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Lier named Russellville High School Principal

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

A week into the new school year, Russellville High School has its new principal. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Norman Lier's promotion from RHS vice principal to principal was approved by a 4-0 vote at the Russellville City Schools Board of Education meeting on Thursday, August 15th.

RCS Superintendent Tim Guinn, who made the recommendation of Lier to the Board, said Lier has the right qualities and the abilities to do the job.

"Colonel Lier brings with him a lot of experience with him, both in life

and administration," Guinn said. "He spent more than 20 years as an officer of the United States Army and finished his career with the famed 75th Ranger regiment.

"When he first got to Russellville as the senior Army instructor for ROTC, he was, at that time, a certified teacher in the social sciences in Alabama. And then shortly after coming to Russellville, he got his administrative certificate and has often filled in at Russellville High School, many times acting in the place of the principal when the principal wasn't there," Guinn added. "He has since been assistant principal at both Ardmore in Limestone County and

See 'LIER,' Page 4



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British traveler enjoys Watermelon Festival, just not taste of watermelon

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

Every year thousands of people visit the Franklin County Watermelon Festival in downtown Russellville, but a majority of the attendees are local. It's your friends, your family, and your neighbors from all across Franklin County.

But at this year's Watermelon Festival, perusing the food vendors and merchandise tents on Jackson Avenue or cooling down inside one of the eating establishments down-

town—air conditioner on full blast, thank you—you may have come across a visitor who was a long way from home.


This reporter, by total happenstance, did.

Lizzie Coram, a 38-year-old chef from Shepton Mallet, a small town in Somerset, England, received the full Watermelon Festival experience this past weekend, taking in the sights, scenes, and sounds of the county's biggest event over two days.

Coming to America, the only real item on Coram's itinerary was not the

See 'FESTIVAL,' Page 3

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Davy Gene Berry, age 63, of Haleyville Alabama, born February 11, 1961, passed away Saturday, August 17, 2024. Visitation will be Wednesday, August 21, 2024 from 9:30-11:00 AM, with the Funeral service to follow at 11:00AM.

Patricia "Pat" Ann Taylor Williams, age 79, of Russellville, passed away on Monday, August 19, 2024. The visitation will be 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 21, 2024, at Spry Memorial Chapel. The funeral service will be at 2:00 p.m. Thursday, August 22, 2024, at Spry Memorial Chapel.

Danny Ray Winstead, age 71, born June 7, 1953, passed away on August 18, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.



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'FESTIVAL,' From Page 1

Watermelon Festival but another classic southern rite, a NASCAR race.

"I initially bought tickets for NASCAR at Daytona, but I thought it was a shame just to fly over for a long weekend," Coram said.

So, having about 10 days in the States, Coram decided to go online and look up some other activities and events going on in this part of the world and she stumbled across the Watermelon Festival.

"I thought I'd look for other fun things to do whilst I was in the south of America and I just did some googling and found this Watermelon Festival," she said. "I came out for that, flew into Orlando, up to Birmingham, and then drove up from there Friday night."

Although Coram has traveled to other parts of the world before, it was her first time in the United States. Asked why she chose to visit the South rather than some of the more populous and touristy metropolises, Coram said she prefers the small town vibe and wanted to do something random—something different.

"If I want a big city I can go to London. Obviously I know like New York's got Central Park and there's loads of really good restaurants there, but I'd rather come down here and eat some proper food. This is just more interesting than that," she said.

Proper food, of course, is a subjective term, but Coram did get the opportunity to sample some of the local delicacies at the festival. Fried oreos the chef didn't rate much—a six out of 10 on her scale. Of course, she had to try the watermelon in the Watermelon Capital of Alabama, but she, apologetically, wasn't too keen on that, either.

"I'm still not a convert to watermelon," she said. "I tried a few slices and it's still okay. And it's messy. Still not a convert to the watermelon, I'm sorry!"

Barbeque, however, hit the spot.

"The barbeque is amazing," Coram said. "I don't really eat meat much at home, but if I moved out here I would just have to eat meat because it's just so tasty."

The Brit was also able to experience some of the competitive aspects of the Watermelon Festival. Even though Coram isn't a fan of eating watermelon, she said she quickly became a fan of watermelon seed spitting.

"I met a lady in the watermelon tasting judging and she took a little video of me trying to do my watermelon seed spitting.

"I did manage to spit a seed about six feet after watching the competitors, and I think if I ever come back I'll have to try it," she said. "I'll do some practice."

Country music, too, received a ringing endorsement. Coram, who visited FAME Studios during her time in the Shoals, learned that not



COURTESY PHOTO

British resident Lizzie Coram at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival.

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'LIER,' From Page 1

Elkmont, as well. So, I'm glad to have him back and I think he's got a lot of experience behind him. I think he's going to do well."

