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Russellville applicant appears before Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission Tuesday

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

A company wanting to make a more than a \$25 million investment in the City of Russellville will try for a third time this week to receive approval for licensing from the Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission (AMCC).

The AMCC will hear oral presentations from 28 applicants hoping to receive one of five Integrated Facility Licenses, considered the Holy Grail of licenses issued by the commis-

sion.

Brian Faught, co-owner of Natural Relief Cultivation, LLC, made his presentation to the AMCC Tuesday morning as part of the commission's latest attempt to consider and award medical marijuana licenses.

The first round of application awards was invalidated as a result of what the commission called 'scoring inconsistencies.'

The second attempt came in August, but saw the commission award all but one of the same licenses it issued the first time. A flood of

See 'APPLICANT,' Page 3

Moulton man facing two animal cruelty charges after allegedly shooting two dogs

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

A Moulton man is out on bond after being arrested on two counts of Cruelty to Animals in Franklin County.

Joel Sandlin, 67, is accused of shooting two dogs on December 23, 2022, near a residence on Duncan Creek Road in Russellville. Sandlin was arrested by Franklin County Sheriff's Office deputies on November 21st and transported to the Franklin County Jail.

According to the resident, Lurie Freeman, the dogs were family pets, with one serving as an emotional support dog for her grandson. The resident said Sandlin shot both

dogs, loaded them into his truck and dumped them a short distance from their home.

"This happened just before Christmas last year. My grandson was devastated. It was almost like a service dog to him and this ruined his Christmas. We want this man to be held accountable," Freeman said.

Cruelty to Animals is a Class B misdemeanor. To convict a defendant under Alabama Code Sec.



Sandlin

See 'CRUELTY,' Page 6

CURTIS BAKER
 Franklin County Commissioner,
 District 1

March 5, 2024
 Republican Primary

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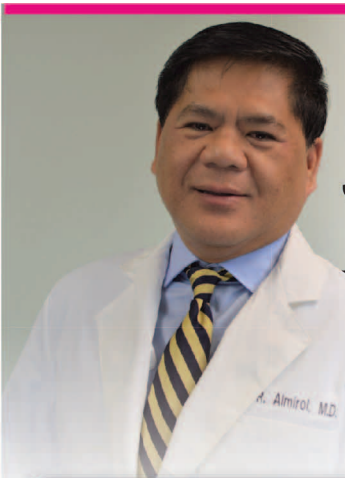
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Franklin County Commissioner

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**Annette Stephenson Lowery, 87, of Florence, passed
away November 29, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home of
Russellville assisted the family.**

**Malcolm D. Campbell, 81, of Hackleburg, passed
away Wednesday, November 29, 2023. Spry
Memorial Chapel assisted the family.**

**Fletcher Cleere Scott Sr. 91, of Russellville, passed
away November 27, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home of
Russellville assisted the family.**

**William Leroy Taylor, 88, of the Crooked Oak
Community, passed away Monday, November 27,
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
approved at no cost to the Franklin County Commission.

Franklin County reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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

'APPLICANT,' From Page 1

lawsuits and legal challenges ensued, with allegations ranging from illegal secret meetings to conflicts of interest for commission members. Natural Relief Cultivation entered into an agreement with the City of Russellville last year to purchase 28 acres on Highway 24 East from the city, with the condition the sale would only go through if its application was approved by the AMCC.

It wasn't, as the commission awarded the five licenses to South Alabama applicants, in spite of its public statement that medical cannabis should be available equally to all Alabama residents across the state.

The company also has an agreement in place to purchase a separate parcel of land on 24 East to build a dispensary if it receives a license.

An Integrated Facility License allows the holder to cultivate cannabis, process it into medical cannabis, including packaging and labeling of medical cannabis products, and to transport, dispense and sell medical cannabis to registered patients at up to five dispensary sites.

The Alabama Legislature approved the Wesley 'Ato' Hall Compassion Act in 2021. That act opened the door for legal use of medical cannabis in Alabama, although Franklin County Legislators Sen. Larry Stutts and Rep. Jamie Kiel both voted against the legalization of medical cannabis.

Stutts told the FFP last week that he's not surprised by the controversy and allegations of impropriety in the medical cannabis licensing process.

