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## City of Russellville to receive \$350,000 paving grant on top of \$3.8 million project already underway

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

As work began last week on the first phase of a \$3.8 million paving project across the City of Russellville, city officials received word they were approved for an additional \$350,000 Rebuild Alabama grant on top of the previously approved funds.

The news came Thursday from Gov. Kay Ivey's office that an additional \$3.9 million in state funding would be awarded to cities and coun-

ties across Alabama from funds raised by the Rebuild Alabama Act. That act, approved in 2019 by the Alabama Legislature, requires the Alabama Department of Transportation to set aside a minimum of \$10 million each year on top of the state's share of the gas tax revenue generated through the act.

The \$350,000 grant, which will be used for micropaving projects in the City of Russellville, additionally includes a \$102,000 match from the city, bringing the project total to \$452,000.

See 'GRANT,' Page 7

## Tharptown Rocketry Team honored at U.S. Space & Rocket Camp

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

It's been a busy month for the eight students who comprise the national champion Tharptown High School Rocketry Team.

They were honored this week with a send off celebration at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville. They will be honored by the Franklin County Board of Education at its July 18th meeting, where Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore and the Franklin County Commission will also be in attendance to present a resolution honoring the team.

They were honored at the City of

Russellville's Fourth of July Jam at Sloss Lake, where they demonstrated their prowess in launching a miniature rocket. And they haven't stopped meeting and working together in preparation for the International Rocketry Challenge, where they will compete for the world title at the Farnborough International Air Show in England. The International Rocketry Challenge begins July 22nd.

In May, the Tharptown Rocketry Team finished first among 922 teams from 45 states who competed in the 2024 American Rocketry Challenge. Now in its 22nd year, the American Rocketry Challenge is a fun and

See 'ROCKET,' Page 4



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**Mary Jane Fontaine, age 71, of  
Russellville, AL. passed away  
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**William Travis Whitten, 55, of Phil  
Campbell, passed away on July 13,  
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**Mary Winchette Craig, 79, of  
Russellville, Alabama passed away  
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assisted the family.**



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#### **Letters to the editor**

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# **Attempted assassination no time for jokes, political humor**

*John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press*

You probably don't know who Bennie Thompson is, but by the time you read this column, hopefully you'll have read or heard a news report about Thompson doing the right thing and firing one of his staff members.

Thompson is U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Democratic Congressman who represents Mississippi's Second District in the House of Representatives.

Shortly after Saturday's attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, Jacqueline Marsaw, one of Thompson's Congressional Aides assigned to Adams, Amite, Franklin and Wilkinson counties, made the following social media post: "I don't condone violence but please get you some shooting lessons so you don't miss next time oops that wasn't me talking."

Marsaw then made a follow up post that read, "That's what your hate speech got you!"

Marsaw made the posts on her personal Facebook page, and removed them Saturday evening at the request of one of the Congressman's senior staff members.

But, in the eyes of most decent people, Marsaw's removal of the post was simply damage control. There's no way for her to unring the bell after making disgusting posts that couldn't have been more untimely.

Perhaps when she made the post, Marsaw wasn't aware a husband and father was killed by the shooter. Perhaps when she made the post, Marsaw wasn't aware two other people were critically injured. Perhaps when she made the post, Marsaw wasn't aware the former President was actually shot in the ear.

None of that matters.

Shortly after Marsaw's post, the Mississippi Republican Party called on Thompson to fire his staff member. The axe should have immediately fallen on Marsaw's job as soon as the ill-timed post was made.

There are certain life decisions we can't simply undo, and this was one of those irreversible actions.

Thompson made a post on X Saturday evening expressing his appreciation to law enforcement for its swift response to the shooting and he extended his thoughts and prayers to Trump, his family, and everyone else involved.

Later Saturday night, Thompson released a statement indicating he was "made aware of a post by a staff member and she is no longer in my employment."

Even though the Congressman fired Marsaw, he failed to speak out against the hate and vitriol so often expressed in today's politically turbulent world.

In April, Thompson introduced the long-titled Denying Infinite Security and Government Resources Allocated toward Convicted and Extremely Dishonorable Former Protectees Act, which, if passed, would terminate Secret Service protection for those sent to prison after conviction of a federal or state felony.

The bill never gained traction, and continues to languish in the House Committee on the Judiciary.

There's a big difference between doing the right thing and doing the right thing after being pressured by multiple sources to act.

In this case, Thompson had a chance to put partisan politics on the shelf and do the right thing, right away. Consider it an opportunity missed.

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# 'ROCKET,' From Page 1

challenging way to expose students to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM, not only learning about those important subjects, but looking at them for a possible career.

