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Former RHS players to host reception to honor Swindall for Hall of Fame induction

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Perry Swindall's high school football coaching legacy extends well beyond the playing fields his teams so often excelled on. Many of Swindall's former players, at Russellville High School where he served as varsity football coach for nine years and his many other coaching stops, talk about Swindall's impact on them long after their football careers ended. Several of his former players have

organized a reception to honor Swindall on his recent induction into the Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame. Swindall was one of 12 inductees in the Hall of Fame Class of 2024. The reception will take place Saturday, July 13th, from 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m., at the Marriott Shoals Conference Center in Florence. Tickets are \$25 and limited seating is available. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served. A cash bar will be available. You can RSVP by emailing the

See 'SWINDALL,' Page 3

Town of Vina, Franklin EMA among grant recipients of FCCDC funds

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Community Development Commission met June 21, 2024, and approved a number of grants to local schools and non-profit agencies. The commission, which includes Brad Bolton, Jeremy Campbell and Russellville Mayor David Grissom, meets quarterly to review grant applications. The commission is comprised of two appointees from Franklin County's legislative delegation and a rotating seat between the mayors of Russellville and Red Bay. Sen. Larry Stutts reappointed Bolton

and Rep. Jamie Kiel reappointed Campbell to another four-year term. With the most recent grants, more than \$2.659 million has been returned to Franklin County since the inception of the funding. The funds come from in lieu of tax payments from the Tennessee Valley Authority. Grant awards for the June 21st meeting included:
 --\$5,000 to Union Community Center for repairs to building and patio from storm damage.
 --\$1,750 to multiple schools and sports for state playoff assistance.
 --\$1,200 to Franklin County Branch of MLK Jr. Scholarship.
 --\$1,584 to East Franklin Volunteer

See 'FCCDC,' Page 4



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**Margie Ann Thomason, 63, passed
away on June 20, 2024. Akins
Funeral Home is assisted the family.**

**Wayne Allen Guthrie, age 58, of
Russellville, passed away on
Tuesday, June 18, 2024. A service is
not planned at this time.**

**Jerry Wayne Beard, age 68, of
Russellville, passed away on
Saturday, June 15, 2024. Spry
Memorial Chapel assisted the family.**



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

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

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'SWINDALL,' From Page 1

number of tickets needed and your name to hofevent556@gmail.com. You will receive a response with a link to complete to register and pay for tickets.

2003 RHS graduate John Tyler Keelon and 2004 RHS graduate Matt Stockton are two of Swindall's former players who are helping plan the reception in his honor.

The event will feature several of Swindall's former athletes sharing memories of their head coach and there will be video tributes by former players and coaches on Swindall's teams. Most importantly, though, it will be a relaxed meet and greet and a chance for Swindall's former players to congratulate him in person.

Russellville Police Department Captain Jake Tompkins was an All-State quarterback for the Golden Tigers under Swindall. Tompkins, a 2003 RHS graduate, describes Swindall as one of his best friends, 21 years after Tompkins played for him.



SWINDALL

"When I played under him, he always told me about character," Tompkins said. "Having good, strong character, something he stressed every day, helps me in my career even today. We still talk a lot.

"He always said you can play good on the field, but you won't always have the field. You need to go be a man out in the world. That's what he really preached to us. I'm always striving to be better, hoping to be chief one day here and I'll always remember his words," Tompkins added.

Keelon, a senior living facility developer who lives in Nashville, attributes much of his character and professional success to his former coach.

"Because of coaches like Perry Swindall and (former RHS coach) Phil Phillips, they really helped me straighten up," Keelon said. "I've seen him turn kids' lives around. He impacted all of us who played for him. Some of us were blessed with good parents, but some were not and he kind of filled that father figure for players with that void in their lives."

In his nine years at Russellville, Swindall's teams averaged 11 wins per season. Russellville had a 42-game region winning streak and three 5A state runner-up finishes from 2002-2004. The Golden Tigers went 99-21 during Swindall's tenure.