"You have a few people selecting a few applicants and to get selected is worth millions of dollars," Stutts said. "That opens up the floodgates for corruption.

"And I'm not sure some of this controversy isn't an intentional attempt to attack the process and then finally get the commission to say 'okay we'll just let everyone have licenses. You can only fight it so long. This is the first step toward legalizing marijuana for recreational use in our state and I remain opposed to that," he added.

The law bans smoking marijuana or consuming it in food products. It will be available in capsules, tablets, oils, gels, creams, transdermal

patches, inhalable oils and liquids and suppositories.

Faught is co-owner of Arkansas' largest cannabis dispensary, Natural Relief Dispensary. Arkansas' law is similar to Alabama's, so Faught's familiarity with the licensing process and experience operating a dispensary the past five years is an asset he included in his presentation to the AMCC.

Faught partnered with the City of Russellville in large part due to the commission's statement encouraging applications from all corners of the state, not just Montgomery or other large metropolitan areas.

Faught has consistently praised Mayor David Grissom and the Russellville City Council for their support of what would be a significant financial investment in the city.

The council approved the lease purchase with Natural Relief Cultivation, LLC, by a 4-1 vote. Councilman Gary Cummings voted against the agreement and Councilman David Palmer did not vote on the measure.

When contacted Friday by the FFP, Faught said he was optimistic about the upcoming hearing and his company's chances to receive a license.

"If the process is done objectively and pursuant to the commission's criteria, we believe we have an excellent chance to be successful," Faught said.

Three of the applicants that scored higher than Natural Relief Cultivation in the original application process pulled out and will not be considered this time around.

The city's agreement with Faught includes certain benchmarks that would have to be met in order for the company to avoid having to pay the \$500,000 purchase price for the land. Those include employment of at least 250 people earning a minimum of \$15/hour and a capital investment of at least \$25 million in the city. The company must also open a dispensary inside Russellville city limits 'as soon as feasible' after licensing.

Grissom describes the agreement, if Natural Relief Cultivation does receive a license, as a "huge economic development for the city."

NRC would also pay the city an annual payment of one percent of its net profit or a minimum of \$50,000, whichever is larger.

After each of the 28 applicants make their presentations, the committee is expected to announce license awards later this week. The AMCC awarded licenses in all other categories last weekend after a week of presentations.

Franklin Free Press

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

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Please send your guest columns and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

Vote KIRK SPARKS

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

Christmas in Cullman expands to 5 weeks this December

Submitted

Christmas in Cullman is becoming Cullman Christkindlmarkt. This year, it's expanding to 5 weeks full of Christmas memories for the whole family, including over 40 vendors at the Christkindlmarkt, an ice-skating rink and carousel, Christmas parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony.

The beloved Christmas market, with origins tracing back to late medieval Germany, is a vibrant and festive tradition that comes alive during the four weeks of Advent. These markets, typically nestled in the bustling heart of town squares, are a picturesque scene of quaint wooden huts. Originating as gatherings to provide locals with essential winter goods, they have evolved into a celebration of Christmas, offering an array of culinary treats, heartwarming beverages, and an assortment of festive gifts and handcrafted items. The market's enchanting ambiance, adorned with holiday decorations, creates a magical experience that delights and captivates visitors of all ages, making it an essential and cherished part of the holiday season.

Immerse yourself in a German winter wonderland at Cullman's Christkindlmarkt. Every Thursday to Sunday, from November 24 to December 23, indulge in rich flavors of traditional German

Christkindlmarkt Cuisine. Experience ice skating, carousel rides, and cherished moments with Santa. The market's heart lies in its authenticity, from carefully handpicked vendors to the preserved centuries-old tradition that best exemplifies true German craftsmanship. Treasure offerings from revered German manufacturers like Christian Ulbricht, Dregeno Seiffen, Engstler, Graupner, Knox, Richard Glässer, Ino Schaller, and Richard Sellmer—where each item is a testament to legacy and meticulous artistry.

The Cullman Christmas Parade will be at 6 pm on December 1st in downtown Cullman, followed at 7:30 pm with the Christmas Tree Lighting and a concert by Taylor Hicks. All events are free admission.

A full schedule of events and more information can be found at www.cullmanchristkindlmarkt.com.