For Tharptown team members Kylee Beard, Angie Chavez, Shyla Martinez, Angel Franco, Adrianna Ashley, Jessie

Mitchell, Isabella Hall and Frank Gutierrez, the next goal is to win a world title in England.

Under the leadership of its coaches and sponsors, Marsha Imon, Areanna Orozco, Darrel Baker and Julie Madden, along with mentor Andrew Heath, the Tharptown team is well-prepared going into the international competition.

The competition involves students designing, building and launching model rockets while using STEM skills to navigate the engineering challenges they face in competition. Their rockets carry one raw hen egg and are scored by how close they fly to their target flight duration and altitude, and whether the egg remains unbroken.

It's a competition Tharptown students know well, as the school has been to the United States finals every year since its rocketry program began in 2018, with four Top 10 finishes.

What started last fall in a THS classroom has now advanced to an international stage and an opportunity for a world championship for these eight students.

And if they return home later this month with a world title in tow, the students might need to hire a press secretary to handle all the interview and appearance invitations.

When school starts in August, though, seven of the eight rocketry team members will return to Tharptown High School to start the process all over again in pursuit of a 2025 American and world title.



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# Russellville Fire Department to celebrate 100 years with Open House for the public

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Fire Department recently received an old ledger detailing fire department business dating back to 1924.

With no record prior to that year, Assistant Chief Randy Seal and Chief Joe Mansell concluded the department is 100 years old this year.

And what's better to celebrate a 100 years of service than to throw a party for the people the department serves?

That's exactly what the department has planned for Saturday, August 10th—a Celebration of 100 Years. And the public is invited to join RFD employees for an Open House to celebrate 100 years of protecting the citizens of the City of Russellville.

The event will take place at Russellville Fire Station #1, 1100 South Jackson Avenue, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. There will be refreshments, station and equipment tours, historical displays of equipment used over the past century and there will be activities tailored for children.

It's all free and you're invited!

"This is a day for the public we serve," Seal said. "We'll have different items displayed from the 100-year history of the department and equipment over the years. We have an old water main that is made out of wood.

"We'll have activities for kids, and you can walk through the station and we'll have our engines out for everyone to see. We'll bring our trailers we have for different teams and have them open. Those include our medium rescue trailer, hazmat trailer and others. And we'll try to answer any questions people may have," he added.

Mansell will present a history of the department some time around 11-11:30 a.m., and there will be a special ceremony that will include

Russellville Mayor David Grissom and the City Council.

Seal said the fire safety trailer, used at schools for fire education, and the department's plug-in fire prevention display will be set up for kids.

Seal and the RFD are asking anyone who was ever affiliated with the Russellville Fire Department, whether as a volunteer or employee, to attend the August 10th event. And any family members of former firefighters who may have any kind of information on the department are encouraged to bring that so it can be added to the historical narrative of the department.

The Russellville Fire Department was an all-volunteer department until the late 1970s, when Harlon Hutcheson became the department's first full-time chief.

Hutcheson remained in that role until 2002, when Mansell was promoted to chief after Hutcheson's retirement.

For more information, or to learn more about how to share historical items you may have that are related to the department, contact Seal at 256-324-0456.

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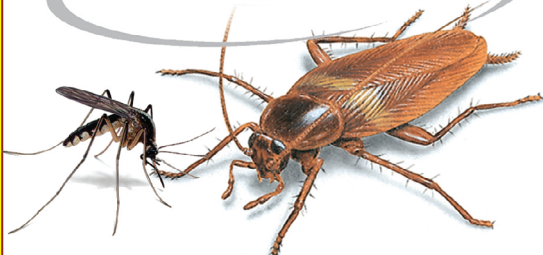


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 **T**he Senior Center of Phil Campbell is under new management. Everyone age 60 and over are invited to come join us and be part of the group. This is for men and women. We meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8-noon. 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 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.

 **M**y Father's House Ministries will host a Kids' Crusade July 24-26, Wednesday-Friday, from 6-8 p.m., nightly. Bring your children for a blessed time of Biblical fun, crafts, puppet shows and food! Friday will be Fun Night with games and food! The theme will be the Hero Hotline, Called Together to Serve God. Everyone is welcome. If you need a ride, call 256-460-1376. Church is located at 104 East Lawrence St., Russellville.

 **S**iloam Missionary Baptist Church will host Summer Revival July 29-August 2, Monday-Friday, at 7 p.m., nightly. Evangelist Dr. Josh Lancaster. Pastor John Powell and Congregation invite you to attend. Church is located at 1657 Co. Road 60, Russellville. For more information, call 256-331-9502.