Lier, whose previous stint at Russellville was as JROTC instructor for 2009 to 2021, replaces former principal Jeremy Madden, who resigned after two years in the role at RHS to take the principal position at Northside High School. Lier, who was hired as vice principal at the beginning of the summer, said he and his family are excited about being back in Russellville and he's looking forward to working with the faculty,



COURTESY PHOTO

staff, and students. **RCS Superintendent Tim Guinn and Norman Lier.**

"I love Russellville, and I think I've said before that I had a good friend that came here and that's when I fell in love with the area. When I had the opportunity to come back, I jumped at it and I didn't think twice," he said. "We have got the greatest students and the greatest faculty. I'll match them up against anybody, anywhere, anytime."

"My wife, Rhonda, she's excited about the opportunity to get back down here and be a part of the community," he added.

Lier said his top priority as principal will be doing everything he can to help the students and teachers excel.

"The most important people are in the classroom, and that's the teachers and the students," he said. "My job is to do everything I can to help them be successful."

Lier's recommendation and subsequent Board approval as principal was the only personnel action item on the agenda. Board member Howard Hillman made the motion to approve Guinn's recommendation and Radford Hester seconded it. The motion was approved 4-0 with Board member Greg Trapp absent.

WGOL-FM 100.7 PASTOR SCHEDULE:

First Sunday each month: 3:30 p.m., Jonathan Prince, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church.

Second Sunday each month: 2 p.m., Andy Gasque, Ligon Springs Baptist Church. 2:30 p.m., Trevor Hallmark, Mt. Nebo Baptist Church. 3:30 p.m., Preston Terry, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church.

Fourth Sunday each month: 4 p.m., Greg Thorn, Shiloh Baptist Church.

We invite you to tune in and enjoy these inspirational messages!



RHS and RES among Northwest Alabama RC&D Council grant recipients

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

Strolling down the corridors of Russellville High School Wednesday afternoon—sans hall pass, tsk-tsk—local and state elected government officials, Russellville City Schools Board of Education members, and representatives of the Northwest Alabama Resource Conservation & Development Council, among others, got their first look at the recently completed renovations at the school.

The renovations at Russellville High School, finished in time for the start of the new school year, were made possible by grants totaling \$33,000, funded by the Northwest Alabama RC&D Council in partnership with the Alabama legislature. And the high school wasn't the only one to benefit from the windfall of grant money: Russellville Elementary School received \$13,000 for a playground renovation, while other organizations throughout Franklin County received project funding ranging between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Together, the various non-RCS projects in Franklin County received \$93,589.84.

"It's very beneficial to each of these entities that applied for these grants, and it makes the community a better place to live and work," Franklin County Commission Chairman Barry Moore said. "We appreciate the legislature for appropriating the money to RC&D for these projects."

At Russellville High School, the first stop on the tour, the group—including in it were Moore, State Senator Larry Stutts, State Representative Jamie Kiel, Northwest Alabama RC&D Council Executive Director Lauranne James, Russellville Mayor David Grissom and city council members, and RCS Superintendent Tim Guinn and board of education members—was guided by RHS vice principal Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Norman Lier.

Lier, returning to RHS earlier this year after a previous stint as the school's JROTC instructor, led the party from the new main building to the old one, where all the renovations took place. First, Lier pointed to the new work display areas—space that was formerly allocated to lockers but now repurposed—where classrooms can show off the assignments or projects they are working on.

"We've raised things up and brought things into the 21st century a little bit," Lier told his tour group.

Then came the upgraded restrooms—"they smell better than they used to, too," quipped one unnamed local official and RHS alum. And all along the way the assembly was treated to new, aesthetically-pleasing wall murals, done by Creative Graphics out of Birmingham, which captured the essence of Russellville school spirit and were met with much approval. One featured the school fight song, another a large electric tiger logo, and one was the Russellville Torch, squeezed between the words, "Forward Ever."

Though Lier said he hasn't yet heard feedback on the improvements directly from students, he believes the upgrades

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COURTESY PHOTO

Local elected officials, RCS School Board members and legislators with Northwest Alabama RC&D officials last week at Russellville High School

ciated and perhaps have played a role in Russellville's flying start to the new school year.

"A lot of times I'm so busy going back and forth, but I think it's been noticed. I think they appreciate it," he said.

"I would submit to you that we've probably had the smoothest start to our school year that we've ever had," Lier added. "I think we're off to a great start, and I think it's because of the teachers and I think it's because of the students. They've flat out hit the deck running."

The Franklin Free Press, however, was able to get the reactions of a couple students, and can confirm Lier's assumptions were correct—the renovations have been noticed and received the all-important student seal of approval.