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American Pickers producers looking for deals in Alabama

Submitted

The American Pickers are excited to return to Alabama!

They plan to film episodes of The History Channel hit television series throughout your area in February 2024.

American Pickers is a documentary series that explores the fascinating world of antique "picking" on The History Channel. The hit show follows skilled pickers in the business, as they hunt for America's most valuable antiques.

They are always excited to find historically significant or rare items, in addition to unforgettable characters and their collections. As they hit the back roads from coast to coast, the Pickers are on a mission to recycle and rescue forgotten relics. Along the way, they want to meet characters with amazing stories and fun items. They hope to give historically significant objects a new lease on life while learning a thing or two about America's past along the way.

The Pickers have seen a lot of rusty gold over the years and are always looking to discover something they've never seen before. They are ready to find extraordinary items and hear fascinating tales about them.

The American Pickers TV Show is looking for leads and would love to explore your hidden treasure. If you or someone you know has a unique item, story to tell, and is ready to sell...we would love to hear from you!

Please note, the Pickers DO NOT pick stores, flea markets, malls, auction businesses, museums, or anything open to the public.

If interested, please send us your name, phone number, location, and description of the collection with photos to: americanpickers@cineflix.com or call (646) 493-2184. Facebook: @GotAPick.

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NOTICE OF INVITATION TO BID

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

2006 Ford F150

Vehicle(s) sold "as is".

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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.

Franklin County reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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Three CB&S Bank employees promoted to Vice President

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

The Board of Directors of Russellville-based CB&S Bank announced three recent promotions to the position of Vice President.

Barbara Gresham, Amanda Oliver and Barry Burleson were promoted to Vice President at the most recent board meeting.

Oliver is Branch Sales Manager at CB&S Bank's Hodges branch. Burleson holds the same position at the North Russellville branch and Gresham is Branch Sales Manager at the bank's Red Bay branch.

Oliver has 38 years' banking experience. She is dedicated to helping people achieve their financial goals and to helping her community, as Oliver volunteers at Gentiva Hospice.

Oliver is a Hodges native and a graduate of Vina High School. She and her husband Tim have been married 27 years and have four children, one grandchild and another on the way.

Burleson is a Haleyville native and Haleyville High School graduate. He's an active member of the Lions Club and Haleyville Chamber of Commerce, having volunteered for numerous community events.

He and his wife Kim have been married 30 years and have two children.

CB&S Bank is a \$2.4 billion community bank operating 55 offices in three states.

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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.

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.

Tennessee 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.

The 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.

MY 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!

The Frog Pond Volunteer Fire Department is holding a fundraiser sale of 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.

North Russellville Baptist Church will host a Pancake Breakfast with Santa on Saturday, December 9th from 9-11:30 a.m., in the church fellowship hall. \$8 per plate includes pancakes, bacon, orange juice and all the photos with Santa you want! (Bring your own camera). This is a fund raiser for the church Youth Group. The church is located at 1401 Waterloo Road.

Mountain Valley Hee Haw will present Zac Hacker & Big Joe and the Catfish Junkies featuring Amanda Brewer, at a special show on Saturday, December 9th, from 7-11 p.m. Hee Haw is located at 5504 Hwy. 79 in Phil Campbell.

Have an event we can help publicize?
Call us at 256-332-0255.
For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net. Send your letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

'CRUELTY,' From Page 1

13A-11-14, the state must prove the defendant 'intentionally or recklessly' kills or injures without good cause any animal belonging to another. Upon conviction, the defendant faces a jail sentence up to six months and/or a fine up to \$3,000. Sandlin was indicted by a Franklin County Grand Jury in April of 2023.

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Commission approves resolution seeking to increase pay for county coroner

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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Annual RFD fundraiser garners more than \$2,000 for breast cancer screening for low-income residents

Submitted

The Russellville Fire Department recently donated more than \$2,000 to Russellville Hospital to be used for screening mammograms for low-income and uninsured women.

The annual Breast Cancer Awareness sees the RFD sell pink breast cancer awareness t-shirts. It's a cause that's very personal for several fire department employees.



COURTESY PHOTO

Members of the Russellville Fire Department present a \$2,017.25 check to Russellville Hospital's Firemen's Fund for breast cancer screening.

