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City officials ready for Thursday's Jam on Sloss Lake, as Russellville Electric Board withdraws its support of the annual event

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

What makes the City of Russellville's annual Fourth of July Jam on Sloss Lake special to Mayor David Grissom is it's a true community event everyone can enjoy with friends or family.

For 15 years, the City of Russellville, along with local utility boards have supported the Jam on Sloss Lake so there's no cost to celebrate our nation's birthday while enjoying great music and a fireworks

show that's second to none.

This year, though, the Jam on Sloss Lake will take place with one less sponsor, as Russellville Electric Board Manager Charles Canida sent an email to Grissom late last week informing him the Russellville Electric Board had withdrawn its financial support of the event.

The city has partnered with the Russellville Water and Sewer Board, Russellville Gas Board, and previously with the Russellville Electric Board to provide top-notch musical headliners and treat residents to a

See 'JAM,' Page 3

2015 RHS graduate Bales a rising star in Shoals theatre scene

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

For as long as he can remember, Dylan Bales has loved to perform.

During his four years at Russellville High School, the 2015 RHS graduate participated in show choir each year and he was part of several theater productions his senior year.

In fact, his performing history began before he could even speak, as Bales' first role came when he was only four months old, when he was Baby Jesus in a production at his church.

"I knew at an early age I loved performing," Bales said. "I played

Buffalo Bill in a second grade production. As soon as I could, I got into 5th grade chorus under Emily Honey.

"I've always remembered performing. It's something that comes naturally for me," he added.

When the curtain opens this month on the Shoals Community Theatre's production of Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory, Bales won't be on stage. He's directing the production that runs July 18-21 in Florence.

Bales previously directed a play at Cypress Moon Studios and a one act production while a student at the University of North Alabama. But Wonka marks his debut directing a

See 'BALES,' Page 4

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'JAM,' From Page 1

top-notch fireworks display after the music ends.

Last year, Canida told city officials he required a letter from Grissom requesting the REB's support for the Fourth of July event. Grissom submitted that letter last month to Canida, so he was surprised to learn the REB had unexpectedly pulled out.

"What happened with that is disappointing but even without their support, we're going to have one of the best Fourth of July shows ever," Grissom said last week. "We want to give a special thanks to the Russellville Water and Sewer Board and Russellville Gas Board for their continued support of this community event."

And this year's Jam on Sloss Lake promises to be special once again, with the country music group Shenandoah as the headliner. Councilman Gary Cummings spearheads the Jam on Sloss Lake each year and Cummings said this year's evening music schedule includes the gospel trio Purpose at 5 p.m., followed by the Kerry Gilbert Band, Rewind of the Shoals and Shenandoah taking the stage at 8:30 p.m.

Fireworks will immediately follow Shenandoah's performance.

The City of Russellville's Splash Pad will open at 12 p.m., along with inflatables including a water slide, all of which children may enjoy at no cost.

The Cotton Flats Cruisers' annual car show starts the day at 7 a.m., and runs until 1 p.m. There will be plenty of food vendors set up as well. Guests are reminded to bring their own lawn chairs to set up for the evening entertainment.

For Councilman Darren Woodruff, his support of the annual Jam on Sloss Lake has as its core the fact that it's for everyone, and every family can attend the free event.

"There are a lot of residents who travel around the Fourth of July, but for those who remain in Russellville, the Jam on Sloss Lake is a great day of fellowship, fun, fireworks and music for everyone," Woodruff said. "We want this to be a true community event. Regardless of what your financial situation may be, please come celebrate Independence Day with us at the Jam on Sloss Lake."

At the REB's June 25, 2024, meeting, board member Chad Wells made a motion to approve the \$10,000 contribution, the same amount each board has contributed in past years.

But Wells' motion did not receive a second, so it died. Board member James McDuffa, according to two sources, commented that the board 'already gives the city too much money.'

The only funds paid by REB to the City of Russellville are payments required by law, called in lieu of tax payments. They are paid to the city based on the value of property owned by the REB and are paid in lieu of the board paying ad valorem taxes.

