in his professional or personal life.

"I have been a friend of Judge Jolly for almost 40 years. Some 30 years ago I would jog with him," Upchurch said. "He was always considerate and would go at my pace, a lot slower than his.

"After he retired from being our Circuit Judge, we served together on the CB&S Bank Board of Directors. Once John and Mrs. Jolly went with me to a bank conference. We went out to dinner and John would not let the bank pay for their dinner. I explained he was actually representing the bank, but he would not allow it because he would not allow even a hint of being compromised. He was a smart, kind and loyal person who will be greatly missed," Upchurch added.

Vote KIRK SPARKS

Franklin County Commission District One
in the
March 5, 2024 Republican Primary

Pd.Pol.Adv.by Kirk Sparks - 17212 Hwy 81 - Russellville,AL 35654

Franklin Free Press

113 Washington Ave. NW
Russellville, AL 35653
256-332-0255

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

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Belgreen Homecoming



BELGREEN HOMECOMING: Homecoming week activities at Belgreen High School conclude Friday, December 1 with home basketball games against Vina High School. The 2023-24 Homecoming Court, and their escorts, from left: Morgan Vandiver, Will King, Lily Blackburn, Brandon Gallardo, Betsayda Andres Ordonez, Alex Guidry, Hanna Borden, Zaden Johnson, Natalie Willingham, Brilee Whitten, Caitlyn Oliver and Samuel Darracott.

'BOE,' From Page 1

term, Johnston reflected on how much she enjoys being part of the leadership and policy-making team for Franklin County Schools.

"It's rewarding but there are challenges," Johnston said. "After coming through a difficult time for our school system with the pandemic, we did well continuing in-class instruction and support for our students as best we could.

"It was a major challenge but I feel like we're on the right path for Franklin County Schools and Red Bay Schools," she added.

Johnston said her decision to run as a Republican was consistent with Republican ideals on education she aligns with.

"I feel like the Republican Party supports our being able to have more local control and decision-making in our schools rather than from the top down," Johnston said.

"The state and legislature in Alabama did an excellent job giving us as much local control as feasible during the pandemic," she added.

After garnering the most votes in a three-man race for superintendent in 2016, Hamilton was unopposed in 2020 as he will be next year.

After navigating his system through a pandemic and improving its financial health, Hamilton is proud of the work done but realizes there will be new challenges ahead.

"I'm pretty satisfied where we're at but that's the result of the people

surrounding me helping our school system—our central office staff, board members, principals, teachers and our students," Hamilton said. "You can visit any one of Franklin County's 10 schools and see the progress we've made."

Those challenges include dealing with the end of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER), part of the massive American Relief Plan Act. Hamilton said Franklin County Schools have received more than \$8 million since the onset of COVID-19. But that funding ends after this school year.

Franklin County Schools face more than a \$2 million shortfall, with \$500,000 of that amount used to fund the system's 11 school nurses. The State Department of Education mandated that every school have a nurse on-site by 2027, but Hamilton said that's one of many unfunded mandates from the state.

"We'll absorb what we can through retirements and attrition, but some perks including intervention teachers may have to be eliminated if we don't come up with the money in other areas," Hamilton said.

Special education is the other area that will have to be made up, to the tune of \$1.6 million. Franklin County Schools have 45 special education students that Alabama requires have a 1:1 aide ratio.

Financial challenges will always be a part of education, though. And coming up with answers is something Hamilton looks forward to doing.

"It's the good people you surround yourself with that help make progress. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to serve as superintendent and I want to thank the people of this county for that," Hamilton said.

RCS board approves 15 personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education approved 15 personnel moves at an abbreviated meeting on November 21st.

A transfer in position for Alissa Moore, from Russellville High School Counselor to Career Coach at RHS, was approved, along with the following other personnel moves:

--Temporary Employment in Position for the 2023-2024 School Year:

Kristyn Landry, Tyrone Wilson, Challice Langston, Cortney Green and Sommer Jackson were hired as teachers for the 21st CCLC. Kristyn Landry, Marlana Young-Jones, Brittney Flanagin and Challice Langston were hired as Teachers for Afterschool Tutoring and Enrichment Program.

--Substitute Bus Driver: Donna Hamilton Clark.

--Leave of Absence: Jesslyn McNutt and Jenna Harrison, teachers at West Elementary School. McNutt from Oct. 18, 2023, through Jan. 26, 2024 and Harrison from Feb. 12, 2024 through March 22, 2024.