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# 'GRANT,' From Page 1

The roadways to receive the new micropaving include Underwood Road, from Jackson Avenue North to Highway 43, Summit Drive, Washington Avenue South and Hester Line Road in Cedar Creek Subdivision.

Micropaving, or microsurfacing, includes the application of a mixture of water, asphalt emulsion, aggregate (very small crushed rock), and chemical additives to an existing asphalt concrete pavement surface. Polymer is commonly added to the asphalt emulsion to provide better mixture properties.

According to Russellville District One City Councilman David Palmer, micropaving allows repaving dollars to impact approximately two times the amount of roadway compared to the traditional mill and fill process followed by new asphalt being laid.

According to Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville), the \$350,000 represents the third Rebuild Alabama grant for Franklin County in the past three years.

"I appreciate Mayor (David) Grissom and the Russellville City Council for applying for the Rebuild Alabama Grant," Kiel said. "I'm especially appreciative of Councilman David Palmer for using his expertise and unique connections to assist with the application.

"Applying for this grant allowed me to bring tax dollars back to my district and hometown. I have worked hard during my time in office to build relationships with Gov. Ivey and her staff and I am grateful to her for recognizing this need and funding this grant," Kiel added.

At its July 15th meeting, the city council approved a contract for professional engineering services with the Civil Group for the micropaving project.

The project will have to be bid out, so that process will take some time before the work begins.

In the meantime, work is underway for phase one of the city's massive \$3.8 million repaving project, by far the largest such project in the city's history.

The \$3.817 million is coming from several sources, including Rebuild

Alabama Act funds, the city's general fund and other city funding.

Last year, the council approved purchasing its own paving equipment and approved bids for asphalt last month. These moves allowed the Russellville Street Department to do much of the repaving in house. When the job doesn't have to be bid out, the funds stretch to allow additional roadways to be repaved.

Work on phase one will continue into the fall, and the final phase will start next spring with plans to be completed by summer 2025.

Palmer coordinated a recent inspection of all roadways in the City of Russellville. That data was provided to council members so they could review the most pressing needs in their districts.

Those inspections, along with traffic data, the number of residences, the number of businesses along the roads are also used as metrics to determine priority for projects.

"I'm very excited about this large scale repaving project being underway, and to learn last week we received an additional \$350,000 in Rebuild Alabama grants, was also wonderful news that will allow for road improvements on some of the city's busiest streets," District Two Councilman Darren Woodruff said.

Each of the city's five districts will see an average of \$763,400 of paving and/or striping work as part of the \$3.8 million award.

Palmer set up a meeting with ALDOT Director John Cooper, where City of Russellville officials made their pitch for the grant based, in large part, on the plan to use micropaving.

Palmer, although instrumental in the grant application process, said the \$350,000 grant was attainable as a result of teamwork and the mayor and council working together.

"Things like this don't happen if you don't have a mayor and council and everyone pulling in the same direction," Palmer said. "There's so much that goes into this and it just takes one person not working together to not get the job done. I'm blessed to be part of a group of people who work together as a team and have their community's best interests at heart."

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# Bolton one of 14 MSU College of Education graduates to be named Stephen D. Lee Scholar

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Red Bay High School alumnus Bailey Bolton was recently recognized as a Stephen D. Lee Scholar during spring commencement ceremonies on the campus of Mississippi State University.



COURTESY PHOTO

Bolton is one of 113 students to receive this honor among approximately 3,500 spring graduates. Bolton was one of only 14 from MSU's College of Education to be named a Stephen D. Lee Scholar.

Stephen D. Lee Scholars have achieved a cumulative 4.0 grade point average during their college careers at Mississippi State.

Bolton majored in Elementary Education and

earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the school's College of Education.

She is a 2020 graduate of Red Bay High School, where she was Salutatorian. Bailey is the daughter of Brad and Julie Bolton of Red Bay.

Bolton recently accepted a position at Itawamba Attendance Center as a kindergarten teacher.

"Kindergarten has always been my dream grade to teach and I am absolutely overwhelmed that God has answered this prayer," Bolton said in a social media post. "I am so full of joy, excitement and gratitude. Please be in prayer for my future students, their parents, myself and all staff at IAC. I am so excited to be an Indian!"



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# Sibley says Northside Grocery 'on track' to open by Labor Day

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

With the installation of a new roof complete, Northside Grocery is on track to reopen by Labor Day, according to Russellville businessman Jim Sibley, who bought the property last year.

The iconic business, located on Waterloo Road, used to be a fixture for students and staff at Russellville City Schools.

The store/gas station has been closed since the building was heavily damaged by fire in the fall of 2022. The former owner took no action to repair the building or property, and in March 2023, City of Russellville Fire Marshal Justin Green spoke with the owner, who said he was going to sell the property instead of repairing it.