When Swindall was told his former players wanted to organize a reception to celebrate his Hall of Fame induction, he was appreciative and a bit humbled. And he's looking forward to reconnecting with many of the young men he coached over his 40-year career.

"I'm super excited and honored that some former players want to do a football reunion," Swindall said. "We all have such great memories of our time together as Golden Tigers. It will certainly be great to get to visit with and connect with coaches and players who all shared so much during my time at Russellville."

For Russellville City Councilman Darren Woodruff, Swindall's impact on the Golden Tiger football program survived well after his nine years on the sideline.

"What a legacy Coach Swindall left in Russellville. He set the bar sky high for any coach following in his footsteps at RHS," Woodruff said. "His legacy and impact ran years after he left Russellville with the success of the teams long after Coach Swindall had moved on."

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'FCCDC,' From Page 1

Fire Department for purchase of streamlight LED lantern and charger.

- \$1,000 to City of Red Bay for Founders Day sponsorship.
- \$500 to City of Red Bay for Founders Day Car Show.
- \$500 to Franklin County Emergency Management Agency for purchase of tarps.
- \$500 to Franklin County Technical Response Team for purchase of 10 sets of Haz Mat Training Manuals.
- \$500 to Franklin County Fire & Rescue Squad Association for fire safety training for volunteer departments.
- \$500 to Franklin County Sheriff's Office for Training Academy expenses.
- \$800 to Belgreen High School for 2nd Grade classroom technology supplies.
- \$1,250 to Phil Campbell High School for Special Education classroom for purchase of washer & dryer.
- \$2,500 to Franklin County Chamber of Commerce for Watermelon Festival expenses.
- \$200 to Vina Volunteer Fire Department for Car Show sponsorship.
- \$500 to Vina High School for girls basketball camp expenses.
- \$3,500 to Red Bay School Improvement Fund for Year 2 of 5 sponsorship commitment.
- \$800 to Phil Campbell Elementary School for 1st Grade classroom supplies.
- \$800 to Phil Campbell Elementary School for sixth grade classroom purchase of AMSTI Technology Initiative.
- \$800 to Tharptown High School for sixth grade classroom purchase of AMSTI Technology Initiative.
- \$2,500 to City of Russellville for purchase of Gravely lawn mower & Stihl weed eater.
- \$500 to City of Russellville for purchase of American flags.
- \$6,000 to Future Economic Development Fund.

The next meeting of the FCCDC will be August 30, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex. Grant requests for the August 30, 2024, meeting must be received by a commission member before 12 p.m., August 23, 2024.

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Three Franklin County NW-SCC students among 24 FAME signees

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

At a special event held June 13th at Northwest-Shoals Community College, 24 NWSCC students signed Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education, or FAME, agreements with 10 northwest Alabama companies.

Included in those 24 students were three Franklin County students. The FAME program allows students to earn college credits of 16 or more semester hours while attending class two days each week and working three full days with their sponsoring company.

FAME is a pathway for students to embark in a career as a multi-skilled technician that opens the door to well-paying careers. The current FAME program at Northwest-Shoals has 43 students participating, according to a press release from the college.