--Athletic Consultant for 2023-2024: Nicole Jensen to be a pro-consult for the RHS Girls Basketball Team. Maximum payment for the athletic consult at the high school level shall not exceed \$825, to be paid by the Basketball Booster Club.

RCS Superintendent of Education Heath Grimes told the board that Russellville City Schools has been recognized by the State of Alabama as an Alabama Science and Reading Spotlight District for

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Bids should be marked "Bid on Ford F150".

Use attached tabulation sheet.

If you wish to view the items or have any questions, please contact Gene Ward at (256) 460-9697.

Truck is to be removed within fourteen days from the date the bid is approved at no cost to the Franklin County Commission.

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Ministry helps make Christmas special for kids of jailed parents

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Debbie Dixon has a heart for giving. And once again, Dixon is organizing her annual Christmas for Kids, an outreach that provides Christmas for children with one or both parents in jail or prison.

"These are innocent children who have done nothing but are certainly affected because of their parents' wrongdoing," Dixon said.

Christmas for Kids is seeking sponsors for children. A sponsorship entails purchasing at least three gifts for each child sponsored. You will be provided with the child's age, clothing sizes and toy/gift preferences.

Christmas for Kids is a non-profit organization and your gifts are tax deductible.

For more information, or to sponsor a child or children, contact Dixon at 256-443-1297 and Merry Christmas!

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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 **T**he 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.


 **A**shaKiran 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.


 **T**he 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.


 **P**astor 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.


 **T**ennessee River Bass Club is seeking members for our 23/24 season. Club fishes monthly on Tennessee river and Bear Creek lakes. We welcome boaters or non-boaters 16 or older of all experience levels to join. Club is based in Sheffield. For more information, contact Tommy 256-627-5662.


 **A**claimed acoustic band Act of Congress will perform their unique blend of American roots music mixed with traditional Christmas music at the Ritz Theatre on Friday, Dec. 1, at 7 p.m. An Act of Congress Christmas is made possible by presenting sponsor Colbert County Tourism. Tickets range from \$40 - \$30 and are available now at tennesseevalleyarts.org or by calling 256-383-0533. The Birmingham-based band has released multiple albums and has toured the world as Cultural Ambassadors for the U.S. State Department. Act of Congress regularly performs with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and has played for the likes of Disney, SXSW, NPR, Paste, and Billboard. Their modern mixes of traditionally popular Christmas songs demonstrate their skillful musical talent while enticing audiences to sing along. For more information about the Tennessee Valley Art Association, which runs the Ritz Theatre and the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, visit tennesseevalleyarts.org or call 256-383-0533.


 **T**he Frog Pond Volunteer Fire Department is holding a fund raiser Gun Raffle with proceeds going to benefit the Frog Pond VFD. Tickets are \$10 or \$25 for 3 and may be purchased through Cash App or PayPal. Call 256-263-0825 for more information. One AR-15 and one Glock 19 Gen 5 will be given away. 16" AR-15 5.56/223 with 15" MHR. And Glock 19 Gen 5 9mm. Drawing will be held at the Fire Department on February 23, 2024, at 6 p.m.


 **M**Y FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES, RUSSELLVILLE, AL, 104 E. Lawrence St., Pastor Pearl Shelton, would like to invite you to our weekly Prayer Meeting every Monday evening at 5:30 p.m. Come join us as we pray together in unity and power! Anyone needing prayer please be sure to join us! Everyone is welcome!

 **F**our Christmas Parades are set for Franklin County in December. The first is the Red Bay Christmas Parade on Monday, Dec. 4. Vina will host its Christmas Parade on Tuesday, Dec. 5. On Thursday, Dec. 7, the annual Russellville Christmas Parade will roll through downtown Russellville. The Phil Campbell Christmas Parade is set for Thursday, Dec. 14. All parades will begin at 6 p.m.

 **T**he Frog Pond Volunteer Fire Department is holding a fundraiser sale of Boston Butts and BBQ ribs smoked by William Bishop. They are pre-selling Boston Butts and ribs with all proceeds benefitting the Frog Pond VFD's expenses for new equipment. Whole smoked butts are \$35 and full rack of BBQ ribs is \$25. You can pay with Cash App, Paypal. Must be paid when order is made. Cash App is \$FROGPONDVFD and Paypal BINGHAM899. To order call 256-263-0825 or 256-856-0476. Pick up is December 16, 2023, at Frog Pond VFD between 3-6 p.m.