Sibley said he's experienced some delays with the previous contractor, but a new crew is working on the property and he hopes renovations will be complete in August. Sibley said the pumps, gas tanks and canopy are ready.

Northside Grocery will operate as an independent station, and will not be a Chevron affiliate, as most of Sibley's properties are.

Sibley plans to lease or sell the business. He will retain the fuel supplying through Sibley Oil Company.

While he considered opening the business and running it himself, Sibley decided the best plan was to lease or sell it and said he's been in discussion with multiple interested parties. Sibley expects to have a deal in place some time next month, whether it be a lease or sale.

The 2022 fire caused extensive damage to the building's interior. Investigation by local fire department officials indicated the origin of the fire appeared to be an electrical accident, possibly in the break room or bathroom.

Northside Grocery has been a part of Russellville for more than 80 years, and that was a large reason why Sibley decided to purchase it.

"It's a long-standing, viable location that the people of this community have supported in the past, and will support again once it's open," Sibley said. "It's been an expensive, lengthy process to renovate and reopen, but it's worth it to preserve a part of the history of this city and to continue the tradition of Northside Grocery."



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# Commission to solicit bids for Highway 75 bridge repair project

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission authorized Franklin County Engineer Jason Baggett to advertise for bids to complete a bridge repair project on Highway 75 at the commission's July 15th meeting.

The project will be paid for with Rebuild Alabama Act funds. Advertising for bids will begin July 31st, with all bids due by August 21st. Baggett will have a recommendation on which bid to accept at the commission's September business meeting.

In other agenda items at Monday's meeting, the commission:

--reappointed Commissioner Joseph Baldwin to be the Association of County Commissions of Alabama legislative appointee for the coming year.

--approved Family Medical Leave Act leave for Franklin County Emergency Management Agency Director Mary Hallman-Glass. Hallman-Glass had back surgery last week and is expected to be out six to eight weeks.

--approved the resignation of temporary employee Caden Watts with the Franklin County Highway Department.

--approved setting a public hearing to consider whether to vacate a 7,375 foot unnamed right of way that runs behind Eddie's Collision Repair which is located on Highway 24 West. The hearing will be at 8 a.m., Monday, August 19th, prior to the commission's business meeting set for 8:30 a.m.

--declared three Ford F-150 trucks as surplus property and authorized advertising them for sale on Govdeals.com. Two trucks are property of the Highway Department, with 154,000 and 207,000 miles. The third truck is a 2016 F-150, property of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office.

--approved hiring James Fleck as a permanent Corrections Officer/Dispatcher in the Sheriff's Office, and Matthew Crum as a Deputy. Crum will be assigned to work security in the Franklin County Courthouse.

--approved the promotion of Corrections Officer Kandy Barnett to Sergeant with the Sheriff's Office.

--approved the promotion of deputies Chris Hill and Chase White to Sergeants in the Sheriff's Office.

--authorized advertising for bids for the hauling contract to transport municipal household waste from the Franklin County Landfill to an approved landfill. The county's current contract with Morris Farms in Hillsboro ends in August. Bids are due by 2 p.m., August 1, 2024.

--reappointed Kim Horton to the North Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourism Association Board.

--renewed a cable franchise agreement with Spectrum for cable television services only. Franklin County receives five percent of the gross revenues from Spectrum cable TV subscriptions in Franklin County. The new contract will continue that same percentage going to the county.

The next regular business meeting of the Franklin County Commission will be August 19, 2024, with a public hearing at 8 a.m., and meeting at 8:30 a.m.



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## Youth tennis camp begins Thursday, July 18th

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

Starting Thursday, July 18th, the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department is offering a three-day tennis camp for youth entering the fourth through the 10th grade. The camp, which requires a \$50 registration fee, will be held at the Russellville Tennis Courts on Rube Courtington Drive behind the Russellville High School football stadium.

During the first two days of the camp, which will start at 6 p.m. and run until 8 p.m., participants will learn the sound fundamentals of tennis, events coordinator Denese Gault said.

"They're going to work on technique and form," Gault said. "They're going to be taught things like the correct way to hit fronthand, the correct way to hit backhand, volleys at the net, and things like that."

"You can put a racket in anyone's hand and you can go out there and goof off, but like any sport when you do that it's probably wrong," she added. "If you can learn the fundamentals and proper form now, eventually you'll have those mastered and be pretty good at it."

The final day of camp, Saturday, July 20th, will begin at 8 a.m. and will feature competition between the participants.