"I think the updates are a great way to show school spirit," senior Ari Kate Willingham said. "This is my fourth year at RHS, and you can definitely tell a difference in how it feels in the hallways of the old main building."

"The updates make the old main building look and feel more modern," added senior Jenna Barnett. "The bathrooms and hallways all look and feel so much better than they did. It's a big difference."

The next stop on the circuit was Russellville Elementary, where the school put its \$13,000 grant to work sodding grass on the playground, erecting soccer nets for use

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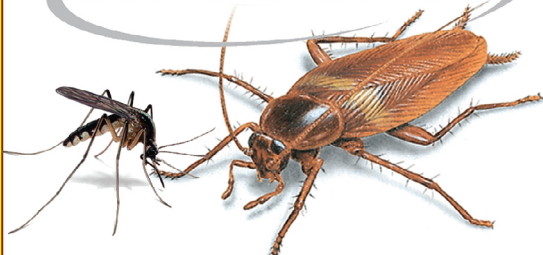
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 **T**he Senior Center of Phil Campbell is under new management. Everyone age 60 and over are invited to come join us and be part of the group. This is for men and women. We meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8-noon.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

 **N**orthwest Regional Library is proud to announce audiobooks are now available through our Books-By-Mail program. This program is completely free to those that are medically homebound, live more than 10 miles from a town with a public library, or require large print or audiobooks only. Must be a resident of Marion, Franklin, or Lamar counties. Contact us today at 205-487-2330 or visit our website at northwestregional.net to find out more information about the program! We are accepting donations of new or gently used CD audiobooks. Donations can be dropped off at any member library. Contact us for more information. "

 **N**orth Russellville Baptist Church presents the second annual October Youth Fest, Sunday, Oct. 6th, 5 p.m.-until. Guest speaker will be Shannon Knight. Praise and Worship by Dustin Richardson, Dry Bones Revived and Jacob Feltman. Drama by the Bethel Drama Team. There will be door prizes, Youth Fest t-shirts for sale and finger foods following the event. Adults and Youth invited to come join the congregation for a great night of worship. A love offering will be taken up. Youth are asked to bring a stuffed animal for Cahaba Shriners for 'Shriner Kids.' For more information or to reserve seating for large groups, call Youth Pastor Randy Bracken at 938-646-4656, La Shawn Fortuna at 256-460-9510 or Lyndsey Marshall at 205-269-7429. Church located at 1401 Waterloo Road in Russellville.

 **V**alley Grove Baptist Church invites all local firefighters and their spouses to a special appreciation banquet on September 7, 2024. There will be a guest speaker as well. You will have the opportunity to hear John Picarella, a firefighter in New York City who was on one of the September 11, 2001, response crews at the World Trade Center. Please RSVP by calling 256-381-1662 M-Thu from 8-2. You can also email Lashanda.elliott@valleygrove.com. Last day to RSVP is August 25th.

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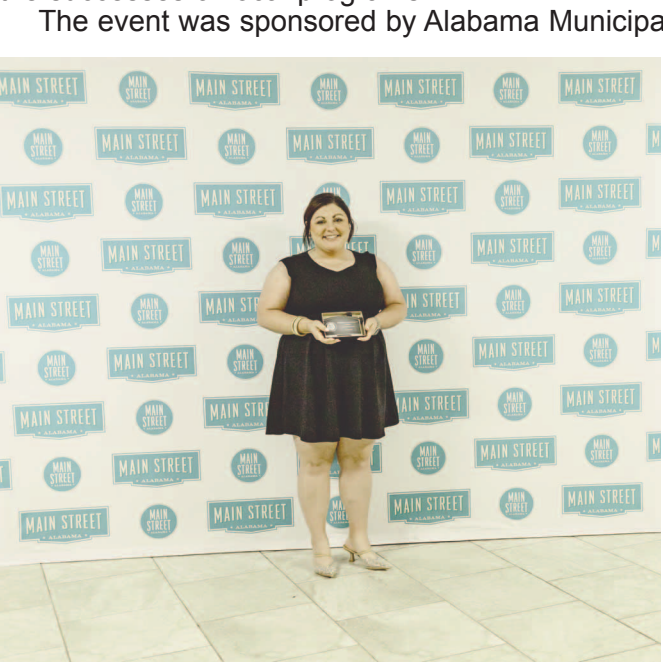


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Russellville Main Street awarded statewide recognition at Alabama Conference

Submitted

On August 15, Main Street Alabama held its eleventh annual Awards of Excellence Banquet at the Community House in Monroeville to celebrate the successes of local programs.



COURTESY PHOTO

Main Street Russellville's Kara Shelnutt at the Main Street Alabama Conference.