Interestingly, the REB's decision not to support this year's Jam on Sloss Lake comes one week before Canida, selected REB employees and the board travel to Gulf Shores to enjoy an all-expenses paid trip as part of the Electric Cities of Alabama's Annual Meeting and Governmental Affairs Conference.

In recent years, Canida has used ratepayer funds to rent a private chartered fishing trip for himself and the board. Canida used his REB credit card to pay for a lavish dinner, again for himself, the board and selected guests, with the cost having soared over \$3,000 for that meal in previous years.

Again, the REB ratepayers foot the bill for Canida and the board's gas, expenses, lodging, meals and conference fees, as well as the private fishing charter.

Additionally, thousands of dollars from a hidden bank account the REB had at Alabama Central Credit Union were withdrawn just days before the annual beach conference. All withdrawals were either in cash or in pre-paid gift cards.

When the Franklin Free Press requested records from this account, they were not provided until Canida had the account closed. Records show more than \$9,000 in cash and gift cards withdrawn from this account, all coinciding with the summer beach trip or the board's annual Christmas party at the Shoals Marriott.

In past years, the total cost to ratepayers for this one trip has topped \$40,000, all for a conference that has two 3.5-hour business sessions on Monday and Tuesday as the entirety of its schedule, other than social events.

Grissom said the Jam on Sloss Lake will remain an annual event, regardless of the loss of one sponsor.

"The work Councilman Cummings does each year to plan the Jam on Sloss Lake is immense. He does it out of a love for community, and that's why we as the city support this event," Grissom said. "And that's not going to change."

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musical.

He's still performing on stage in other productions, but directing is something Bales wants to explore further.

"The thing about directing that I like is when I would go see shows, I'd think how I might do a scene a certain way, or what if they had tried it another way?," Bales said. "It's so cool to be able to put my ideas into action on stage for other people.

"You can't change what's written in the script, but certain stage directions, sets, costumes and how lines are said is left up to the director. Going into a show I like to read the script and not watch too many other productions of the show. I read the script and visualize what I believe might work," he added.

That's exactly what Bales did with the Gingerbread Players' presentation of Willy Wonka, the Musical. The show follows an eccentric candy manufacturer who stages a contest where he hides golden tickets in five of his candy bars. Those who find the golden tickets receive a tour of the Wonka factory and a lifetime supply of the candy it produces.

While four of the children turn out to be entitled hellions, Wonka bonds with one winner, a young man named Charley Bucket, who takes the tour with his grand-



COURTESY PHOTO

Dylan Bales, who's done it all for stage productions, is directing Willy Wonka this month at Shoals Community Theatre.

Tickets for Wonka are available by calling 256-764-1700 or by visiting www.theshoalstheatre.org or the Shoals Community Theatre's Facebook page.

Bales describes his directing style, at least so far, as 'chill,' but that could change as opening night draws closer.

"I'm friends with most of the cast, but as we get close to the show, you have to take that friend cap off and put your director hat on," Bales said. "Anything I might get fired up about (as director) will not be personal and the cast knows that. We'll say what we say and do what we do to make this show as good as possible."

While Bales will soon make his directorial debut, he hasn't quit his day job just yet. He's office manager at Economy Carpets in Muscle Shoals.

Bales earned his Associate of Arts degree with a concentration in music from Northwest-Shoals Community College and earned a Sociology degree from UNA, so he's not afraid of hard work with a busy schedule.

"My mom (Candi Bales) laughs at me sometimes when I complain about being tired all the time," Bales said. "She says I do it to myself. But it's a theater bug. Once you catch it, you can't stop. It might burn out one day, but not anytime soon."

Bales' pathway to his directorial debut began when he worked with other directors of Shoals Theatre productions. He's worked in backstage roles, served as assistant director and climbed his way up to directing his first show at Cypress.

"I tried to get as much experience as I could to allow me to step into a director's role one day," Bales said.