"On Saturday the 20th we'll do like a little round robin so we can see their skills and how they

See, 'TENNIS,' Page 13

## Entrekin selected for elite summer baseball showcase

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

After an excellent debut season with the Russellville High School varsity baseball team in the spring, rising freshman Brayden Entrekin has received a special, exclusive invitation to compete with another squad later this month.

Entrekin—a versatile player for the Golden Tigers during their 2024 campaign, especially on the mound—was selected to join Team Alabama for Prep Baseball's upcoming Junior Futures Games showcase in Emerson, Georgia, July 23-28.

"Playing at the Futures Games means a lot to me. It will give me a whole new experience of the game, and I get to see the best competition from all across the county," Entrekin said. "I will get to represent Team Alabama and Russellville." Prep Baseball (or Prep Baseball Report, PBR), started in 2005, has held



COURTESY PHOTO

RHS rising freshman Brayden Entrekin was an important part of last year's varsity Golden Tiger team.

See, 'SHOWCASE,' page 12

## NWSCC to house new volleyball program on Phil Campbell campus

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

Northwest Shoals Community College announced the addition of volleyball to its athletic programs in a press release on July 9th. Set to begin competition at the Phil Campbell campus in the fall of 2025, it will be NWSCC's first volleyball team since the program was discontinued after the 2010 season.

"We are thrilled to add volleyball to our cross country teams on the Phil Campbell campus," said NWSCC President Dr. Jeff Goodwin in the press release. "We look forward to hosting matches on campus and have our tremendous community come and support them."

The addition of the volleyball program next year will bolster the number of Patriot athletic squads to five with NWSCC already fielding men's cross country, women's cross country, baseball, and softball teams.

"Volleyball is popular in our state and we have proven that we can compete at the highest level," NWSCC Athletics Director Taylor Franks said in the statement released by the school. "We have six ACCC volleyball state championships to our credit and with the talent in our area, I truly believe we can get back to that level. However, more important than championships, we are looking forward to welcoming and nurturing student-athletes that truly understand what it means to be a part of the Patriot family and a community that wants to help each other be successful in life."

Adding volleyball to the Phil Campbell campus, which already hosts the men's and women's cross country teams, will hopefully serve to boost school spirit and the overall experience of the students there, Franks told the Franklin Free Press.

"Phil Campbell already has a great reputation of making it a student-friendly campus," she said. "I think this will really enhance that, adding this element to that."

See, 'NWSCC,' Page 14

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# 'SHOWCASE,' From Page 11

the Futures Game showcase since 2011. The organization's mission, according to its website, is "to scout and promote amateur baseball—high school, junior college and college—and, ultimately, help athletes achieve their dreams of playing baseball at the next level." Prep Baseball claims the most full-time scouts among independent amateur scouting companies and has scouting directors in 41 states and Canada who devote their time to scouting the local talent in their respective regions.

Russellville head coach Jess Smith is familiar with the work of Prep Baseball and said the organization, especially the PBR Alabama team, does a great job of highlighting talented players throughout the state. To be selected to play in the Junior Futures Games, Smith said, is a pretty big deal.

"PBR Alabama does a fantastic job giving players in our state exposure. They blast social media with in-game videos of players, and they travel across the state pretty much every day during baseball season and in the summer to the different tournaments," Smith said. "For Brayden to be chosen is a huge honor for him and for Russellville baseball with him getting that exposure at that young of an age."

The opportunity to play in the Futures Games, hosted at the LakePoint Sports Complex, comes by invitation only, which only adds to the prestige of the event. Only the best of the best are selected.

"It means the organization has chosen Brayden as one of the top upcoming underclassmen in Alabama, and he gets to go represent himself alongside some of the best in the state," Smith said. "It's a pretty special opportunity, and we certainly think he deserves it. He played on some of the biggest stages with us this year, and we know who he is and his work ethic. He certainly deserves this recognition, and we think he's going to be one of the best players in his class in the state of Alabama."

Entrekin, who also plays travel baseball with the Canes Southeast Scout 14U team, played in the outfield and batted .250 with a .380 on-base percentage in 64 at-bats with the Golden Tigers in 2024. He made his biggest impression on the mound, though: In 10 appearances on the bump, Entrekin ended the year with a 3-0 record, one save, and a 1.45 earned run average over 29 innings pitched. He allowed just six earned runs all season and he finished with 16 strikeouts. Most of Entrekin's pitching appearances came in relief, but notably the southpaw was handed the start in a must-win playoff game against Leeds, showing just how much faith the Russellville coaching staff have in the young arm. Entrekin recorded the win against the Green Wave, tossing five and two-thirds innings and allowing just one earned run as Russellville advanced to the quarterfinals of the Class 5A playoffs.