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County will hold a fund raiser Bake Sale on December 2, 2023, starting at 9 a.m., in front of Canine Cakes & Curls, 516 St. Clair Street in Russellville. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Cowboy Church of Franklin County's Youth Program.

 **L**ifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 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@russellvillehospital.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!

 **T**his is the season for joy and community spirit! Colbert County is gearing up for a series of heartwarming Christmas parades, bringing festive cheer to our region. Mark your calendars for these merry events: Tuscumbia Christmas Parade: Nov 28, 6:00 PM, Muscle Shoals Christmas Parade: Nov 30, 7:00 PM, Leighton Christmas Parade: Dec 2, 6:00 PM, Sheffield Christmas Parade: Dec 5, 6:00 PM, Cherokee Christmas Parade: Dec 7, 6:30 PM. For parade details, contact Colbert County Tourism at 256-383-0783.

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Commission approves resolution to increase county coroner's salary

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved a resolution to support an increase in the compensation package for the Franklin County Coroner.

The commission will request that Rep. Jamie Kiel introduce a local act that would increase the expense allowance for the coroner from \$4,200 per year to \$9,700 per year.

Franklin County Coroner Charles Adcox receives an annual salary of \$300. Additionally, Adcox receives an annual expense allowance of \$4,200 for the office.

The legislation would change that allowance to \$9,700 per year through 2026, the next election year for the coroner position. After that, the expense allowance would be eliminated and the coroner's annual salary would be \$10,000.

Commissioners unanimously approved the resolution at their November 20th meeting.

In other agenda items, the commission:

--approved a bid of \$501.99 from Rhonda Bullion to purchase a 1995 Ford Econoline van from the Franklin County Coroner's Office.

--approved the resignation of temporary custodian/groundskeeper/housekeeper Brandon Beam, effective October 19, 2023.

--approved a low bid of \$7,078 from Mobile Communications of America to repair the county's weather sirens.

--approved a set up expense of \$7,995 from Gov App to build a mobile app to alert Franklin County residents about severe weather alerts, Amber alerts, etc. The app will be integrated into the existing Franklin County Sheriff's Office app and future annual maintenance costs for the app, \$7,995 per year, will be shared by the Franklin County Emergency Management Agency and the sheriff's office.

--recognized EMA Director Mary Hallman-Glass for earning her Certified Local Emergency Manager certification through the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

--approved the resignation of Highway Department temporary employees Butch Harkness and John Payne, effective November 10th, the retirement of Roadway Foreman David Gaston effective December 1st, the promotion of Bruce Wilson to Roadway Foreman and authorized advertising for the position of Roadway Maintenance Technician I.

--approved the hiring of Kandy Barnett (effective 10/16) as a Corrections Officer/Dispatcher in the Sheriff's Office, the resignation of Steve Bullion (effective 11/11) as a deputy and authorized advertising for the same, the resignation of Corrections Officer/Dispatcher Alexis Browning (effective 10/24) and authorized advertising for the vacancy.

--approved Family Medical Leave Act leave and catastrophic sick leave for Sheriff's Office employee Colin James, and approved the resignation of Samuel Cosby as Office Clerk and authorized advertisement for the vacancy.

--approved rebidding sealed bids on a 2006 Ford F150 and a 2008 Ford F250 truck, surplus property in the Franklin County Highway Department.

--approved hiring Randy Barnett as an Accounts Receivable Specialist in the Solid Waste Department, approved the hiring of Riley Winstead as a Heavy Equipment Operator (effective 10/30) and the resignation of Riley Winstead as a Heavy Equipment Operator (effective 11/8) and authorized advertising for the vacancy.

--approved a holiday schedule to include all State of Alabama holidays, and Friday, November 24th and Tuesday, December 26th as county holidays.

--reappointed Probate Judge Barry Moore to the Northwest Alabama Resource Conservation & Development Board.



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RHS grad chosen as UAH College of Business Ambassador

Submitted

Ian Miller, a resident of Russellville, AL, was recently selected to serve as a College of Business Ambassador at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH).

Through this exclusive leadership program, selected business students have the opportunity to practice their leadership and professionalism by representing the college at student, community and recruitment events. These outstanding student leaders are knowledgeable about the college, are highly involved on campus and demonstrate academic excellence. The ambassadors also have the unique opportunity to attend exclusive leadership programs with community leaders to expand their professional network.