Bales' evolution into Shoals theatre has not gone unnoticed by Honey, now a teacher at Stanhope Elmore High School in Millbrook, AL. Honey remembers having Bales in her class and saw his passion for the stage even at a young age.

"Dylan was such a joy to teach and watch on the stage. He would just light up," Honey said. "You could see just how much he loved being up there."

"I have been following him and his performances via Facebook and I am so proud of his involvement in the community theatre scene in the Shoals. His many nominations for the Stanleys (annual theater awards) make my heart so happy. I'm so glad he's being recognized for his talent and hard work," she added.

Bales plans to continue to perform and direct and the growing Shoals theater scene should provide him ample opportunity to do both.

Bales went through an interview process after applying with the Gingerbread Board to direct Wonka. He met with board members, pitched some ideas he had and waited to hear back.

He received notification in early March he was selected to direct the cast of approximately 50. And he's already been named director of a January 2025 production of Steel Magnolias at the Shoals Theatre. It's a show he's pitched for three years to the board and his persistence finally paid off.

As for Wonka, Bales will pay due respect to the show's script, but he's throwing in a few Easter eggs from the Wonka movie.

In theater, Easter eggs are hidden references from a movie version of a production that will likely be detected only by the most observant of patrons.

35 of 35 Franklin County establishments earn satisfactory health ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the 35 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the period of May 1, 2024 through June 11, 2024, had scores that fell into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

35 of 35 Franklin County establishments listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The high score was 100, received by Dollar General #25299, 5550 Hwy. 19, Vina, Red Bay Nutrition, 102 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay and Red Bay Senior Center, 115 5th Avenue SE, Red Bay.

The lowest score among the 35 establishments was an 88, received by McDonald's, 15254 Hwy. 43, Russellville, and Red Bay Tobacco Mart, 908 4th St. NW, Red Bay, although this score was within the 'satisfactory compliance' range.

Other inspection scores of Franklin County businesses, in alphabetical order, included:

- Bel Haven Heights, 107 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 99.
- Black & Gold Nutrition, 700 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 97.

- CJ's Grocery, 14545 Hwy. 187, Russellville, 94.
 - Captain D's, #3737, 15434 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 92.
 - Casa Fiesta Mexican Grill, 520 4th Ave., Red Bay, 92.
 - Dollar General Market, 212 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 98.
 - El Buen Sabor Latin Cuisine, 104 Montgomery St., Russellville, 95.
 - Harold's Gas & Grocery, 1425 Hwy. 172 East, Hodges, 99.
 - Hilltop Diner, 808 Ronnie McDowell Ave., Russellville, 93.
 - Ideal Mart, 503 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 98.
 - Las Palmas Taqueria & Mexican Grill, 14204 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 92.
 - Legacy Chevron, 13518 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.
 - Los Primos, 105 and 107 Marion St., Russellville, 94.
 - Malone Oil, LLC, 23791 Hwy. 24, Russellville, 93.
 - McDonald's, 606 4th Avenue SE, Red Bay, 89.
 - Murphy Oil Convenience Store, 13669 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.
 - Quick Stop No. 7, 606 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 99.
 - Red Bay Hospital, 211 Hospital Road, Red Bay, 99.
 - Red Bay Tiger Mart, 211 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 95.
 - Red Bay Yacht Club, 996 9th St. W, Red Bay, 96.
 - Russellville Hospital, 15155 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 98.
 - Sonic Drive-In Russellville, 15376 Hwy. 43 N., Russellville, 93.
 - Subway 24292, 15300 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
 - Subway 37464, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
 - The Grind Cafe, 13760 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.
 - Waffle House, 14005 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 96.
 - Walmart Market, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 98.
 - Walmart Bakery, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
 - Walmart Deli, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
 - Willi's, 5680 Hwy. 243, Phil Campbell, 96.
- Health ratings are available at www.foodscores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