The event was sponsored by Alabama Municipal Electric Authority and University of West Alabama Division of Economic Development and Workforce Development. Main Street Alabama's President and State Coordinator, Mary Helmer Wirth, and Assistant State Coordinator, Trisha Black, recognized projects and individuals who made significant contributions to their communities. The Awards of Excellence program highlighted the tremendous impacts of these honorees in their respective areas. "As an organization, we are honored to receive this award; however, it is the hard work of individuals investing in our downtown that truly deserves acknowledgment. Their efforts—ranging from purchasing and refurbishing buildings to launching new businesses—are pivotal in realizing our vision of Russellville's downtown as a vibrant place for both work and play. We are deeply grateful for their belief in our community's potential, which has been instrumental in making this vision a reality", stated Board President, Mitch McKinney.

2023/2024 Awards of Excellence \$1 Million Total Reinvestment (Russellville)
"Last night's event was a heartwarming celebration of the remarkable achievements of our local Main Street programs," said Wirth. "The inspiring success stories shared at the event truly highlighted the essence of community spirit and collaboration. It's a testament to the effectiveness of Main Street's Four-Point Approach in fostering economic development and preserving historic areas."

Main Street Alabama has 33 Designated Programs and 29 Network Communities. Alexander City, Anniston, Athens, Atmore, Birmingham's Historic 4th Ave Business District, Birmingham's Woodlawn District, Calera, Centreville, Columbiana, Decatur, Demopolis, Elba, Enterprise, Eufaula, Florence, Foley, Fort Payne, Gadsden, Heflin, Jasper, LaFayette, Leeds, Marion, Monroeville, Montevallo, Montgomery, Opelika, Oxford, Scottsboro, South Huntsville, Russellville, Talladega, and Wetumpka each have Designated Programs.

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'RC&D,' From Page 5

during recess, and purchasing other playground essentials like balls and bases.

Giving the walk-through at RES was principal Tiffany Warhurst. Since there wasn't enough money leftover to install a sprinkler system, Warhurst said she, among others, became a part-time landscaper this summer, watering the playground grass to help the project to fruition. Though it required some TLC, Warhurst said she's grateful her students have another fun resource at their disposal.

"When I say it's been a project, it's been a project; but it wouldn't have been made possible without this grant and this funding, so I do want to thank every one of you that had a part in making this decision and helping us because our students are sure enjoying it," she said.

On the way back from viewing the playground, Warhurst introduced the present dignitaries to multiple classrooms where the politicians were able to shake the hands of young future voters and the students were able to thank the legislators and RC&D officials for helping make, arguably, the best class of the day, recess, a little bit better.

Time spent outside on the playground is obviously supposed to be fun for the young students, but Warhurst said it's a time that's also fundamental to their development.

"If you can't reach them, you can't teach them, so I think relationships are very important to our students' learning," she said. "Where they develop a lot of their relationships is when they're out there playing with each other and developing those social skills. Without those social skills they are not going to be able to learn in the classroom, they're not going to cope.

"A lot of our students come from diverse backgrounds," she added. "That's one way they can get out there and connect together outside the classroom."

Adding to that, RCS superintendent Tim Guinn said the renovations at both schools boost pride in the student body, and he believes students' pride in their school and its facilities correlates with students' success in the classroom.

"You want students to take pride in their school building and their school grounds, but in order for them to take pride in it they need to be top quality," Guinn said. "Having school grounds that you're proud of and are taught to take care of goes hand-in-hand with student academic achievement in the classroom. It takes discipline to do both: take care of your stuff and take care of your grades and pride in your academic achievements."

School officials made it clear that the renovations at both schools provide a multitude of benefits, but both are the type of projects that would typically be difficult to consider without outside funding.

"I think it's vitally important," Guinn said. "When we have RC&D and other organizations like it grant us money for things like this, it's things that may take twice, sometimes three times as long to put on a capital outlay plan.

"In our plans we have to prioritize things such as HVAC systems and roofing and things of that nature," he added. "When we have a little money leftover, then we can do some of these other things—fixing up grounds and hallways and painting and that sort of thing. But without these grants, it would take a whole lot longer to get some of these things done."

