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## Russellville Electric Board officially accepts Canida retirement, approves job description for position and authorizes sale of \$85,000 Yukon Denali

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

At a special called meeting held August 30th, the Russellville Electric Board unanimously accepted the retirement of general manager Charles Canida effective November 1, 2024.

Additionally, the board approved a job description for the GM position and authorized REB attorney Jeff Bowling to advertise the position through September 30, 2024.

The board also unanimously approved declaring Canada's \$85,000 GMC Yukon Denali as surplus property and authorized adver-

tising taking sealed bids for the vehicle through September 30, 2024.

As of August 30th, Canida remains in possession of the Denali, though according to one board member, that is 'expected to change' in the near future.

Canida did not attend Friday's REB meeting.

Qualifications for the new GM include a degree in Engineering, Business, Accounting, Finance or other equivalent college degree along with at least 5-10 years' experience in public utility management with increasing responsibility.

This is a significant deviation from the process that saw Canida get

See 'REB,' Page 4

## Russellville Library Board approves policy changes to comply with new state regulations regarding explicit materials

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Public Library has completed the process of complying with new regulations in the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) Administrative Code that are a prerequisite for public libraries to receive FY2025 state aid.

The Russellville Library Board approved a policy that complies with the new regulations at its August meeting.

The APLS began accepting updat-

ed policies from Alabama public libraries on September 1st. APLS held workshops to assist library boards and librarians who have questions regarding the new policies.

The new policies reflect language in HB385, a bill introduced in the 2024 Alabama General Legislative Session. Although HB385 didn't pass, it is expected to make a return next year with a strong likelihood of becoming law.

Essentially, the bill would eliminate the exemption from state obscenity

See 'LIBRARIES,' Page 9

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**Ronald Alan Gilbert, Age 59 of Russellville, passed away, Thursday August 29, 2024. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.**

**Gus G. Garrard, 82, of Russellville, passed away on August 29, 2024. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.**

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# Baldwin named ACCA legislative delegate for Franklin County

Submitted

Franklin County Commissioner Joseph Baldwin has been elected to serve as a member of the 2024-2025 Legislative Committee of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA), the statewide association representing Alabama's 67 county governments.

The Association's Legislative Committee is composed of a chairman and a representative from each county. Commissioner Baldwin will represent the interests of Franklin County on the committee and work in concert with six steering committees to formulate the Association's legislative agenda for the 2025 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature.

"Counties are a creation of the State, which means they can only do what the State authorizes them to do," said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director. "For this reason, counties must maintain an incredibly close working relationship with the Legislature, which is why serving on this committee is a tremendous honor and responsibility."

The Association of County Commissions of Alabama is a statewide organization speaking for all 67 counties with ONE voice. It promotes improved county government services in Alabama, offers educational programs for county officials and their staff members, administers insurance programs for county governments and employees, offers legal advice, and represents the interests of county government before state and federal organizations and agencies.



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## 'REB,' From Page 1

hired as GM in December 2012, when he went from Chairman of the Russellville Electric Board to making more than \$100,000 as GM at the same meeting.

Canida's hiring, according to some, violated Alabama's 'Revolving Door' provisions of the state's ethics laws. Those provisions prohibit certain activities by public officials and public employees for a period of two years after leaving their public employment.

After he resigned as board chairman, Canida was hired as GM minutes later at the same meeting.

Former REB member Darren Woodruff, who was appointed by the Russellville City Council to fill Canida's vacated spot on the board in 2013, turned Canida and the board into the Alabama Ethics

Commission several years later after he learned the action may have been a violation of the Revolving Door Act.

The response from the Ethics Commission was that too much time had elapsed from the 2012 meeting where Canida was hired and any prosecution was barred by the statute of limitations, Woodruff said.

Canida's 2012 hiring was done without the board ever advertising the position or conducting interviews.

Canida's compensation package, including retirement, vehicle, expenses, travel, sick leave, annual leave, bonuses, conferences, telephone and other benefits soars beyond \$200,000 each year.

When Canida used ratepayer funds to purchase a luxury SUV Yukon Denali for \$85,000, it was only months after the board bought Canida a new SUV, one Canida claimed had warranty issues that could not be repaired.

In a mailer sent out to all REB customers in 2023, signed by the Russellville Electric Board, it was alleged the luxury Denali cost ratepayers only \$14,000. That assertion was met with sharp criticism from some ratepayers, who believed the upgrade was an unnecessary expense to begin with.

According to a source familiar with the REB, board members considered moving up Canida's retirement date from November 1, 2024, but chose not to do so due to the length of time required for him to file paperwork and complete the retirement process with Retirement Systems of Alabama.