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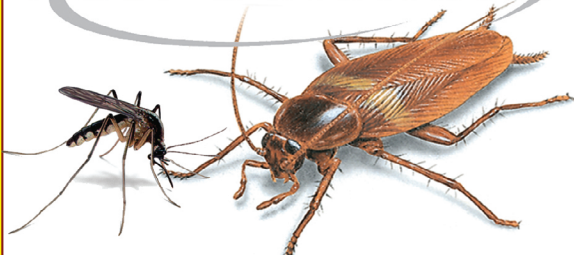
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 **T**he Senior Center of Phil Campbell is under new management. Everyone age 60 and over are invited to come join us and be part of the group. This is for men and women. We meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8-noon. 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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Horton to serve as Community Spirit Bank's Chief Compliance and BSA Officer

Submitted

Community Spirit Bank is delighted to announce the promotion of Jessica Horton to Chief Compliance and BSA Officer. Jessica, a seasoned professional with nineteen years of financial industry experience, now joins the bank's executive management team.

Her previous role as vice president/compliance and BSA officer, coupled with her unwavering commitment to community banking, makes her a standout leader in all compliance matters.

Jessica is a Belmont High School graduate and a Red Bay native. In 2013, she began working on her additional compliance certifications, obtaining her Certified BSA/AML Professional status; in 2014, she received her specialty certification as a Certified Community Bank Compliance Officer. Jessica studied at the Barret Graduate School of Banking in Memphis, Tennessee, graduating in 2016.

Jessica's dedication to her team is unwavering, as evidenced by her being the 2022 recipient of the Spirit of CSB Award, a peer-nominated accolade driven by the bank's team. This award is a testament to her embodiment of the fundamental 'Spirit' of our organization.

Jessica's commitment to the community banking industry is unparalleled. She is a true community banker at heart, consistently going above and beyond to support our institution and other bankers across the industry.

She exemplifies dedication and a tenacious determination in all she does, and we are so thankful for all she contributes each and every day.

"On behalf of the Officers, Directors, and employees of Community Spirit Bank, I congratulate Jessica Horton on the promotion to Chief Compliance Officer, which was approved today at our June board of directors meeting, said Community Spirit Bank's president and CEO, Brad M. Bolton.

"With this designation, Jessica formally joins our executive management

team. As a nineteen-year banking veteran, Jessica is an integral part of our team and contributes to the bank's success by working cooperatively and proactively in all areas. She represents our CORE Values daily, paying attention to all stakeholder groups, including our employees, customers, and communities. This designation formally acknowledges her vital role, and we look forward to her continued leadership," Bolton added.



JESSICA HORTON



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Rewind of the Shoals	6:10 p.m.
Shenandoah	7:10 p.m.
Fireworks	8:30 p.m.
	9:45 p.m.

4
JULY

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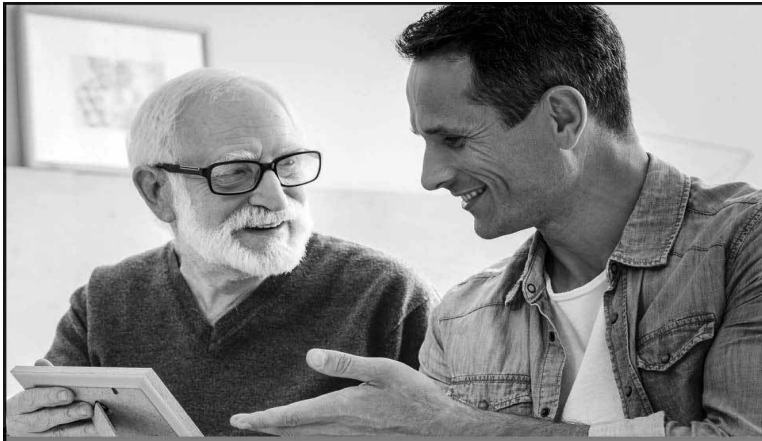
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Scofield's baseball career to continue at Huntingdon College

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

Another Golden Tiger baseball standout will be taking the field at the college level next spring with recent Russellville High School graduate Michael Scofield deciding to further his career and his education at Huntingdon College in Montgomery.