“Being a college of business ambassador at UAH is a great opportunity. I get to make valuable connections for my academic and professional future, while also getting to enjoy all of the perks of college life,” Miller said.

“We are fortunate to have these outstanding ambassadors representing the College of Business,” said UAH College of Business Dean, Dr. Jason Greene.

“As individuals, each one brings their unique strengths, interests and perspective to reflect the breadth of programs and people who have found a home and sense of belonging here,” Greene added.

Greene also commented on how the student leaders have contributed to the culture of the college.

“As a group, they create a welcoming culture throughout the college – one of active engagement, professionalism and fun. We are proud to have them as business ambassadors and to share their journey as they launch their careers,” Greene said.

Miller graduated from Russellville High School in 2021 and is now pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration with a major in Information Systems at UAH.



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RV Council approves agreement to extend lease of ALPR cameras

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council authorized Russellville Police Department Chief Chris Hargett to enter into a five-year agreement with a company that provides automated license plate recognition (ALPR) through cameras located around the city.

The extension will renew annually at a cost of \$12,500/year. The cameras, already in operation at four locations around the city, send real-time alerts to law enforcement when a stolen car or known wanted suspect from a criminal database is detected, or when a missing person in an AMBER or Silver alert is detected.

The cameras are mounted in fixed locations at three points around the city. The fourth is a mobile camera similar to the speed detection mobile unit residents have seen around Russellville.

Hargett said the five-year agreement locks in the annual lease cost for the city.

The annual cost will be paid through the RPD’s Drug Task Force Unit Fund, Hargett said.

“We have more than three pages of hits on stolen cars, missing persons and other information used to solve abduction cases, so it’s really useful to the department,” Hargett said.

The cameras send a real-time message to dispatch so officers can quickly respond to the alerts.

The council approved the agreement at its November 20th meeting. In other agenda items, the council:

--approved a resolution to amend the Community Development Block Demolition Grant budget. The grant was used to demolish 11 dilapidated buildings in the city, including College Avenue Elementary School.

--approved the hiring of Luther Posey as a police officer in the Russellville Police Department.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be December 4, 2023, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.



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IRS warns of 'romance scam' that's impacted more than 70,000 victims

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

There are plenty of scams to be aware of in our globally-connected world. But the Internal Revenue Service is warning citizens about a rapidly-increasing romance scam designed to tug on the victim's heart-strings while stealing their identity and money.

The IRS Atlanta Field Office issued the warning November 20th through a press release.

More than 70,000 Americans fell victim to the romance scam in 2022, some with devastating financial results. Those victims reported a collective loss of more than \$1.3 billion.

Criminals create fake online profiles, often through social media and/or dating web sites, and they attempt to build emotional attachments with their targets to the point where the victim feels comfortable enough sending money.

Scammers often find their victims by combing through public information as part of the pre-scam research.

"It is important that people are careful of others they meet through social media sites," said Demetrius Hardeman, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Atlanta Field Office.

The IRS offers the following tips to avoid falling victim to a romance scam:

- Never send money to anyone you have only communicated with online or by phone.
- Be careful what you post and make public online.
- When starting a new relationship, take it slow and ask lots of questions.
- Be suspicious of those who seem too perfect or quickly ask you to leave a dating service or social media site to communicate with them by other means.
- Beware of those who want to isolate you from family and/or friends.
- Don't share inappropriate photos or financial information that could later be used to extort you.

--Be suspicious if the individual promises to meet in person but then never does.

To report romance scam or other types of online crimes, victims can file a report at <https://www.ic3.gov/>.

The website contains information including Frequently Asked Questions, consumer and industry alerts and a graph on complaints and losses over the last five years.

IRS-CI special agents are the only federal law enforcement agents with investigative jurisdiction over violations of the Internal Revenue Code. The agency has 20 field offices across the United States.

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SPORTS

11.29.23

Lady Golden Tigers off to 3-1 start on young season

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville High School girls' varsity team moved to 3-0 on the young season after a win over Athens in the Hartselle Thanksgiving Tournament on November 21st.

The Lady Golden Tigers trailed 12-10 after one quarter, but outscored the Golden Eagles 7-2 in the second to take a 17-14 halftime lead in a defensive battle. Russellville led after nine after three quarters and finished with a 31-22 win.