"Several of us here at the RFD have had breast cancer affect their families over the years," said RFD Deputy Chief Randy Seal. "That's one of the many reasons why we try to help those who need testing but otherwise might not be able to receive it. Early detection is the key when it comes to breast cancer."

Members of the RFD presented the donation to Russellville Hospital CEO Stephen Proctor on November 9th.

The Russellville Fire Department has supported this annual fund raiser more than 12 years by partnering with Russellville Hospital in creating what's called the Firemen's Fund. This year's donation was \$2,017.25.

"Everyone in the department looks forward to this fundraiser each year. We are grateful for the opportunity to help raise funds for such a good cause," Seal said.



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Grand jury to consider theft case against former Franklin County Rescue Squad president

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Since he was arrested last year on felony theft charges, not much has happened on the case against John WM "Pete" Brackin, Jr., the former president of the Franklin County Rescue Squad.

That should change soon, according to Franklin County District Attorney Jeff Barksdale.

Brackin was arrested last June after an audit of Rescue Squad funds was conducted. A review of bank records and receipts obtained by Franklin County Sheriff's Office investigators showed more than \$13,000 in unaccounted for funds.

Investigators concluded Brackin had allegedly used the funds to purchase items not intended for use by the Rescue Squad. These included prescription drugs, clothing, pet food, a back massager, a PlayStation 4 console and internet service at his home.

According to Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver, some transactions involved Brackin receiving cash back and included him withdrawing Rescue Squad funds from an ATM.

Barksdale said Brackin's case would be presented to an upcoming Franklin County Grand Jury for review in early 2024.

According to Oliver, Brackin admitted using the funds for personal use over a period of several years.

Oliver said the Franklin County Rescue Squad is no longer operational and is not recognized by the Alabama Association of Rescue Squads as a member. Additionally, the Franklin County Rescue Squad is no longer receiving monies from the Franklin County tobacco tax and the Franklin County Commission.

Dispatch records showed the FCRS had not received a single emergency call or request for assistance in more than two years.

Brackin was charged with one count of Theft of Property, First Degree, for his alleged theft of \$13,019.39 of Rescue Squad funds. A

Grand Jury could indict on that same Theft of Property, First Degree charge, a different charge, or could decide not to bring any charges at all.

The case was bound over for Grand Jury consideration in August 2022, but no action on the case has taken place since that date according to court records.

As with any person charged with a crime, Brackin carries the presumption of innocence until proven guilty in a court of law.

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SPORTS

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RMS girls basketball team rolling at 11-2

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

The Russellville Middle School girls basketball team improved to 11-2 with its December 1st win over Haleyville, and Russellville's girls varsity is laying the foundation for a good season of its own.

The Golden Tigers' girls varsity started 3-0 but consecutive losses to Columbia and Mars Hill dropped Coach Jermaine Groce's team to 3-2.

Against Mars Hill, a close game at halftime saw the Golden Tigers trailing by four, 31-27. But Russellville was outscored 22-7 in the decisive third quarter.

Ella Copeland led Russellville with 19 points. Avery Watts and Jacey Moore added 10 apiece.

Russellville was set to host Deshler Tuesday, December 4th. The Golden Tigers will host Brewer this Friday, followed by a road trip to Jasper on Monday, December 11th.

As for Coach Angela Woods' RMS Tigers, they've won two of their three most recent games, including a 49-20 blowout of Haleyville on December 1st.

Russellville built an 11-2 lead after one quarter. That ballooned to a 36 point lead going into the fourth quarter, as the Golden Tigers

See, 'RMS,' Page 14

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Belgreen softball standout signs with Bevill State

*Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press*

On the morning of November 14th, at Belgreen High School, senior Hannah Borden completed her lifelong goal by signing a softball scholarship to Bevill State Community College.

"She's a hard worker, dedicated, and has persevered. She has worked endless hours with her dad and other coaches to be where she is today. Hannah is a true competitor and will be successful in whatever endeavor she takes on," head Belgreen softball coach Sander Tverberg said.

Borden's primary position is third base, and sometimes on the mound.



COURTESY PHOTO

See, 'SOFTBALL,' page 13

Tharptown boys basketball team off to 3-2 start

*Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press*

The Tharptown Wildcats boys varsity basketball team is 3-2, as they've hit the ground running after only having one week to prepare for their season.