Scofield, Russellville's starting catcher this past season, announced his decision on June 27, and he said he's excited about the opportunity to join the Hawks. His campus visit revealed that Huntingdon, which competes at the NCAA Division III level, was the place for him.

"The campus was small and wasn't too big, so that was a plus for me," Scofield said. "All the coaches that sat down and talked to me were super nice. They told me, 'Look, we'd love to have you here. We're not going to force you to make a decision, but it'd be nice if you came here.'

"When they were talking to me I was thinking that this is the perfect fit for me, to go to Huntingdon and continue my athletic career," he added.

Russellville head coach Jess Smith said he's delighted that Scofield has been able to find a college home after a long process.

"I'm super proud and happy for Michael and his family," he said. "We grinded through a lot of this

See, 'SCOFIELD,' Page 13

Strickland to continue tennis career at Central Alabama Community College

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

Recent Russellville High School graduate and former Golden Tiger varsity girls' tennis player Addie Strickland will be taking her tennis talents to Central Alabama Community College, a member of the National Junior College Athletic Association, next season.

Strickland, surrounded by coaches and teammates, signed with the Trojans at a ceremony held at the Russellville Field House on June 28.

Strickland, a member of two state runner-up teams at Russellville, said she is excited to be able to continue her playing career.

"Just getting to play more after high school (led to the decision)," Strickland said. "I thought I was done with playing after high school and then I realized I wasn't.

"I looked at a lot of other colleges and then just narrowed it down," she added. "I really liked the school, and the coach and the campus were really great so that's what made me want to go there."

Russellville varsity girls' tennis head coach Charlotte Dollar said she's glad to see Strickland get the chance to compete at the college level.



COURTESY PHOTO

Addie Strickland, with her RHS tennis teammates, at her recent signing ceremony.

See, 'STRICKLAND,' page 14

Russellville Parks and Rec offering 'low key' adult softball games this month

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

If you are looking to relive your "glory days," prove to yourself (and everyone else!) that, hey, you've still got it!, or for just some wholesome fun and a little exercise, the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department has just what you are looking for in the month of July.

Every Tuesday evening this month, beginning July 2nd, adult softball games will be held at the John Blackwell Sports Complex off Highway 24.

"The purpose is to provide Russellville adults an enjoyable outlet for low key athletic competition which develops softball skills, the concept of teamwork, and a healthy self-esteem," said Aaron Page, who is organizing and coordinating the games. "We want to give the adults something fun to do. We always have stuff for kids, which is our primary focus, but at the end of the day we want to have recreation for our adults, too."

There is a \$5 fee for participants, but admission is free for fans and big league scouts. The full concession stand will be open and selling the usual fare of ballpark favorites. Anyone wanting to participate is asked to please arrive at 5:30 p.m. so that they can be registered and teams can be picked in time for the 6 p.m. start.

Two games will be played on each field used. If there are enough participants for four teams then two fields will be used. Page said he anticipates there will be enough players for four teams. In that case the winning team from the first games will play each other in game two and the same for the two losing teams. The second game will start 10 minutes after the conclusion of the first game.

Each game will last six innings or 60 minutes, so after an hour there will be no new innings. There are also a few extra rules in this league that are different from traditional softball but similar to other

See, 'REC,' Page 12

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'SCOFIELD,' From Page 11

during and after the season, and they were as good as could be about it. We tried and tried with folks, but honestly I can't take credit for anything. It was one of our assistants, Coach (Justin) Sappington, who ran into a coach from Huntingdon at an event...and he told him about Michael. That led him to be able to connect Michael with that coach and go on a visit.

"It couldn't happen to a better dude, and, again, I'm just really happy for Michael and his family," Smith added.