Russellville's next tournament game was Wednesday against Columbia.

Avery Watts led Russellville with 12 points. Ella Copeland had 10. Laila Hill added five and Jacey Moore four, as the only players to score.

In the Vina Holiday Tournament the previous weekend, Coach Jermaine Groce's team built a 19-point halftime lead en route to a 68-32 final over the Cougars.

Copeland led Russellville with 21 points. Moore, fresh off her softball scholarship signing with Northwest Shoals Community College, added 15.

Alexia Groce scored six, Jemma Moore five, Aleah Bonman five and Kaylee Suggs and Watts had four apiece.

Russellville's season opener was a 50-43 win over Wilson. Copeland led the Lady Golden Tigers with 15 points. Watts and Moore had 11 apiece, Moore six, Hill four and Desiree Medina added three.

Russellville's first loss came Wednesday in the Hartselle Tournament when it fell to Columbia

See, 'TIGERS,' Page 12

Tharptown softball mini-camp designed to teach fundamentals, spark interest in program for elementary students

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

New Tharptown High School varsity softball coach Jonathan Jones wants to build his program from the ground up.

That means generating interest in softball for young Tharptown Elementary School students so they will look forward to being part of the program when they reach high school.

With that in mind, Tharptown's coaches and varsity softball players hosted a Softball/Baseball Mini-Camp for 27 elementary students from the third through sixth grade.

The camp was held at the softball field earlier this month.

The focus was to teach and improve basic skills including throwing, fielding, base running and hitting fundamentals.

In his first year at THS after leading Vina High School's softball program last season, Jones was

See, 'SOFTBALL,' page 12



COURTESY PHOTO

'A hard hat and lunch pail' group: Ritter praises senior class' work-ethic, success

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When the 26 seniors on the Russellville High School football team walked off the field November 24th after a second round playoff loss to Moody, the mood was somber as they realized their time on one of Alabama's premier football programs had come to an end.

When those young men look back at their football careers at RHS, though, they will remember being part of a team that did not lose a Region 8 varsity game in their four years. That's right...24-0.

The 26 seniors won four consecutive Region 8 championships, out scoring Region 8 opponents 1082-159 over their high school careers.

This year's team averaged 37.3 points per game, good enough to land in top five among all 5A schools.

Their overall record was 35-14, with advancement to at least the second round of the playoffs every season.

Those who want to be negative will talk about the weakness of Russellville's Region 8 opponents. But these kids had nothing to do with who they played each week.

Instead, they showed up each week in what Russellville Coach John Ritter describes as a 'hard hat and lunch pail mentality.'

"This year's senior class may not have any 5-star recruits or 4-star recruits, but what we did have

was a bunch of guys who laid it on the line for their team, their school and their community every Friday night regardless who they were playing," Ritter said.

"Watching this bunch play was fun because of the way they prepared, played and handled everything, good or bad, in stride. It's very refreshing to see a group of kids handle adversity with grace and handle success with grace as well," Ritter added.

As he discussed each of the 26 players who will be graduating this spring, Ritter repeatedly used the word 'fun,' something you don't often hear high school coaches mention.

"This was just a fun year. Our kids had fun at practice. They were fun to be around in the locker room. Whatever we did, they just had fun with it. When you can have fun and still work hard, that says a lot about this group. They did all they were asked with the right attitudes and good hearts," Ritter said.

Ritter's thoughts on each senior player follows. They are listed in increasing order by their jersey numbers:

—#4, Michael Scofield, WR: He was a wide receiver who switched over to offense this year and had a great senior year. He'd been a cornerback for us his first three years. He had a good skill set and can fly. We felt he added a dimension to our offense we needed and was very tough in the box, along with being a great run blocker. He really developed over his senior year to be a very

See, 'SENIOR,' Page 14

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'SOFTBALL,' From Page 11

pleased with the turnout and response to the mini-camp.

"This was a great turnout considering the camp was held on short notice and it's our first year as a staff to conduct a mini-camp," Jones said.

"Our players did a great job reinforcing the kids' learning by teaching specific skills such as foot work," he added. "We are trying to spark interest at the elementary level for softball while building relationships with those students coming over to the high school next year. It was a blessing to see all the kids having fun and growing to love the game of softball."

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'TIGERS,' From Page 11

53-51.