Second-year Wildcat coach Chuck Simmons is busy getting his team into basketball shape after football season ended three weeks ago.

The Wildcats are returning seven seniors, including Jackson Clement and Edwin Vela, two players Simmons will count on for leadership and production this year.

"We only had one transfer from last season. Otherwise, we're returning guys with good varsity-level experience. Clement and Vela hold everyone together on the court," Simmons said.

The Wildcats' biggest challenge is their size. Simmons has been experimenting with some underclassmen who bring that aspect to the floor.

"We've been working sophomore Bryson Borden on the court some to get him some experience on varsity level to be competitive in

the future," Simmons said.

The Wildcats started their season with a home win against the Phillips Bears, 66-30, on November 16th. Dylan Valdez led Tharptown with 18 points. Malachi Minor added 13 and Clement 12. Clement scored five points in the final quarter as Tharptown outscored the Bears 14-0.

"I was proud of our guys' effort. We do have areas of improvement to work on, but we were able to balance scoring out between Dalton Maldonada, Clement, and Vela," Simmons said.

The Wildcats then faced the Danville Hawks at home on November 21st and lost 65-48.

Danville is a full-court pressure team that is very physical up front.

"We like to see the pressure early to gauge where our team is physically. Although we didn't start well and lost, we progressively improved throughout the game. We finished well," Simmons said.

Dylan Valdez led the Tharptown offense with 18 points. Vela and Minor had 11 apiece.

The Wildcats faced the Addison Bulldogs Tuesday night and lost 63-57.

See, 'THARPTOWN,' Page 12



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'THARPTOWN,' From Page 11

"The Bulldogs had two guards that were bigger than our post guys. We got in foul trouble early and gassed out by the fourth quarter. We gave up 12 post points in the fourth quarter that ultimately cost us the game along with the unforced turnovers," Simmons said.

Maldonado paced the Wildcats' offense with 17 points. Valdez added 10 and Clement 8.

The Wildcats traveled to Colbert Heights December 1st to face the Wildcats, a measuring stick game for Simmons.

"Colbert Heights plays some of our county schools, and that will give us a good measure of our ability," Simmons said.

And Simmons liked what he saw, as his team took home a 57-37 road win.

The Wildcats hosted Lindsey Lane Christian Academy on Saturday and won a lopsided 54-24 game.

The Wildcats will host Belgreen Thursday, December 7th and will host Hatton the following night.

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'SOFTBALL,' From Page 11

Borden spent her junior year rounding home 31 times in just 49 games. Borden totaled 46 hits and 39 RBIs last season. Borden also stole 16 bases on 21 attempts.

Also, at the plate, Borden's on base percentage was .354% last season and she walked 16 times. Her slugging percentage was .508 with an OPS of .929.

"Seeing another Belgreen Bulldog go to the next level is exciting. We are ready to get this season underway and see what we can accomplish. Congratulations, Hannah, and go, Bulldogs," Tverberg said excitedly.

"I would like to thank Coach Chris Harris at BSCC for giving me this opportunity. I would also like to thank my dad and mom for always supporting me, all the coaches I've had who taught me the game I love, and all the support of my Belgreen Softball Family. I'm excited and ready to start my senior season," Borden said.

The Bulldogs will rely on their senior class for leadership, as that group was part of last year's 30-18-1 season with an appearance at Regionals.

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'RMS,' From Page 11

outscored the Lions 23-0.

Blevyn Sappington led all scorers with 13 points. Lourdes Ellis had 11, Sadie Odom 10, Bella Malone 6, Lilly Hood 5, Brandtley Benford 2 and Aleya Lane one point.

The Golden Tigers were cooled off against Deshler on November 30th, as the Tigers raced past Russellville 43-25.

Malone led RMS with 10 points. Sappington had 8, Ellis 5 and Odom 2.

On November 28th, Russellville rolled over Mars Hill 39-11. The third quarter was once again decisive, as Russellville outscored the Panthers 15-0 to break the game open.

Odom led the team with 14, followed by Ellis' 12, Sappington's 7, Malone's 4 and Hayleigh Chaney added 2.

The Golden Tigers will host Mars Hill this Saturday morning at 11:15 a.m. The RMS boys seventh grade team will play at 10 a.m., and the boys eighth grade team at 12:30 p.m.