"He went right after them with no fear. He didn't blink, he didn't get nervous, he didn't look overwhelmed," Smith told the Franklin Free Press following that game. "To be so young, the way he carried himself gave even our older guys and our coaches confidence. You looked out there and knew that it didn't really matter what happened, we were going to win that game, and it started with him."

Entrekin said the coaching he's received and his experiences with Russellville this past season will serve him well at the Junior Futures Games.

"Having coaches at Russellville that pushed and believed in me helped mentally prepare me for 'game three' situations every time I take the mound. Coach Smith believed in me enough to start me against Leeds in game three. It was a big game—win or go home," he said. "Having Coach (Cody) Greenhill keep me focused, mentally and physically, helped me stay level even when the situation got stressful. Coach Smith's high pressure practices helped me prepare for high school games and high-level travel tournaments. I plan to take all of these situations with me as I go into the Futures Games."

"Baseball is a game of failure. Coming from seventh grade ball to varsity came with a lot of obstacles, highs and lows. Every single coach and player helped me work through them in some way," he added.

David Sharp is a member of the PBR Alabama staff and is Prep Baseball's Regional Supervisor for the Deep South. Sharp, who has extensive experience as a coach, evaluator, and scout, said inviting Entrekin to join Team Alabama was a simple choice.

"I saw Brayden, personally, at Arab when Russellville played a doubleheader over there," Sharp said. "I was really, really impressed with him as an eighth grader at the time and now obviously going into his freshman year."

"He came to our premier event in the state this year, called the Yellowhammer State Games, June 18th and 19th over at Sand Mountain Park and really stood out, both as a pitcher and a position player," he added. "It was a fairly easy decision to ask him."

Entrekin will be joined by 13 or 14 other players on his Team Alabama, according to Sharp. All the members of the team are chosen by Prep Baseball state directors after many hours of scouting and evaluation.

"We get out during the high school season, and we covered over a hundred teams this past year throughout the state. We get out and we see these players during their high school seasons and follow them into the summer as they go with their travel ball organizations, playing in tournaments over at LakePoint (Sports Complex) or at some of the tournaments we have here in Albertville," Sharp said. "That's how we go about it—getting eyes on these players, whether it be during the high school season or during our summer events that we have; that's how we evaluate the teams that we take over there to the Futures Games."

After checking in on July 23rd, participants will take part in a pro-style workout on the following day before games begin on Thursday, July 25th. Entrekin will be a member of one of 37 teams from 35 states (Alabama and Georgia will have two teams) taking part in the event, according to Sharp. Each team is guaranteed four games: three games in pool play and at least one game in the single-elimination tournament. Games will be played through Sunday, July 28th.

The Futures Games, billed as Prep Baseball's premier recruiting event, are truly a spectacle to behold, Sharp said.

"I'm biased—I understand that—but it is truly, truly a unique experience that people can tell you about, but until you go over there and see it yourself you don't understand the magnitude of it," he said. "We want to give these players a memorable experience that they'll never forget."

Entrekin said he is looking forward to competing with and against some of the best talent from around the country as well as the chance to meet new people.

"Having the opportunity to see the top talent from across the country will make me a better player. Seeing great pitching, pitching against great batters, only makes you better," he said. "I'm most excited about meeting new people that are my age. It's fun when you get back to school ball and play against your teammates or others you faced in the travel season. I am lucky to have friends and teammates all across the state and South."

With so many top competitors and so much talent all in one place there will obviously be a desire to win, but Sharp said the games' outcomes are not the main point.

"You want to represent your state well, and do we want to win it? Yes. But this is not a win-at-all-costs thing," Sharp said. "We're doing this to give these players an experience they'll remember, and these kids love going over there. Our entire roster will hit...and we'll be subbing players in and out."

"Players hit in numerical order, and that's the way it is for everyone over there, which I think is great. We do it to try to keep the at-bats as close to equal as possible," he added. "Anytime you get on the field, you know, the competitive juices get flowing and you want to win, but that's not the ultimate goal here."

The mission of all the Futures Games (there will be three events—14U, 16U, and 17U Futures Games—all happening at the same time) is to give the players the spotlight their talent deserves, Sharp said. If precedent holds, there promises to be plenty of exposure.

"In the last few years we've had over 375 college coaches there, and when I say college coaches I'm talking about the Alabamas, the Auburns, the (Vanderbilts), the UCLAs, the Connecticuts, the Saint Johns. They're from everywhere. It's the big-time Division I coaches that are there," Sharp said.

NCAA rules don't allow coaches to recruit Entrekin yet, Sharp said, but one never knows who could be watching.