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The Lady Golden Tigers trailed throughout the close game, but a fourth quarter comeback fell just short, even though they outscored Columbia 20-11 in the final eight minutes.

Copeland's 16 points led Russellville.

The Lady Golden Tigers' next game was set for November 28th against Red Bay.

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Russellville Electric Board enacts no sign policy on its utility poles

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Signs of any size, shape or variety will no longer be allowed on utility poles inside the City of Russellville after the Russellville Electric Board approved a new zero tolerance sign policy at its November 21st meeting.

Effective January 1, 2024, signs placed on REB power poles will be taken down by REB employees pursuant to the new policy, which was recommended to the board by Manager Charles Canada.

"The nails and staples can increase injury. Under this policy, no signs will be allowed. They create a hazard for our employees and the public," Canada said.

The policy applies to all types of signs, whether commercial, political or ones advertising yard sales.

"The Russellville Electric Board will enforce the pole policy and promptly remove signs from poles," Canada said.

The board heard an update on a REB project that will create a new electrical feed to the Russellville City Schools campus and surrounding areas. The process of clearing under utility lines on Waterloo Road is underway.

Once complete, the additional feed will provide a bypass option if the usual electrical route is interrupted and will improve power reliability to the area, Canada explained.

Last Sunday, the Russellville Fire Department responded to power pole on fire behind the KFC at the Highway 43/Gandy Street intersection. The pole broke in two between the transformer and crossing arms.

When REB employees arrived, the pole had already fallen and was burning on the ground.

Power at KFC, Dollar General, Arabella Health & Wellness Nursing Home, the Russellville Hospital and a few homes in the Mill Village were without power as a result of the fire.

Generators restored temporary power at the hospital and nursing home, and REB employees worked into the night to install a replacement pole and power was restored around 3 a.m.

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good receiver. (39 receptions, 539 yards, 3TDs)

—#7, Carson McCalpin, DB/ST (Special Teams): Carson took pride in being on the special teams units and was a really good player for us. He averaged 2-3 tackles per game on kickoffs and punts and was a great practice player from the standpoint of giving our starting offense good looks. He improved so much from day one to his last day. He made an impact every Friday night. (25 tackles, all on ST).

—#9, Harrison Burch, QB: Harrison played two years for us. Last year we ran more one of a one read system while this year a lot of our RPO stuff was multiple read. We spent a lot of time in the off-season researching things we could do in the passing game to take advantage of the personnel we had. What we settled on put a lot more pressure on him and I think he handled that well. He'll be very successful at the next level because he's a very hard worker. The best example of that is last year he power cleaned about 140 pounds. At the end of this season he's cleaning 250-255. That makes you a batter athlete when you're bigger, faster and stronger. (57% completions, 1,766 passing yards, 15 TDS, 3 INT).

—#12, Brock Reathford, LB: Brock switched to defense this year and found his niche. He played special teams for us too. He got hurt near the end of the year and wasn't able to finish his senior year on the field. He switched from QB to outside LB and put himself in a position to be successful and was a great contributor on special teams.

—#16, Reece Carson, LB: A guy who had a phenomenal senior year. We didn't know what to expect coming into this year from him. Reece was a special teams guy for us as a junior. He worked his tail off in the weight room in the offseason. He's also our number one tennis player at RHS but he didn't let the fact that he's a multi sport guy keep him from working out hard. He had a monster senior year and was a really good outside LB for us. (88 tackles, 11 for loss, 2 sacks, 1 INT).

—#20, Martin Tomas, LB: If I could have 650 Martins, I'd take 650 Martins. He does everything right. He's a hard worker and a dang good football player, but he had some really bad luck this year. He missed three games with an emergency appendectomy. He played hurt against Moody because of some issues related to his surgery so out of 12 games he played in six of them. The fact he had such a good senior year is a testament to him. He was a great leader for our team, a great person all around and the type of young man we want our program to be known for. (60 tackles, 9 for loss).

—#21, Bralynn Vincent, WR: Bralynn was the Swiss Army knife for our offense. He played a variety of positions to go along with his pass receiving. Both he and Nick Pounders brought a toughness to our offense that made them both such valuable players. We did a lot of things with Bralynn because he was athletic enough to play in space but tough enough to play in the box too. (20 receptions, 351 yards, 5 TD).