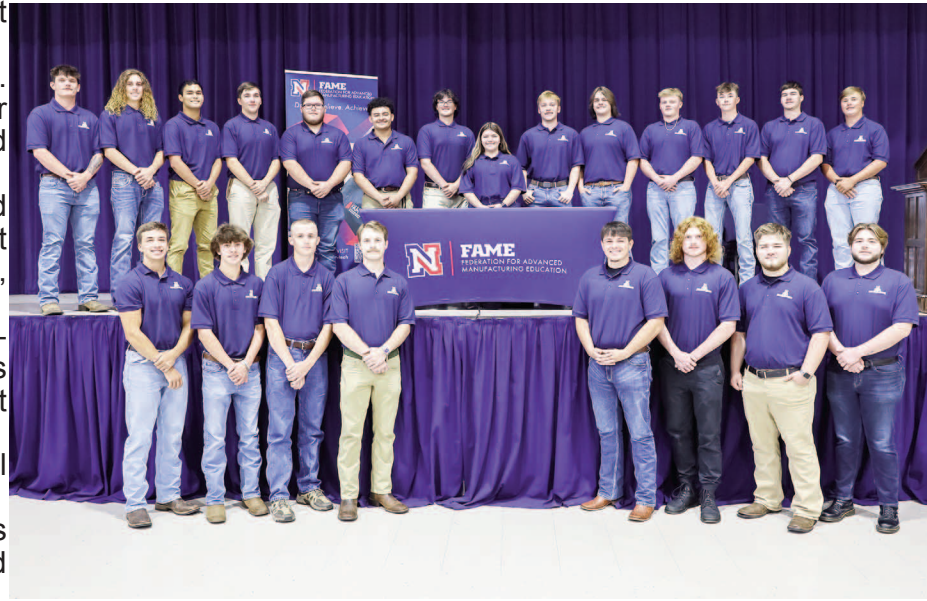
Students participated in selection interviews as part of the FAME application process and were matched with a production company. Students selected for the FAME program will now begin the pre-employment process with their sponsoring company.

Two NWSCC students from Russellville and one from Phil Campbell signed as part of FAME Signing Day.

Edwin Alfredo Vela signed with Constellium and William Hunter Spears signed with Essity. Phil Campbell's Richard Tilmon Baker also signed with Essity.

Although its student signee was from Haleyville, G&G Steel of Russellville also participates in the FAME program.

Fall semester classes at NWSCC begin August 15, 2024.



COURTESY PHOTO

The 24 NW-SCC signees at this year's FAME Signing Day.

Franklin courthouse to be closed July 4th and 5th

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Courthouse will be closed Friday, July 5th after the Franklin County Commission approved the measure at its June 17th meeting.

Thursday, July 4, is a state and federal holiday and Commissioner Joseph Baldwin contacted several county commissions to see whether they closed county offices the following day, July 5th. And the consensus was most would be closed that Friday.

In other agenda items at Monday's meeting, the commission:
--authorized Franklin County Emergency Management Agency Director Mary Hallman-Glass to negotiate a resolution to a dispute over a balance owed to Konexus Alert Sense, an emergency notification platform.

--approved FMLA leave and catastrophic sick leave for Franklin County Highway Department employee Brian Messer.

--approved hiring Peyton Ray as a full-time temporary employee in the Highway Department.

--approved the resignation of Zachary Cochran, Corrections Officer/Dispatcher and Adam Mitchell, Deputy, in the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and approved advertising for the same.

--approved hiring James Fleck as a temporary Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, Jonathan Copeland as a full-time Deputy and the transfer of Heath Voyles from Dispatcher to Corrections Officer and Felix Mojica, from Corrections Sergeant to Dispatch Officer.

--authorized the county attorney to draft a letter to Carl Overton giving him 30 days notice that the county's contract with him for telecommunications auditing service will be terminated.

--declared 18 iPads used as poll books by election workers as surplus property and authorized contacting local libraries to see if they would want the iPads, which can not be updated, or in the alternative, authorized taking sealed bids for them.

LEGAL NOTICE

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Notice is hereby given that assessed values of all property listed for taxation have been fixed according to state law. Assessed valuations are available at the Franklin County Revenue Commissioner's office, and are open for public inspection. The Board of Equalization will hold an annual meeting at the Franklin County Courthouse on a date to be announced by the Revenue Department in order to address any written protests filed with this office. The last day to file objections will be August 1, 2024.

If you should desire an appointment with them, you may file a written protest giving your name, address, daytime phone number, parcel identification number and an explanation of why you think the value of your property is incorrect.

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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.

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 **T**he Harris/Trapp Family Reunion will be Saturday, July 6 from 10-2 at East Franklin Community Center. Everyone bring something as it's a Pot Luck Lunch. For more information, call Diane Halsey at 205-485-4616 or Cathy Harris at 205-486-4387. Friends of Lena Trapp Harris and Andrew Jackson Harris invite you to join them. They can't wait to see everyone!