In his senior season with the Golden Tigers Scofield was the team's every day man behind the plate playing in all 39 games. He finished the season with a .330 batting average, collecting 37 hits including two triples and a home run. He had 22 RBI and scored 33 runs. Russellville head coach Jess Smith said he is proud of his now former player and believes Scofield deserves his opportunity to play at the next level.

"Watching Michael's transformation from his junior year to his senior year was really something special to be a part of," Smith said. "As far as his future in baseball, I think he's just now scratching the surface of his potential.

"He was very aware that not a lot of people thought he could do it, but he did and he did more than anyone anticipated he would. Going to a really good program like Huntingdon I think he's only going to get better and better," Smith added.

Smith felt that Scofield was underrated and didn't get as much recognition as he deserved for his performance his senior season.

"I was kind of taken aback that he wasn't an all-state selection. I know that's a hard job to pick, but that guy did a really good job behind the plate for us this year," Smith said of Scofield, who was a 2024 Franklin Free Press All-



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"Catchers are like the offensive lineman of baseball. They do a lot of the dirty work and get little to no credit for it, and that's just part of it," he added. "I told him, 'There are nine players on the baseball field and eight of them are looking at you, and we're going to be who you are. I want us to be tough and consistent and play really, really hard every time we step on the field.' He did that and he executed the vision I had for him being our catcher."

Smith added that Scofield's mental and physical toughness will be a big asset for him playing college baseball.

"Catcher is my position group, so he took it on the chin from me almost every day," Smith said with a laugh. "I really challenged him. Mentally that's one of the biggest transitions you see for guys going to play at the next level. You've got to be able to be coached hard and compete with people that are just as good or better than you. He's a tough kid, not just physically but mentally, and he's a really, really good person with a really, really good heart. He's prepared, no doubt."

Scofield said making the jump from high school ball to college ball, for him, will be all about hard work.

"It's going to be 100 percent work ethic," Scofield said. "If you don't have a good work ethic, it's not going to take you anywhere in life. You've got to put your mind to something and do it, and I think that'll make me successful.

"I'm going to give it everything I've got to try and be a starter my freshman or sophomore season," he added.

Scofield will not just be taking his work ethic to the Huntingdon baseball program, but some lessons he learned as a Golden Tiger, too. One of the most important lessons he learned at Russellville, he said, is that baseball is all about teamwork.

"It's all about the team. You can't do everything by yourself, and you've got to have multiple guys helping you to get better," Scofield said. "When you believe in your teammates and your team, you're going to be a much better ball club."

Whenever Scofield's playing career comes to a close, it still likely won't be the last anyone will see of him on the field. In the classroom Scofield, who played football for the Golden Tigers, as well, said he intends to study education with the ultimate goal of becoming a coach. His dream job wouldn't take him too far away.

"I'm going to major in education and then when I graduate hopefully come back to Russellville and be a baseball and football coach," Scofield said.

Asked what drove him to want to pursue a teaching and coaching career in the future, Scofield pointed to his recent mentor.

"What interested me in it was Coach Smith, really," Scofield said. "Just watching him do what he does in the classroom and on the field that pushed me to want to become a coach and a teacher. What he does and how he does it, it inspired me a lot."

Hearing Scofield's words, Smith said that's what coaching is all about—inspiring a player is the greatest tribute a coach can receive. "It makes you a little bit emotional to hear that because it's really easy to get lost in the wins and losses and Xs and Os of baseball, but you can't ever lose sight of what kind of impact you're trying to make on these young guys' lives," Smith said. "I think that's the greatest honor. I'm the product myself of my high school head coach, Coach Johnson, investing in me and that's why I got into it."

"To hear Michael say that, that's the biggest honor and it's really humbling. I think that's the greatest honor you can give a coach, to feel in such a way that you want to make the same impact. It really makes me happy to hear that, and Michael is going to be a great coach one day



FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSION

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Barry Moore, Chairman
Chris Wallace, District I
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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

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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S H E R I F F

'STRICKLAND,' From Page 11

"(Strickland) expressed she had a desire to play at the next level all year," Dollar said. "She had a couple of different junior colleges talking to her and looking at her...and she had the opportunity to go to more than one. CACC is where she ended up choosing to go, and we're excited for her to have this opportunity."