—#23, Nicklaus Pounders, H-Back: Nick was one of our unsung heroes. With him, it was almost like being an offensive lineman. He didn't have a lot of stats show up, but what does show up is we were so successful on offense because of guys like Nick and Bralynn. He was a very good H-back and what he did in the run game and blocking in the pass game allowed us to be successful. (5 receptions, 46 yards, 1TD).

—#26, Braxten Goodson, S: Braxten was a very rough, smart football player. He was our tough guy in the secondary. The way he played so rough combined with a controlled recklessness made for a very good football player. (85 tackles, 5 for loss).

—#31, Malachi Duncan, LB/RB: Malachi had a great senior year on special teams and on defense. He could flip over and is a kid who'd start at running back for 11 of the 12 teams we

played. He had eight carries for 120 yards and two touchdowns but was playing behind one of the best players in North Alabama. Malachi did things in all three phases which were special plays. He's a heads-up smart football player. He played at a different level this year which is what you want out of your senior players. (92 tackles, 20 for loss, 4 sacks, 3 interceptions).

—#35, Joshua Reed, DL: Josh found a place where he could excel and it was on the defensive line. He was an undersized defensive lineman but the way he practiced and played when he got the opportunity made him successful. Coming into his senior year, he had played very little. He was an H-back, then moved to outside LB and in practice one day he played defensive line and looked very good there. He contributed in a lot of games. He wasn't sure what kind of senior year he would have, but it turned out to be a great senior year. (17 tackles, 3 for loss).

—#43, Shiloh Willis, TE/H: Shiloh was really hampered by injuries. He played tight end for us early in the year. He brought that tough, physical, aggressive nature to our offense. But then he dealt with a hip flexor issue in the second half of the season and it kept him from finishing it the way he started. He was a real cog in our offensive production early on.

—#45, Jeremy Winston, DL/LB: Jeremy was stuck behind two of the best linebackers to play at Russellville in a while in Devin Green and Martin Tomas. Jeremy had a skill set we felt we could take advantage of and play some DL. He worked himself into the rotation on the defensive line and played some really good football for us. He had some big stops in the Fairfield game, including a sack. He had a great senior year because of his unselfish attitude. (18 tackles, 6 for loss, sack).

—#49, Matthew James, DL: Matthew was a really good football player who could do a lot of things for us. He played defensive tackle, nose, defensive end. We stood him up in our four down look. It was a totally different skill set than noseguard and he was able to do it all and do it well. Matthew has a great personality and he made coaching fun. It was fun to watch our defense and to watch the way he played.

—#50, Devin Green, LB: Devin is an old-school linebacker. He even wore the old-school cowboy collar to boot. He hit some people over the last two years where I think he hit their soul. His hit on the Brewer quarterback is the hardest hit I've seen in years. He played rough and physical and was a great leader the way he carried himself and the way he plays the game. (97 tackles, 10 for loss, sack).

—#53, Juan Junior Balthazar, DL: Junior, as we call him, was an undersized but very good defensive lineman. He's a strong, thick, physical kid. He's an example of a good old-school football player. (32 tackles, 5 for loss, sack).

—#54, Tait Barnes, C: Over his four year career, he started as a sophomore at center. As a junior, he did not start for us. He worked himself into the rotation at guard and tackle. And this year he played every snap at right guard. I'm so proud of him. A lot of kids would have quit if they got benched their junior year, but he didn't do that. He played every position on the OL for us through his career and handled adversity and some injuries well.

—#55, Jose Manuel, OL: Jose came out his senior year to play for us. He's a big bodied kid. He did a lot of good things for us Monday-Wednesday each week. He understood what his role was and never backed away from it. He attacked each practice the way you wanted him to. He made us better because he worked hard and thought what he was doing was important. I have a lot of respect for a kid who does that.

—#63, Devin Jones, DL: We moved Devin to defensive lineman as a junior. He came on and got to the point where early on he was doing some good things for us. He was a really big body on the DL. He played well early on but got hurt and it took him a while to recover. With a knee injury it's never good, but for a bigger guy it's even tougher. He came back late in the year and really helped us in practice and worked into the rotation. I'm proud he got to come back and finish his senior year on the field.

—#65, Christopher Lopez, DL: He was with us the whole time and really worked into a position where he was helping us Monday-Wednesday. He worked hard and gave us a great look on the scout team defense.