 **T**he 2024 Franklin County Watermelon Festival Car Show will take place on Saturday, August 17, from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Prizes will be awarded throughout the day. 50/50 raffle. Winner drawn at 1 p.m. Must be present to win. Entry fee \$25 for first car and additional cars \$15. Call 256-443-5919 for more information. The event is sponsored by the Russellville High School Marching Hundred Band Parents.

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Three-sport RHS athlete touts benefits of fascial stretch therapy

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As a three-sport athlete at Russellville High School, Malachi Duncan often pushed his body to its limits.

The 2024 RHS graduate played varsity football, basketball and tennis for the Golden Tigers and it wasn't unusual for Duncan to come home complaining about his back hurting, explained his mother Melissa Duncan.

She took him to several chiropractors and doctors, with varying degrees of success. Eventually, Melissa set up an appointment for Malachi to see Anna Carol Porter, a Russellville practitioner certified in fascial stretch therapy and craniosacral therapy. And the results were amazing.

"After that first appointment, if Malachi came home and his back was hurting, he asked for Anna Carol," Melissa Duncan said. "She's been so good for Malachi. Injuries happen in basketball and football, and fascial stretching helps prevent problems. If your muscles are more flexible, that flexibility can prevent injuries.

"She takes her hands and locates where the pain without you having to tell her. I had an injury at work after a really bad fall, so I went to Anna Carol. Within two days, I felt like a new person. I wouldn't be recovering without her," she added.

Porter owns and operates Holistic Harmony, a holistic health practice in Russellville with a new location in Madison. Porter's services include hypnotherapy, Qigong, craniosacral therapy and fascial stretch therapy.

Fascial stretch therapy can target specific fascia adhesions that occur after injury, surgery, repetitive motion or result from inactivity or poor posture. Additionally, stretch therapy can be effective to prevent injury by keeping one's fascia tissue unrestricted and continuous.

According to the website <https://pivotalphysio.com>, fascial stretch therapy involves the therapist using movement through a series of stretches designed to unlock tension in the deepest layers of our tissues.

A foundation of the therapy is to target the continuous lines of fascia rather than just targeting individual muscles.

Fascia is the web of connective tissues that penetrate every soft tissue in the body, including connecting tendons and ligaments to bone, and encasing every muscle. The goal is to restore continuous fascial movement throughout the body, eliminating pain and increasing movement and flexibility. From Malachi's standpoint, though, he just knows it works.

"Anna Carol helped me overcome any soreness or injuries I've had during sports," Malachi said. "She helped me through lower back pains that I've been having since middle school. I went to chiropractors and still believe Anna Carol did the best job."

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Anna Carol Porter with Malachi Duncan, Calen Bragwell and Melissa Duncan.



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See, 'STRETCH,' Page 10

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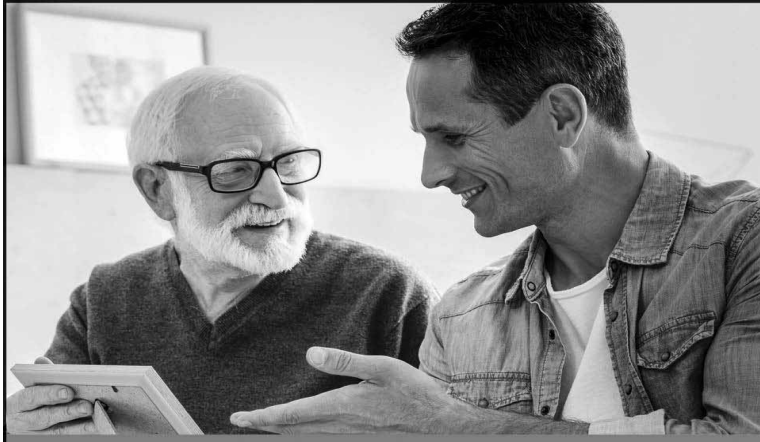
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'STRETCH,' From Page 8

stretch therapy is vital to increase mobility and flexibility. When stretching is done by a therapist like Porter, a greater range of motion is achieved compared to attempting to stretch the same body part on your own.