"Her sister played at CACC, as well, so she's familiar with the program," Dollar added. "They've got some really nice facilities. I know she's excited about the opportunity to further her education and play tennis."

"I hope she really enjoys her years there and uses them wisely to get an education."

In her final season at Russellville, Strickland competed as an individual and played doubles at the state tournament after helping her team win another Section 8 title. Alongside Kaitlin Speck, Strickland advanced to the quarterfinals in their doubles flight at the state tournament, aiding the Golden Tigers in their red map run in Mobile. Strickland was also an individual quarterfinalist

at the state tournament in 2022 when Russellville finished as the runner-up.

One of Strickland's best attributes on the court, Dollar said, is her strength and power. The Golden Tiger coach said that part of her game will aid her in collegiate competition.

"Addie has a super strong serve. It's just knock-em-dead. She has a powerful serve that I think will really work to her advantage at the college level. It's very overpowering," Dollar said. "She's strong, and she hits really hard backhands and forehands both. She's already going to be at the power level that they play at at the junior college level."

Strickland believes her mental strength is also an asset for her.

"I don't give up and I keep pushing myself even when I'm down," she said.

When she gets to Central Alabama Strickland said she is looking forward to meeting her new teammates; she wants to build a similar dynamic and familiarity with them as she had with her high school teammates.

"I think it's important just being able to work as a team and to get along and fend for each other," she said. "I want to encourage each teammate and build those relationships like I had at Russellville."

Strickland has a few other goals for her first year away from home, as well.

"I'm hoping to make new friends, have a successful season, and just learning to become independent in college being so far away," she said.

In the classroom Strickland is planning to study criminal behavioral psychology.

"I've always been interested in the crime field," she said. "And with my dad being a probation officer, I've just always been kind of drawn to that kind of thing. I wanted to work in something in that field, and I've always loved the psychology part of it. I thought that would be the best job for me."

Off to a new place and a new school to learn new things this fall, Strickland said some lessons she learned at Russellville she will be sure to remember as she starts her college journey.

"I learned to know to keep pushing myself and not to give up," she said. "If you have a goal, keep striving for it."

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A Red Bay native and a Belmont High School graduate, Jessica graduated from the Barret Graduate School of Banking in Memphis in 2016. Her dedication to her team is unwavering, as evidenced by her being named the 2022 recipient of the Spirit of CSB award, a peer-nominated accolade driven by the bank's team.

Her commitment to the community banking industry is unparalleled. She's a true community banker at heart, consistently going above and beyond as she exemplifies dedication and a tenacious determination in all she does. We are thankful for her contributions each and every day.

Congratulations, Jessica on formally joining our executive management team!



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Latest broadband grant will see Freedom Fiber build out from Waco community into Colbert and Lauderdale counties

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Last Tuesday, Gov. Kay Ivey announced a grant of nearly \$53 million to continue the build out of high-speed internet service across Alabama, Franklin County was among 24 counties Ivey said would be impacted by the funds.

The grant was awarded to the Alabama Fiber Network, a coalition of electric and generation/transmission cooperatives, and will be used to develop the second phase of the state's broadband network deployment, something called 'middle mile' broadband.

Middle-mile projects fill the gaps in broadband expansion so as to make it less expensive and less labor intensive for providers to extend broadband services to additional businesses and households.

The \$53 million will allow the expansion of 1,095 miles of high-speed middle mile broadband that will connect 120 community anchors. Community anchors include schools, hospitals, government offices, and police and fire departments.

The grant will be administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs through its Digital Expansion Division, an agency Ivey and the Alabama Legislature created to focus on broadband expansion in the state.

The Franklin County portion of the middle-mile build out involves \$5 million of grant funds awarded to Freedom Fiber and will allow the company to use existing connectivity in the Waco community to expand into Colbert and Lauderdale counties.