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Helping Santa Toy Drive registration underway as donations needed

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Once again the City of Russellville's Helping Santa Toy Drive will provide toys for the children of Russellville this Christmas.

Applications for assistance can be picked up at the Russellville Police Department. The deadline to turn in applications is December 8th.

Toys will be distributed on December 20th for City of Russellville residents, December 21st for Franklin County residents and December 22nd for late sign-ups and all others until donations run out.

Toys may be donated during the City of Russellville Christmas Parade this Thursday, December 7th. Russellville City Council members will walk the parade route and collect new toy donations from those who bring them.

"Our goal is that no child in the City of Russellville will go without Christmas gifts this year," said Russellville Fire Department Deputy Chief Randy Seal. "During these rough economic times, we are seeing more and more children who will go through Christmas without food, clothing or toys. We are asking that those who can help please do."

New toys will be collected for age groups newborn to 15 years old. Monetary donations may be made at Alabama Central Credit Union, First Metro Bank, Valley Credit Union, CB&S Bank branches in Russellville, Valley State Bank Russellville branches, Listerhill Credit Union and Community Spirit Bank.

All money donated will be used to purchase toys and clothing for needy children.

Toy donation boxes are at the following locations: Russellville Fire Department Station 1 & 2, Russellville City Hall, Tractor Supply, Russellville Police Department, Pilgrim's Pride, Miller's Affordable Furniture, Green's Dependable True Value, Country Cottage, Community Spirit Bank, El Patron Mexican Restaurant, Paw Life Pet Care, Dollar General, the Ville and more.

Once again, the Cotton Flats Cruisers have donated \$500 to the Helping Santa Campaign. Club members made the donation Monday evening at the Russellville City Council meeting.

Last year's Helping Santa campaign allowed more than 300 children to have a more enjoyable Christmas.

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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.

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Ayers seeking Republican nomination for Franklin County Commission District Two

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Spruce Pine resident Heath Ayers recently announced his candidacy for the Franklin County Commission District Two seat in the March 5, 2024, Republican Primary.

This is Ayers' first bid for elected office, a decision he attributes to his grandfather George Riley.

"I was raised by my grandparents and great grandparents so I've been in Franklin County all my life," Ayers said. "He taught me if you want to make a change, it has to start with your voice. That's the way I've taught my kids, so I decided to follow through. You've got to lead by example."

Ayers and his wife Amy have two children. He's been employed by Constellium in Muscle Shoals since 1994. Ayers also raises quarter horses on his family farm. His son Jacob is a welding instructor for Russellville City Schools. He and his wife Morgan have one son. Ayers' daughter Kaylie works at Family Pharmacy. She and her husband Dalton have one child.

Amy is coordinator of surgery at North Alabama Medical Center.

Ayers said his decision to run for the seat being vacated by District Two Commissioner Jason Miller was motivated by a desire to continue improving the quality of life in Franklin County.

"I want to thank the prior commission members and probate judge for the job they've done. I'm running to make sure we keep some very important things in place in Franklin County," Ayers said. "Franklin County is one of Alabama's best counties to live in. We have good hunting land, good lakes, good recreation and it's our duty for future generations to keep it that way.

"If we keep what we've got and improve it, we'll attract more businesses to come to Franklin County or to expand businesses already here.

We've got very good county and city school systems," he added.

Ayers said his campaign isn't about making empty promises to the people of Franklin County. But there is one issue he clearly defined his position on.

"I'm definitely opposed to landfill expansion or another landfill in our county. Maybe we can look at something down the road like an incinerator that would generate more revenue and not be dangerous to the people in Franklin County," Ayers said.

Ayers describes holding public office as a time to keep a level head and look at what benefits the people you represent.

"What's good for me might not be what's good for the whole body, but that's what must be considered. I mostly want to make sure everybody's opinion is heard in a respectful way," Ayers said.

And Ayers is already familiar with representing others as he serves as president of the local union that represents employees at Constellium and Kaiser Aluminum.

"I think we could benefit from having an important issue brought up and discussed in the community before being brought to a commission meeting. Then we can gather all the information we can and make the best decision possible from there," he added.



PHOTO BY SERA RICE

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