Medical studies show we lose approximately 10% of our flexibility every 10 years, but regular fascial stretch therapy can offset that loss, help improve posture, sleep and overall health.

Calen Bragwell, Duncan's older son, owns and operates the Dawg House, a gym in downtown Russellville. Bragwell, a personal trainer, has also benefited from fascial stretch therapy helping him recover from a chronic back injury.

"I had been struggling with a nagging back injury where I always felt super tight anytime I'd sit for long periods of time, so finally I contacted Anna Carol," Calen said.

"After just one session with her, my back was feeling brand new and I was no longer getting near as stiff. Anna Carol's technique is second to none and I would recommend her to people who struggle with all kinds of things, whether it be muscle tightness or even anxiety. Her practice can surely help them," Bragwell added.

Craniosacral therapy involves Porter using gentle placement of her hands to release tension in the body's connective tissue, or fascia. Craniosacral therapy leads to tension relief that can also help other connected parts of the body function more effectively.

"Anna Carol is amazing. When I first saw her, I had so much pain I was sleeping in a recliner and I could barely get on the table in her office," Melissa said. "She really has magical healing hands and is excellent at what she does."

For more information on fascial stretch therapy, craniosacral therapy or any other services provided by Porter, call 256-668-2830 or visit her Facebook page by searching Holistic Harmony.AC.

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SPORTS

6.26.24

Belgreen to play varsity, junior high football schedule this fall

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

Belgreen High School's inaugural year of football in 2023 set a foundation. Now Belgreen, which released its tentative 2024 varsity and junior high schedules last week, is looking to continue building, both figuratively and literally, heading into year two.

"We started from scratch last year, and a lot of our kids were really young. You know, 99 percent of them had never played football before," said Belgreen head coach Jonathan Raper, who took over the fledgling program after 11 seasons as Phil Campbell High School's head baseball coach. "From the simplest things like technique—how to catch the football, how to throw it. We did a lot of that kind of stuff.

"We had a good year with these kids last year, and I feel like right now, from where we started out, we're night and day ahead of where we were last season," Raper added. "We still have a long way to go, but now we've got an idea of how to run an offense, how to run a defense, and things like that."

Belgreen did not hold spring practices, but the Bulldogs are going to work this summer in preparation for the fall, Raper said.

"We didn't do anything in the spring so that we could start earlier with regular practice in the fall," he said. "Since school's been out we've

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RHS baseball coach Smith 'excited' to add Porter to coaching staff

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

The Russellville High School varsity baseball team recently bolstered its coaching staff, hiring former North Jackson High School head baseball coach Cole Porter as an assistant coach. The move was approved at the Russellville City Schools Board of Education meeting on June 11th.

"Coach Porter is a great addition to our coaching staff, and we're really excited to be able to add a coach of his talent and caliber to our program," Russellville head coach Jess Smith said. "I've known Coach Porter for a long time, and I know the type of coach he is. He had a lot of success as a head coach at North Jackson, and his experience will be very valuable to us here at Russellville."

Porter, well aware of the Golden Tigers' success over the years, said he's looking forward to working within a program dedicated to continued excellence and in a community that supports its baseball team.

"I know Russellville's history as a baseball powerhouse, and I really felt like that was something I wanted to do—to work with guys who put a lot of time and effort into it," he said. "I wanted to work for a baseball team that the community really loves. It's a baseball place and I'm a baseball guy, so why go anywhere else?"

Joining Smith's coaching staff, Porter will get to work alongside an old pal. Smith and Porter go way back.

"Me and Jess grew up together. We played on the same travel ball team at 10 years old, and we played college baseball against each other," Porter, who played collegiate baseball at Snead State Community College and Martin Methodist, said. "I'm really excited to get the ball rolling and excited to be working with Jess and at Russellville."

After a single season as the head coach at Pisgah High School, Porter spent the last six years at the helm of the North Jackson program compiling a 120-63 record with the Chiefs. He led North Jackson to playoff appearances each season and made it to the Class 4A semifinals in 2021. This past season Porter guided the Chiefs to the 4A quarterfinals.