—#66, Jonathon Lopez, DL: We called (Jonathan and Christopher are twins) them 'Dos Lopez.' He was important and he did a good job embracing his role to help us get better on offense each week. He and his brother were very coachable kids and you can't have a successful team without guys like that.

—#68, Weston Jackson, OL/TE: He was going to be a returning starter for us at offensive tackle. We lost him the first week of fall camp. We didn't get him back until the Fairview game. Then we played him at tight end and he had some huge catches. The Moody game he had a big reception down to the 2-yard line, his first catch of the year. He's a big-bodied guy who is a great blocker but also is very athletic and had some good hands.

—#73, Eric Hernandez, OL: Eric didn't play in a game until his senior year on the varsity level. He blew out his knee as a junior when we expected him to make a run pushing some guys on the OL. He came back this year and started at left guard with no experience. But he got better each week and had to grow up fast with no experience. To see how far he came as a player was really rewarding to see.

—#74, Logan Lindsey, C: He started every snap for us the last year and a half at center. He had a lot of responsibility at that position. You not only have to identify defenses for your OL, you also have to talk through where the combos are and who's responsible for in pass protection. You can't have bad snaps. He handled that so well and had a really good career here. He's a smart, heady player and that's what you want at center because they control a lot of things.

—#89, Adiel Juan-Francisco, DL: Adiel was in our rotation on the defensive line. He worked hard to put himself into that situation. He wasn't the most talented kid with size or football skills, but he was an extremely hard worker. He did what you coached him to do and was a very strong kid who worked hard in the weight room. Our offensive line had to block some quality defensive linemen during the week and Adiel was a big piece of the puzzle. (7 tackles)

—#90, Javonte Hill, DL: He was a guy who worked hard and became a very good defensive lineman. He was a kid who came in and was going to quit his sophomore year. We talked to him and he stuck with us and worked his tail off. He had a really good senior year as a result of that hard work. (80 tackles, 15 for loss, 3 sacks).



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Submit your picks by email to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com by Saturday morning, December 2nd, at 10 a.m. Include your name, phone number and game selections, including tiebreaker.

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Miami-Ohio	Toledo
Oklahoma St.	Texas
App. State	Troy
(NFL) Indianapolis	Tennessee
(NFL) Atlanta	New York Jets
(NFL) Detroit	New Orleans

Tiebreaker Score: Alabama Georgia

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No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers



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FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSION

P.O. Box 1028 · Russellville, AL 35653
Phone (256) 332-8850 · Fax (256) 332-8855

Barry Moore, Chairman
Chris Wallace, District I
Jason Miller, District II
Joseph Baldwin, District III
David Hester, District IV
Leah Mansell, Administrator

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

Roadway Maintenance Technician I, Franklin County Highway Department

Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Deputy, Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Heavy Equipment Operator, Franklin County Solid Waste

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Friday, December 1, 2023.

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, by calling (256) 332-8850 or applications are available at www.franklincountyal.org under the Careers tab.

Franklin County is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in the employment or provision of services.

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SUN | DEC 3RD | 1:30 - 7:30PM

RUSSELLVILLE, AL

FOOD VENDORS:

**DON PEPE TAQUERIA | ASHLEY SWEET TREATS | DIXIE CONCESSIONS
AWW SHUCKS**

LOCAL TALENT (1:30 PM - 4:30)

FREE INFLATABLES | TRAIN RIDE | PHOTO AREAS

CRAFT VENDORS:

**LIVIE T'S | MOLLY'S BOWS | SHOALS HAIR CO. | LIGHT US UP | AMY'S DOOR DECOR
THE FAIRY HAIR POPUP | VIC'S VITTLES | TRIGREEN | GARRET'S CRAFTY CREATIONS
KS CREATIONS | ELIZABETH'S JAZZY JEWELS | THE CRUNCHY COLLECTIVE
DOOR HANGERS AND FRESHIES BY KAYLEE SMITH | VIOLET RENEE'S MACARONS
DBA COUNTRY WOODWORKS AND CRAFTS | SAFEPLACE | FRESH AIR CONCEPTS
SUGAR RUSH | TO BLESS N BLING (PAPARAZZI) | MCGUIRE LEATHER
INVISIBLE STRING BALLOONS | LUX BOUGIE**

SANTA ARRIVES AT 5:00 PM

**EVENING CHRISTMAS PROGRAM BEGINS 5:10 PM
PROGRAM WILL END WITH A LIVE NATIVITY GRAND FINALE**