With funding for broadband build out across Franklin County secured, Freedom Fiber will move north from its existing Franklin County connectivity, opening the door for high-speed broadband in unserved areas of Colbert and Lauderdale counties.

It's essentially the high-speed internet version of 'paying it forward.'

As Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) explained, Franklin County is positioned to see high-speed internet availability across the entire county in the coming months.

"My number one goal upon taking office was to find funds to bring high speed internet to every home in Franklin County," Kiel said. "We have benefited from over \$5 million in funds from the state since then to do just that.

"Freedom Fiber has been a great partner and has invested almost \$40 million in the project. These funds, along with American Rescue Plan Act funds that the Franklin County Commission allocated to fiber, bring the total investment to almost \$50 million to bring high speed internet to every home in Franklin County," Kiel added.

The new \$53 million grant is expected to bring more than 7,500 unserved residences and businesses within five miles of high-speed internet connectivity, Ivey explained. As with the Franklin County Commission's funding commitment, the \$53 million will come from Alabama's share of American Rescue Plan Act funds.

The Alabama Fiber Network is made up of seven electric cooperatives and one generation/transmission cooperative. Neither the Russellville Electric Board nor the Franklin Electric Cooperative are part of that network, although both are working with Freedom Fiber to lease access to utility poles as part of broadband build out.

For residents and business owners in the City of Russellville, their broadband options will soon include a third provider in Freedom Fiber.

"Freedom Fiber will soon be building out their network in the City of Russellville. Although Russellville is now served by AT&T and Spectrum broadband, this will provide another option for city residents to have reliable high speed internet service," Kiel added.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS INVITATION FOR BIDS

Sealed Bids will be received by the **Russellville Water and Sewer Board** until **Tuesday, July 30, 2024**, for the work according to Specifications and Contract Documents on file in the office of the Owner, the improvements hereinafter described. No bids will be received after the time set forth hereinabove, and the Bids will be publicly opened and read. The Bid Documents will be opened at the **Russellville Water and Sewer Board 721 Jackson Ave S, Russellville, AL 35653. If your Bid Documents are mailed, they should be received prior to Tuesday, July 30, 2024 at 10:00 A.M. at The Russellville Water and Sewer Board 721 Jackson Ave S, Russellville, AL 35653.**

The work of labor for **Russellville Waterline Relocation Project Along Highway 243 - ALDOT Project No. BR-0243 (S04)** will be let under one Contract.

The principal items of work are detailed herein below.

Principal Work:

1. Approximately 1,000 L.F. of 2" Water Line Relocation
2. Water Meter Resets
3. Valve Box Reset
4. 350 L.F. of Directional Bore (Creek Crossing)

Plans, Specifications and Contract Documents are open to public inspection at the office of the Owner, **The Water and Sewer Board of the City of Russellville, AL** or may be obtained from the office of the Engineers, **Utility Engineering Consultants, LLC., 130 Southcrest Drive, Suite 100, Homewood, Alabama 35209. Phone (205) 951-3838** upon receipt of \$50.00 per set, the actual cost of printing, reproducing, handling and distribution for each set of documents. No refunds will be made except to bidding Contractors, who shall be refunded for one bid set.

The Contractor is hereby advised that **TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE** on this project and that the contract time of **60** calendar days and noted restrictions shall be strictly observed. **LIQUIDATED DAMAGES WILL BE ASSESSED IF THE CONTRACT TIME IS EXCEEDED.** The Contractor may apply for an extension of time in accordance with the provisions of the contract; however, such an extension must be approved prior to the contract completion date to avoid the imposition of liquidated damages. All applicable Federal Guidelines must be met. Davis - Bacon Wage Rate, Beason Hammon / E-Verify Certification, and Equal Opportunity requirements must be met. A Pre-Bid meeting will be held on Monday, July 18, 2024, at 10:00 A.M. at The Russellville Water and Sewer Board 721 Jackson Ave S, Russellville, AL 35653.

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