During Porter's tenure at North Jackson, he was named Jackson County People's Choice Coach of the Year Award, the Daily Sentinel Coach of the Year Award and thrice named the area coach of the year.

The new Russellville assistant said he's proud of what his North Jackson teams were able to accom-

See, 'PORTER,' page 13

Water aerobics classes now available at Russellville City Pool

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

This summer the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department is offering a cool way to keep fit and exercise with its water aerobics class, held twice a week at the Russellville City Pool behind the Russellville High School football stadium.

The water aerobics class, held every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 a.m., is led by Ella Burcham, the manager of the Russellville City Pool this summer. This is the second summer the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department has offered the class, Burcham said, after requests from the public.

Water aerobics, Burcham explained, is simply a form of exercising in the water. For thousands of years, immersion in water, in many cultures, has been viewed as both spiritually and physically healing, but our modern day idea of water-based exercises is believed to have begun in the 1930s when Jack LaLanne, the "Godfather of Fitness," opened the United States' first modern health club in California. Water aerobics, also known by names like aqua aerobics or hydronastics, picked up in popularity in the 1970s and '80s, and it remains a popular form of exercise to this day.

Key to the general popularity of water aerobics are its benefits over conventional exercise.

"It's exercise that some consider easier than on land," Burcham said. "It's beneficial because it's easier on the joints, and a lot of people who are going through some sort of joint or muscle recovery take it because it's easier on their body than a regular exercise class."

According to the Mayo Clinic, water aerobics and aquatic exercises offer low-impact activities that put less pressure on bones, joints, and muscles while simultaneously offering natural resistance, which strengthens muscles. Other benefits, according to the Mayo Clinic, include "improved heart health, reduced stress, and improved muscular endurance and strength," and it may relieve pain for sufferers

See, 'POOL,' Page 12

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'POOL,' From Page 11

of osteoarthritis. For these reasons and more, water aerobics is popular among older adults.

However, the benefits of water aerobics are not exclusive to certain age groups. Everyone can take part in the activity and Burcham said her class doesn't require any prior experience.

"Anybody can come. It's open to all ages, and you don't have to have any experience coming in," Burcham said. "Our exercises range from beginner to intermediate, so I don't want anyone to think they can't come because they're not prepared. Everybody is welcome."

The classes began on June 18 and Burcham said they will continue every Tuesday and Thursday through the end of July.

There is no registration required for the class. The cost of each session, which lasts an hour, is \$5. More information is available by contacting the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department.

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'PORTER,' From Page 11

plish during his six seasons there.

"We had some really, really good groups come through there. We went to the playoffs every year and had tons of success with a semifinal and a quarterfinal appearance," Porter said.

After so many successful years as a head coach of the Chiefs, Porter said his main reason for making the move to Russellville now as an assistant is his family.

"The number one reason is for family," he said. "I've got a wife and a three-year-old son and a one-year-old girl. My wife is from Haleyville, and I kind of pulled her away from her family for six years. We had a six-year plan at North Jackson...and after those six years we talked about it and it felt like the right time to make that move and get her back home.

"A lot of people have asked me, 'What's the deal? You've had a lot of success as a head coach. Why do you want to go be an assistant?'" he added. "It's family. Having more time with the kids, that's important for me."

Another reason for the change, Porter said, is the transition from head coach to assistant will give him the opportunity to improve as a coach.

"Another big reason is I just want to learn. I graduated college and then I was a head baseball coach," he said. "I've never worked for anybody, and I've always wanted to. I've had the opportunity to go work for a couple guys, but I felt like this was the right time and the right opportunity."

Smith said Porter's thirst for knowledge and his commitment to honing his craft are among his best qualities and will be assets to the program.

"Coach Porter, I know, is a really hard worker and he loves the game," Smith said. "I think one of the best things about him as a coach is he's always wanting to learn, always hungry to learn. He's all the time going to camps and clinics and just trying to learn as much as he can and improve himself as a coach."

Porter will join an assistant coaching ensemble including Jay Stanley, Richard Maggerise, and Justin Sappington, who all have many years of coaching experience; a couple with experience as head coaches. Porter, with his head coaching experience, Smith said, will fit right in with the cast.