"Last year we had an elite arm throwing for us on our (class of) 2028 team and we look in the back and there's an LSU assistant coach, an Alabama assistant coach, and Tony Vitello, head coach of the national champion Tennessee Volunteers, back there watching our elite arm. That's a pretty cool experience for such a young player to be a part of," Sharp said. "There may be a college coach sitting in the stands when Brayden throws, and they see him and they think, you know, that's a name to remember for the future. That's what it's all about."

If all goes well for Entrekin at the Junior Futures Games—if he shows what Golden Tiger coaches and fans know he's capable of—it can only set him up for more possibilities down the road.

"I hope that attending the Futures Games will push me as a player," Entrekin said. "Playing in these games can open more."

# 'TENNIS,' From Page 11

play each other," she said. "That'll start at eight o'clock, but we're not sure what time that will end exactly. It'll be one of those things if you lose you can go home."

Tennis balls and water will be provided. Participants will need to bring their own racket and Gault encourages those individuals to also bring their own refreshments and a snack.

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The camp will be instructed by three volunteers—Peyton Parrish, Reece Carson, and Bralynn Vincent—who all have experience coaching, Gault said. Parrish, Carson, and Vincent are all 2024 graduates of Russellville High School and were members of the Golden Tigers' boys' and girls' tennis teams. Parrish, who has signed a tennis scholarship to the University of North Alabama, helped the RHS girls' squad to a section championship and a runner-up finish at the state tournament this past season.

"Peyton teaches tennis and she goes to all these camps," Gault said. "She's very knowledgeable about tennis."

Carson and Vincent were members of the Russellville boys team that won sectionals and finished fifth at state. Carson will also be a coach for the Russellville Middle School football and tennis teams next year.

"The three we've got out there teaching are super sweet, very patient, and I really think the kids participating will benefit from this camp," Gault said.

Gault said the impetus behind the camp really fell with the three volunteers.

"This was kind of impromptu," Gault said. "I was talking to Reece and Peyton and they were like, 'Can we do a camp?' and I was like, 'Yeah, let's do a camp.' It was kind of sudden, but the only way we could fit into all their schedules was to do it (July 18-20)."

"(The RHS tennis program) is doing well, and these three don't want it to go downhill. They're trying to make sure it keeps going as a good spring sport," Gault added. "They're coming back to volunteer their time and get more people involved in it, so that the program will continue to succeed and stay up there like it is."

They want to see the Russellville tennis program succeed like it has been doing."

If the youth camp is successful and has a good turnout, Gault said there may be another camp planned for later in the year.

"I know a lot of people will be on vacation and may not be able to do it right now," she said. "If it goes well I'd like to pick it up again in the fall and do another camp."

Gault said she also hopes the camp will also spark more interest in the sport overall.

"I'd like to eventually one day start a league through the (Russellville Parks and Recreation Department)," she said. "Alabama Parks and Recreation does do tennis, but right now there's just not that much of an interest in this area. I'd like to watch and see tennis grow and gain more of an interest."

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# 'NWSCC,' From Page 11

"We put cross country there last year but with the renovations going on they haven't really been able to establish themselves there, so going into next year both men's and women's cross country and volleyball will really be able to add some exciting stuff to the campus," Franks added.

NWSCC said renovations underway at the gymnasium on the Phil Campbell campus are set to be completed by December 2024. The nature of the renovations and the facilities available to NWSCC were key factors in deciding to add volleyball specifically.

"One of the major reasons were the renovations on campus, and looking at the plans and specifications that we had to work with—basically the size, ceiling height, etcetera—that really dictated what we were able to add there," Franks said. "The three (sports) we have now are outdoor sports, so we're excited to add an indoor sport to the pro-

gram and also utilize the gym the best way we could with what we were able to do with our renovations. Volleyball really fit that bill."

It was volleyball's turn this time around, but Patriots fans can expect to see the number of sports offered at NWSCC continue to grow in the future. Franks said there's no concrete timeline, but the school has plans to keep building on its progress as circumstances allow.

"Phil Campbell is undergoing renovations and at some point we'll start more renovations on the Shoals campus, so those timelines will dictate what we're able to bring back," she said. "We've had golf on the table; we've looked at tennis, and, of course, men's and women's basketball. We're pretty much open to exploring all the possibilities."

"This little corner of the state has excellent talent, and that's what we want to do: provide these opportunities for our local kids. We have a lot of talent in a lot of areas," Franks added. "I'd say everything is on the table, but we're going to look at what makes the most sense. Of course we have to look at our budget and what we're able to do."

"Facility-wise we have to look at where we are. Facilities and the renovations we're undergoing decide when and what we're able to bring back, but we're excited and looking at all the possibilities," she said.