The final stop was the Franklin County Commission Office, where funding for 14 other projects throughout the county was hailed:

- \$5,500 for robotics kit & electrical safety for the Alabama Retirees Technical Advisory Group
- \$10,000 to Bear Creek Collaborative for an accessible outdoor classroom



- \$7,000 to the Bear Creek Development Authority for its shoreline stabilization project
- \$5,746.80 to the Franklin Co. Technical Response Team for rescue team equipment
- \$6,843.04 to the Franklin Co. Soil & Water Conservation District for Franklin SWCD office furniture
- \$5,000 to the Franklin County Board of Education for Belgreen's sound system
- \$5,000 to the Franklin County Fire & Rescue Association for volunteer firefighter training
- \$6,000 for Automatic External Defibrillators for the Phil Campbell Ambulance Service
- \$5,000 to Phil Campbell High School for its football stadium erosion project
- \$7,500 to the Russellville Fire Department
- \$5,000 to Save Our Strays of Franklin County
- \$5,000 to the Town of Vina for a Town Park Concession Stand
- \$10,000 to Northwest Alabama RC&D Council for weather radios
- \$10,000 to Northwest Alabama RC&D for outreach and organizational assistance

"The ones who receive these grants are very appreciative of it," Moore said. "When you have whoever it is—the fire departments or the towns—receive these grants, it helps the community. It helps the citizens in each community and they're very appreciative of it."

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'FESTIVAL,' From Page 3

all country music is the same after hearing different musicians and styles played during the festival. She listened to L.A. Shepherd at Tradition's Sports Deli on Saturday afternoon and then went to Austin Bohannon's show on the big stage that evening, afterwards praising all the local talent.

"Country music in the U.K. is like Jelly Roll," Coram laughed. "The country music here is really good. It's different."

Coram's education didn't end with music. She said she also enjoyed learning some local and American history, like the fact that Jackson Avenue was named after then-general Andrew Jackson, and, while having a pint at the pub with some new mates, learned that Yeungling is America's oldest brewery.

Although Coram's hometown, like Russellville, is relatively small in population—Shepton Mallet had an estimated population of just under 11,000 in 2019—she said that's where many similarities between the two end. For example:

"There's so much space," she said. "Back home it's very rural, very country and green. But our house is tiny compared to yours and even if we have a bit of a lawn it's nothing compared to your yards."

She said the weather here, in her opinion, is "much nicer," too.

"It's warm and it's not raining," she said. "A British summer is like two nice days of nice weather and then it's raining for two weeks, so it's just gray and miserable. It's been hot, but it's been really good."

She also said that an event like the Watermelon Festival doesn't really happen across the pond.

"We just don't have things like this at all, really, at home," Coram said. "Nothing. They don't have festivals where you close off the entire street. It's just not something we have."

Asked what her favorite experience at the Watermelon Festival was, Coram said it was meeting the locals who validated the South's reputation for charm and hospitality.

"The people are so hospitable and friendly," she said. "Everyone's so friendly and everyone says hello. It's been a really fun time."

"Everything's just been so lovely," she added.

After leaving Russellville Coram said she would head south and perhaps visit some other small towns in Alabama and maybe Georgia, too, before going back into Florida. She hopes to take a line dancing class in Tallahassee and go kayaking in Silver Springs before attending the Coke Zero Sugar 400 race on August 24th. After that it'll be back to merry old England for Coram, but after her experience in the States she said she would love to make a return trip down the road.

"I didn't really have any expectations. I didn't really know what I was coming into. I was just here for the experience and to do something random on a holiday rather than go sit on the beach in Spain or something," Coram said. "I've never come over this way before, and I never really thought I'd come to America, but I really, really enjoy it and I want to come back because it's been so fun. Baseball games I've sort of looked into and I feel like it would be fun to go to other states like Georgia and other places in the South in the future."

Cheers to that, Lizzie



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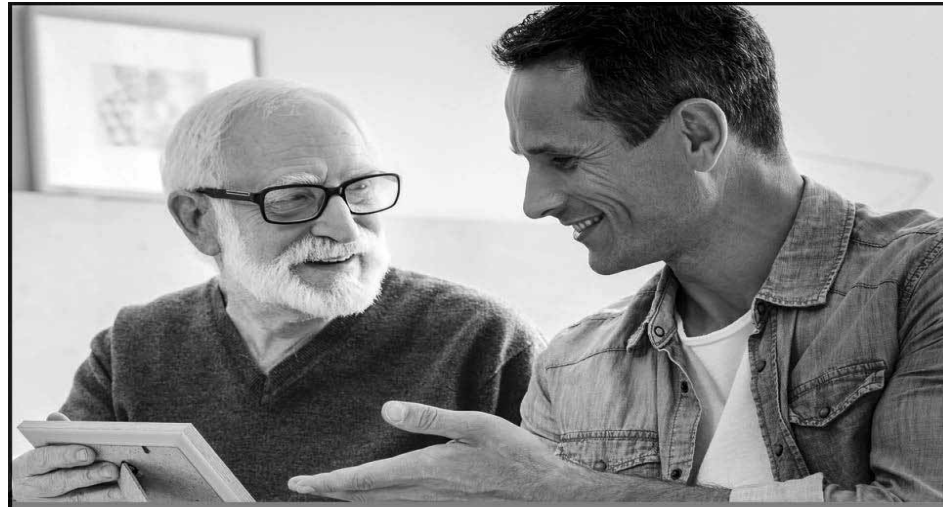
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Belgreen, Russellville and Tharptown set to open football seasons this Friday

*Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press*

Belgreen (0-0) vs. Shoals Christian (0-0)

*Date: Friday, August 23, 2024
 Time: 7 p.m.
 Location: Sparks Stadium
 Last week: N/A*

What to watch: This is Belgreen's first varsity game in program history, and it's the first game to be played in Belgreen's swanky new digs, Sparks Stadium.