"First of all, I don't think that the light shines on our assistant coaches as much as it should or as much as they deserve," Smith said. "We have a great coaching staff who have a lot of experience. We have guys that have been head coaches before, and I think they're all head coach types."

"Coach Porter with his experience as a head coach brings that much more to the team. It will not only help our players improve, but I think it helps us as coaches improve, too," he added.

Porter, who will be taking over as the hitting coach, the role Smith occupied himself previously, believes his head coaching experience will help Smith, will help the team improve, and make his transition to assistant easier.

"I think I can help (Smith) in things he's already good at and things he may be weak at, maybe I can help him in those ways, too," Porter said. "He's a great coach, and he's got a great mind for it."

"I think for me, as far as coaching, being an assistant will help me look at the game in a different way," he added. "I'm taking over the hitting... and a lot of hitting coaches will just go in and work on hitting. They don't work on situation or what's going to help you win a baseball game. No hitting coach wants to work on hitting a ground ball to the second baseman, right? But sometimes hitting that ground ball to the second baseman will help you win a game. Being a head coach before I understand sometimes that's what you've got to do. I think that'll help me as a coach, and I think I can bring that to the team and help them."

"I'm just super excited to get to work, and I think I'll be more excited to go work as an assistant coach, honestly, than I ever was to work as a head coach."

In addition to his role as assistant varsity baseball coach, Porter, who was a four-year starter at quarterback for Plainview High School, will also assist with the middle school football team.

"I'm looking forward to helping out and working hard and having fun with it," Porter said.

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Deputy, Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Wednesday, July 3, 2024.

Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, Franklin County Jail

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Wednesday, July 3, 2024.

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.franklincountyval.org under the Careers tab.

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'BELGREEN,' From Page 11

been going three days a week and we'll continue that until the end of July when we can then start full football."

Last year the Bulldogs played a junior high schedule, but this year Belgreen has +added a varsity schedule. Currently the Bulldogs have seven varsity games and nine junior high games on the calendar. Belgreen is scheduled to play a number of local teams such as Tharptown, Phil Campbell, and Vina, as well as further flung schools like Sumiton Christian and Victory Christian in Pell City.

"I think we've got a good quality schedule that will give us a chance to measure where we're at now compared to where we were at the end of last year," Raper said.

"I think it's less about who we play and more about how we play against them. I think we're going to be improved from where we were last year just because now we've played some football before," he said. "There's nothing like playing in an actual game. You can only do so much in practice."

Belgreen, a Class 2A school, will not play a varsity region schedule this season and therefore will not be eligible for potential postseason play this year.

"I think in a couple years we'll be in a region and play in a region, but we're just excited to continue to build so we'll be ready to compete when we are playing in a region and have a chance to make the playoffs," Raper said. "We're going to do this this year and next year, and the following year after that we're going to try to go full scale with 10 games and have a chance to compete in a region and all that stuff."

While Raper continues his work on building up the Bulldog football team, others are making progress on the construction of the Belgreen football facilities. Between the varsity and junior high schedules, the Bulldogs have 10 home games listed. Belgreen is hopeful the stadium will be ready for kickoff in the fall.

"It's supposed to be ready—I hope it's ready," Raper said. "We've got a brand new turf field and they're putting up the lights. In the next couple weeks they're supposed to come in and put up the bleachers. They've almost got the concession stand built, and I think the last thing they'll start on is the field house. If you know about construction you know we're at their mercy, but we hope it's going to be ready."

"It's going to be exciting to play here at home on a Friday night because there's nothing else like it," he added.

The focus, Raper said, is on improving a squad that is still early in development, but as the program continues to come together participation and enthusiasm around the team is growing.

"We're still a young team and a young program. We've just got to continue to learn the game of football and learn the fundamentals. We've got to learn our assignments, what we're doing on this play or that play, and what our responsibilities are," Raper said.

"But we've got more kids out this year than we had last year. We've got more kids out here working this summer," he added. "We're ready just to get it started up again, playing varsity football games, and getting everyone excited and involved."