The new Patriot volleyball team, which will compete in the Alabama Community College Conference, will consist of 14 scholarship players. Walk-on opportunities will be determined by the future coach of the program. NWSCC opened applications for the coaching position on July 9th, the day the program was announced, and it will close them on July 23rd. The basic qualifications for the part-time job are a Bachelor's degree and/or three years of volleyball coaching experience at the high school level or higher, but Franks said NWSCC is really looking for a coach that will bring enthusiasm to the program and supplement the student life at the Phil Campbell campus.

"What we're looking for is something with experience and...it'd be better that they know the area," Franks said. "They need to understand it will be at the Phil Campbell campus and they're excited to boost the student life there."

Franks said NWSCC will take its time in deciding who the first coach of the reestablished Patriot volleyball program will be; however, they want to give their hire plenty of time to prepare for the 2025 season.

"Once we go through all the applications we'll make sure they meet all the requirements and then we'll call them in for interviews. We're going to make sure whoever we hire is the right fit for our program," Franks said. "We'll have our coach in place by (December) and the coach will help us establish the program, do some recruiting this fall, and be able to get us ready to compete next fall."

"We're very, very excited to be able to offer one more sport at Northwest Shoals," Franks added.

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# New coach, new optimism for Belgreen varsity volleyball this fall

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

As the dog days of summer continue on, so do the Belgreen High School Lady Bulldogs' preparations for the 2024 volleyball season. Last week, Belgreen hosted a play date with four other schools—Tharptown, Meek, Colbert Heights, and Cherokee—giving the Lady Bulldogs an opportunity to receive some match day experience before the start of the regular season in the fall.

Due to various circumstances like vacations and church trips, Belgreen head coach Alison Terry, who was hired to take over the program on June 11th, said she didn't have her entire complement of players for the exhibitions, but she was pleased with what she saw from her squad.

"We just put together the best rotations we could for these play dates, and I got to see how some girls worked under pressure," she said. "I was very pleased with all of their effort.

"I was very, very pleased with how it all went," Terry added.

Encouraging for Terry at this point, she said, is her team's coachability.

"They were very open to instruction," Terry said. "They did what I asked them to do, and if you do what I ask you to do then you can be successful.

"I just told them, 'This is a ship and I'm the captain of this ship and I promise I won't let you drown,'" she added.

Terry said the Lady Bulldogs focused on in-game situations. Once the real matches begin, she said, there's no time to go over that kind of instruction.

"I told the other coaches that I wanted to use this as a learning tool because, of course, in the regular season you can't go on the court and show them where to go and explain things," Terry said. "I let all the coaches know exactly what it was going to be—it's a coaching experience with live game situations so we can go out there and explain stuff to the girls."

Playing against other teams during the play date has also given Terry and her coaching staff an idea of where they most need to improve, both tactically and mentally.

"My main takeaway is we've got to work on certain defensive coverages and offensive coverages," Terry said. "I also told the girls, too, that no matter how fast- or slow-paced the game is, you can't ever relax. It doesn't matter if you've got a server who's served 20 points in-a-row, you still better be ready. Don't ever, ever get lax in volleyball because as soon as you get lax something happens.

"I want them to be on their toes at all times and super scrappy," Terry added.

The Lady Bulldogs' roster is still a work in progress. Belgreen has two seniors with different levels of experience playing volleyball, Terry said, but the roster is mostly comprised of underclassmen. There will be plenty of competition for spots on the varsity roster, she said.

"We're really ninth and 10th-grade heavy, so these girls are really going to have to fight for their positions," Terry said. "If you're good enough for varsity, you're going to be on varsity; if you're not, you're not. But I feel like all of these girls are going to put up the fight to show me where they need to be.

"(Junior varsity) and varsity are really going to have to fight for where they belong," she added.

As Belgreen irons out its personnel questions, Terry is also shaping her goals and expectations for her first year in charge of the program. Right now, the Lady Bulldogs want to start small and work their way up.

"We're going to set our goals small and meet them as we go through the season. We're going to go game by game," Terry said. "First we have county and then it'll be area and then it's going to be super regionals, so we're just going to set these goals as we go through the season and try to accomplish them.

"Sometimes when you set a goal like we're going to win state this year, that's too big of a goal to set for these girls at the beginning of the season," Terry added. "We've got to get the small things rolling before we can make it to our big goal. Of course, (a state championship) is our goal, but we've got to meet these smaller goals before we can make it there."



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**Event will be held at the home of Dewayne & Peggy Greenhill  
9264 County Rd. 84 Russellville, AL. 35653**

Please come join us for a great time while raising money to help Phillip & his family. All proceeds will go to help Phillip with medical cost and lost income. All prayers are greatly appreciated during his battle with cancer.