Series history: This is the first meeting between these two teams.

Next week: Belgreen travels to Sumiton Christian next Friday for its first away game of the season.

*Phil Campbell (0-0)
 OPEN WEEK*

Next week: The Bobcats start their 2024 campaign at home against Class 4A Hamilton in a non-region contest next Friday. Phil Campbell is 4-26-1 all-time against the Aggies. It will be the first matchup between the two teams since 2005. The Bobcats' last win against Hamilton was in 1986.

See, 'FOOTBALL,' Page 14

Tverberg chosen to lead NWSCC Phil Campbell-based volleyball program

*John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press*

When Northwest Shoals Community College officials announced the return of the women's volleyball program beginning next year, they couldn't have found a coach who fit better than Susie Tverberg.

Tverberg, a full-time Child Development Instructor for NWSCC, was announced as the Patriots' volleyball coach Tuesday morning. The volleyball program will be housed on the Phil Campbell campus with home games played in what will be a newly-renovated gym.

The program will offer 14 scholarships as well as several walk-on opportunities for student athletes. Tverberg said she will primarily recruit in a five-county area, including Franklin, Colbert, Lauderdale, Lawrence and Marion Counties, and there will be a few roster spots for out-of-state student athletes. She will discuss a timeline for hiring an assistant coach with NWSCC officials at a later time, she said. Tverberg, a 1991 NWSCC graduate, is ready to start on the recruiting trail.

"As a high school volleyball official, I know where a lot of the talent is because I've seen it on the court," Tverberg said. "Some of those players come to mind and I definitely want to get in contact with them to see what their plans are and see if they're interested in our program."

"I was a Northwest Viking. I played softball for Coach (Bill) Moss and (Mike) Tice in 1988 and 1989 as a pitcher. Some of my best memories revolve



COURTESY PHOTO

See, 'TVERBERG,' page 12

South Eastern Pro Wrestling having 10th anniversary event in Russellville

*Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press*

Pin this date down: On Saturday, September 7th, South Eastern Pro Wrestling is holding its September to Remember event at the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department's Ralph C. Bishop Community Center.

Twenty wrestlers are slated to appear at the wrestling organization's 10th anniversary event, which begins at 7:30 that evening.

"We started in 2014 and we've really just been going ever since," said South Eastern Pro Wrestling organizer Shane Baker. "We've got a pretty good fan base, and I think we've been doing stuff at the Rec. Center for almost three years."

Since beginning a decade ago, Baker said South Eastern Pro Wrestling has continued to grow in popularity and attract more and more fans in the local area.

"It's definitely grown," he said. "Now there may be 70 (spectators) or 170, just depending."

And it's not just one demographic attending the wrestling matches. Baker said many different people come to view the entertainment.

"It varies. We've got a pretty good older crowd, middle (aged) crowd, young people," he said. "(Diverse) is probably the simplest way to describe it."

Tickets to the event are \$10 with kids five-years-old and younger getting in free. Military personnel also receive a discount, Baker said. A percentage of the tickets sold by the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department goes back to the department for its programs.

"That's just one of the ways we want to give back to the Rec. Center and the youth," Baker

See, 'WRESTLING,' Page 13

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**The average pay for this position is \$44,865.60 – 69,160.00
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'TVERBERG,' From Page 11

around that Phil Campbell campus and all the friends I made there. I felt I was a better person when I left that program and that's what I want for our players—for them to be better players and people who want to serve their community when they finish with their education. I want them to have the same experience and opportunities I was given," Tverberg added.

Tverberg's career in education began with seven years as a Head Start teacher, followed by 20 years with Franklin County Schools. She taught and coached at Tharptown and Belgreen High Schools until January 2023 when she accepted her position at NWSCC.

Tverberg coached softball at Tharptown when the program began competing at the varsity level. She coached volleyball for three years at Belgreen, beginning in 2019. Her teams advanced to regionals each of those seasons.

She's also an experienced Alabama High School Athletic Association high school volleyball and softball official, something she began when she took a one-year break from coaching in 2014.

"Coaching has always been in me. It's something I started straight out of high school coaching youth league teams. I honestly can't remember not coaching, other than the year I stepped away and that's when I became a softball and volleyball official. That's how I was introduced to volleyball and I fell in love with it very quickly," Tverberg said.