2024 Belgreen varsity football schedule
8/23 vs. Shoals Christian
8/30 at Sumiton Christian
9/6 at Tharptown
9/20 vs. Tanner
9/27 vs. Cherokee
10/25 at Victory Christian
11/1 vs. Vina

2024 Belgreen junior high football schedule
8/26 at Tharptown
9/3 vs. Tharptown
9/9 vs. Cherokee
9/16 at Phil Campbell
9/23 vs. Shoals Christian
9/30 at Cherokee
10/7 vs. Phil Campbell
10/7 vs. Phil Campbell JV
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Russellville 10-under All Stars win North Alabama All Star Baseball League Championship

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville 10 and under (10u) All-Star baseball team won the North Alabama All-Star Baseball League Championship last week, winning back-to-back games in Lexington on Thursday, June 13.

The Russellville 10u All-Star team took home the title after eliminating Lauderdale County in three games in the semifinal series on Monday and Tuesday and then sweeping Lexington in the best-of-three games championship series, hosted by Lexington, on Thursday.

The series between Russellville and Lauderdale County went to a tiebreaker game three after Russellville won game one 13-3 and then fell in game two 6-3. The Russellville All-Stars advanced after a 7-5 victory in the series finale.

Russellville All-Stars head coach Blake Jackson said his team faced some adversity heading into the championship series after the tough three-game semifinal set.

"We went into the championship faced with a little tough circumstance because we rolled into Lexington after playing three games between Monday and Tuesday, and we wanted to manage our arms as best we could," head coach Blake Jackson said. "We knew Lexington was going to be really good. They beat up on a pretty good Colbert Heights team and swept them in two games on Monday.

"In game one we pitched Joe Goodwin and started him and he pitched a heck of a game. We won that one 10-3," Jackson said.

After jumping out to a commanding lead in game two, errors and mistakes by Russellville allowed Lexington to get back in it and tie it up in the sixth inning.

"Our message to the kids was, 'Hey, let's finish,'" Jackson said. "There's no time limit in the championship series and it took two hours to play six innings.

"We jumped up 9-0 in the third and our goal was to finish it off and 15-run these guys and go home, but unfortunately that didn't happen," Jackson added. "We had some errors and walked some guys and the next thing we know we look up heading into the bottom of the sixth and it's 14-14."

Jackson said Lexington's comeback visibly frustrated his players, but a team talk to calm them down and pep them up appeared to do the trick in the bottom half of the inning.

"They got a little emotional when Lexington came back and tied the game up," Jackson said. "I called time and gathered the team up and just told them it's not over until it's over. We get the last at-bat. Let's get in the dugout, let's get runners on base, and let's go home.

"Jack Cooper hit a walk-off RBI...and after five and a half hours straight of playing baseball we finally wrapped it up," he added. "I think we all got back to where we live...by about one o'clock Friday morning, but that was that. The kids fought really hard."

Jackson said he was proud of the team for winning the championship and added the two series against Lauderdale County and Lexington served as lessons for the players about baseball and, perhaps, life in general.

"I think they saw how complacency can get you beat and will get you beat, and they saw that in game two against Lauderdale County. I think the kids learned that even though you've got a nine-run lead in baseball, it's not over, and it's a game about surviving and moving on to the next play," he said. "When things don't go your way we try to teach the kids to flush it and move on to the next play. I think the kids learned that if you don't do that after the previous at-bat or a previous error in the field that it can carry over. In the end, though, they fought, battled back, overcame and walked off champions."

The members of the Russellville's 10u All-Star team are Brantley Jackson, Bryce Page, Jace Ertle, Braxtin Ertle, Harrison Alexander, Case Fugate, John Alan Marks, Rhett Montgomery, Miles Cade, Joe Goodwin, Brees Crumpton, Easton Huggins, Jack Cooper, Owen Lane, Grant Holcomb, and Case Hallmark. Head coach Blake Jackson is assisted by Cory Trapp, Aaron Page, and Trevor Hallmark.



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