NWSCC Athletic Director Taylor Franks said she was excited to offer the job to Tverberg, who she described as a 'great fit' for the program.

"Coach Tverberg is a great fit for what we were looking for in a coach to build and lead our volleyball program. She is a product of Northwest Shoals and knows our community well," Franks said. "She grew up in Franklin County and played softball at Northwest Shoals on the Phil Campbell campus. She's coached softball and volleyball on the high school level and n one knows better than here about how important it is for our area athletes to have an opportunity to compete collegiately and further their education without having to leave home."

Tverberg earned her Bachelor of Science from Athens State University and a Master of Education from the University of West Alabama. She's pursuing her Education Specialist degree from West Alabama and expects to earn that degree this fall.

She plans to build the Patriot volleyball program with the same work ethic Tverberg's shown throughout her educational career.

"Those who know me understand that I am not afraid of hard work. I am fully committed to bringing passion, energy, enthusiasm, a competitive spirit and an unwavering work ethic to the court and recruiting trail every single day," Tverberg said. "Our area has tremendous talent, and I look forward to attending as many games as possible this fall looking for future Patriots."

Tverberg also plans to promote her program to the people of Franklin County as she builds a bond between the county and its collegiate volleyball team.

"They're doing some major renovations there and updating the gymnasium. It's exciting to have those first-class facilities we will be able to utilize and bring the people of Franklin County out to watch us play and get them excited about this level of competition returning to the county," Tverberg said.

"It hurt Franklin County and left an empty feeling when they stopped athletics. We're excited to bring that back to the people of Franklin County and with cross country already there (on the Phil Campbell campus), it's a very exciting time and a very good time for Franklin County," she added.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net! Send your guest columns, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

'WRESTLING,' From Page 11

said. "That's what it's all about—the kids."

The kids and families. Baker said wrestling is supposed to be fun and exciting, but he also hopes the events South Eastern Pro Wrestling put on bring people together.

"In my opinion, wrestling should be entertaining, but it should also create fellowship," he said. "They may not be able to get together but once a month, families. They may not be able to go out but once a month, but I think this is something they can go out and enjoy together."

"If we can put on entertainment for a few hours and people enjoy it and get to see their family and our family, that means a lot to us," Baker added.

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Doors open for the September to Remember 10 Year Anniversary event at 6:30 PM and the bell time is 7:30 PM. Interested individuals can find out more information about the event and tickets by calling 205-544-5315.

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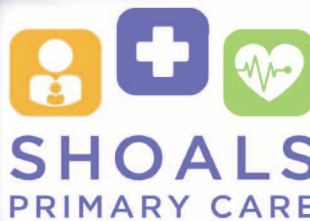
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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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 Friday, August 30, 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.

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

'FOOTBALL,' From Page 11

Red Bay (0-0)
OPEN WEEK

Next week: Red Bay will travel to Lamar County for its season opener next Friday. The non-region game will be the first between the two teams since the Tigers and Bulldogs were in the same region in 2017. Red Bay is 2-7 all-time vs. Lamar County, last beating the Bulldogs in 2011.

Russellville (0-0)
vs. Deshler (0-0)

Date: Friday, August 23, 2024
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Golden Tiger Stadium

Last week: N/A

What to watch: This is Russellville head coach Dustin Goodwin's first game in charge of the Golden Tigers.

Series history: The Golden Tigers hosted Deshler last season, defeating the Tigers 35-13. Russellville holds the slimmest of advantages in the series with a 47-46-4 record against Deshler. The two teams first met all the way back in 1923 (Deshler won 38-0) and have played each other every year since 1988.

Next week: The Golden Tigers travel to 3A Mars Hill in a non-region matchup. Russellville will look to avenge last season's narrow 27-24 home defeat to the Panthers.

Tharptown (0-0)
at Danville (0-0)

Date: Friday, August 23, 2024
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Smith-Owens Stadium

Last week: N/A

What to watch: Tharptown head coach John Johnson is entering his second season with the Wildcats. This will be Tharptown's first opportunity to test the effectiveness of its new offense, a traditional wing-T, which was implemented in the offseason.

Series history: This is the first meeting between the two teams.

Next week: Tharptown will host Waterloo next Friday for its first home game. It is a non-region contest.



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Understanding the risks of AI in the electoral process

John H. Merrill served in the Alabama House of Representatives from 2010-2014 and as Alabama's 53rd Secretary of State from 2015-2023.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has brought significant advancements to various sectors, but its integration into electoral processes has raised concerns regarding its potential negative effects. As countries worldwide deal with the challenges of AI-powered electoral technologies, several crucial issues have emerged that could compromise the fairness and integrity of democratic elections.

AI's ability to harness big data for voter influence is a double-edged sword. It can streamline communication with voters through personalized interactions, offering real-time information on polling locations, candidate platforms, and voting procedures. However, AI also introduces significant risks such as misinformation and disinformation, cybersecurity threats, and bias in decision-making.

AI-driven technologies can amplify misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Advanced AI can generate convincing deepfakes and manipulate media content, blurring the lines between truth and falsehood. This undermines the integrity of political discourse and erodes public trust in electoral processes.

The capability of AI to launch sophisticated cyberattacks poses serious threats to electoral infrastructure. From hacking voting systems to manipulating voter registration databases, AI-driven cyber threats jeopardize the confidentiality and accuracy of election results. Additionally, the widespread use of AI in electoral campaigns involves collecting and analyzing large amounts of voter data, giving rise to substantial privacy concerns. Sensitive personal information can be misused by political entities or malicious actors.

Despite their sophistication, AI algorithms are not immune to biases inherent in the data they are trained on. In the election process, this could manifest as biased algorithms that unfairly impact specific demographic groups, potentially leading to voter suppression. These algorithms can unfairly influence voter behavior, highlighting the need for clear ethical guidelines and careful oversight to ensure responsible AI use.

AI algorithms that optimize campaign strategies based on voter preferences may unintentionally strengthen political extremes. By categorizing voters into increasingly narrow demographic groups, AI could worsen societal divisions and diminish opportunities for constructive dialogue and compromise. This polarization undermines the democratic ideal of inclusive governance and consensus-building across diverse perspectives.

Addressing the adverse effects of AI in electoral processes requires strong regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines. Current laws and regulations often trail technological advancements, leaving electoral systems vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation. Ethical considerations, such as transparency in AI decision-making processes and accountability for algorithmic outcomes, are crucial for maintaining and restoring public trust in democratic institutions. This is a pressing issue that demands immediate attention.

While AI has the potential to improve efficiency and engagement in electoral processes, its negative effects cannot be overlooked. From manipulation and bias to privacy risks and polarization, the unregulated use of AI technologies poses significant threats to the fairness and integrity of democratic elections. Policymakers, election officials, and civil society must work together to mitigate these risks and ensure that AI is used responsibly to uphold democratic principles and safeguard electoral integrity in the digital age.



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\$500,000 grant to be used to update Russellville Police Department vehicle fleet

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the United States Department of Justice, the City of Russellville will soon purchase new vehicles to replace much of the existing fleet of high-mileage vehicles in the Russellville Police Department.

The Russellville City Council approved the grant award at its August 19th meeting, where Mayor David Grissom expressed his appreciation to Sen. Tommy Tuberville for making the grant possible.

"I want to thank Senator Tuberville for that (\$500,000) earmark to be used for purchase of new police vehicles," Grissom said. "Without his support, this would not be happening."

RPD Chief Chris Hargett said the department would purchase six new Dodge Durango police vehicles for patrol officers, a Dodge pickup truck and a Ford Explorer for the city investigators and a Ford F250 truck to be used by the department's compliance officer.

In other agenda items, the council:

--approved the recommendation of Hargett to hire Timothy Balcom as a police officer. Balcom previously worked for RPD before resigning several years ago.

--amended a contract with David Michael, Independent Contractor, to pay Michael \$50/hour rather than the previously-approved contractual payment method based on the total tonnage of asphalt used to repave and improve City of Russellville streets. Michael is serving as supervisor and quality control inspector for the City of Russellville's Project Number RCP 2024-25, a large-scale citywide paving project. The amendment is retroactive to July 1, 2024, the original start date of the contract.

The next meeting of the Russellville City Council will be September 3, 2024, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

Silver Canyon Group acquires Franklin Homes

Submitted

Silver Canyon Group today announces the acquisition of Franklin Homes (From Franklin Structures- C3 Design).

For over 50-years, Franklin Homes has produced manufactured homes, modular residential, and multifamily buildings. The company was founded by Jerry James over 50-years ago and is known for its quality and service. Bobby Killingsworth, previously the President and CEO of the Fulcrum Building Group in the Alabama/Florida panhandle will take the lead as President at Franklin Homes and Blake Jackson, currently the company's sales lead, will be promoted to General Manager.

"Franklin Homes has an impressive history of high quality and value in their homes, and we are very excited to be part of the future of providing affordable housing with Franklin," Killingsworth said.

Silver Canyon plans to support the innovation and growth of the company to include additional plants.

Tim Kelleher, managing partner of Silver Canyon, said the private equity firm "waited for the right opportunity to invest manufactured and modular home sector" and said the firm is "very excited to be working with the management and team to grow Franklin Homes."

The private equity investment firm has invested over \$1 billion in 50+ companies over 30+ years.

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