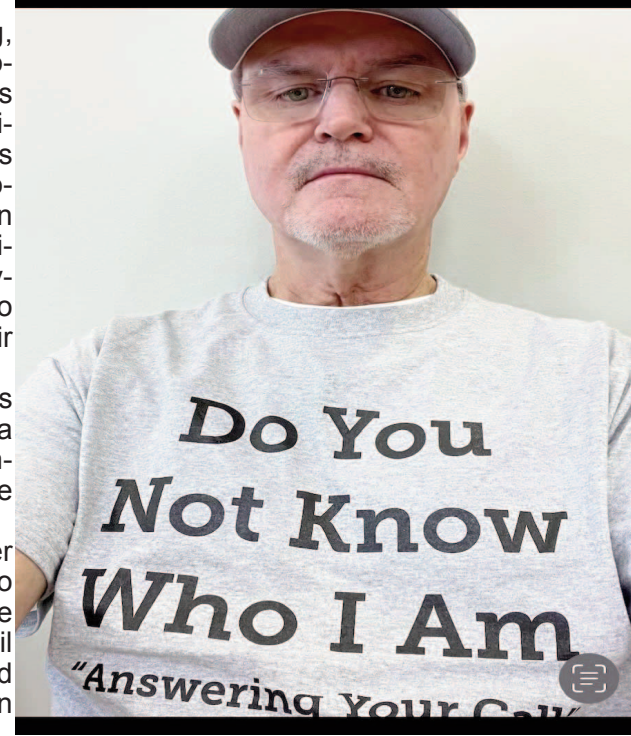
"Was it considered? Yes. But feasible? No. There are documents from RSA that must go back and forth and it's a drawn out process that's longer than we realized," the source said. "If that 65-day period could be accelerated, it would only be by very little. We as a board feel 60 days is adequate."

The board did not name an interim manager, although Canida is expected to use his accrued sick leave days prior to November 1st because REB employees do not get paid for sick days once they are no longer working.

Canida will be compensated for all remaining annual leave days as of his retirement date, the source confirmed.

The next meeting of the Russellville Electric Board will be Tuesday, September 17th at 6 p.m., at the Electric Board Warehouse. No special meeting is scheduled, but that could change if the board decides one is necessary.

The FFP previously reported Canida told board members he was retirement based on medical issues and due to Canida and his wife raising a young grandchild they have custody of



Canida

# Commission approves vacating right-of-way located off Highway 24 West

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved the vacating of an unnamed right-of-way located behind Eddie Hicks' Body Shop on Highway 24.

At its August 19th meeting, commissioners held a public meeting to receive citizen input about the petition to vacate filed by Eddie Hicks.

After the public meeting, the commission approved the request at its business meeting.

The short right-of-way is located north of the body shop on a parcel of land and is not used by the public.

In other agenda items, the commission:

--approved the date of September 4, 2024, at 5 p.m., for a cutoff for all purchase orders for the current fiscal year.

--approved the resignation of Payton Ray, a temporary employee in the Franklin County Highway Department, effective August 8th.

--approved the resignation of temporary probate clerk Jenae Vicente, effective August 9th.

--approved the hiring of Charles Adcox as a part-time, as needed corrections officer/dispatcher effective July 21st.

--approved the resignation of Collin James as deputy effective July 23rd.

--approved the resignation of School Resource Officer Sammie Washington effective July 19th.

--approved a Memorandum of Agreement with the Franklin County School system for School Resource Officer Charles Hamby.

--tabled an appointment on the Franklin County Water Authority.

--reappointed Jimmy Berry to the Franklin E911 Board and tabled the appointment of a second vacancy on the board.

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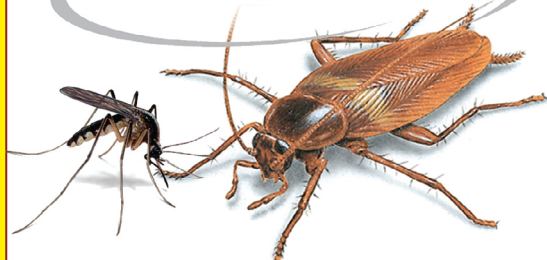
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 **N**orth Russellville Baptist Church presents the second annual October Youth Fest, Sunday, Oct. 6th, 5 p.m.-until. Guest speaker will be Shannon Knight. Praise and Worship by Dustin Richardson, Dry Bones Revived and Jacob Feltman. Drama by the Bethel 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](mailto:Lashanda.elliott@valleygrove.com). Last day to RSVP is August 25th.

 **T**he 2nd annual Jagger's Journey Poker Run is set for Saturday, Sept. 14. Get ready for an exciting day of riding and fun at the Poker Run event in support of Jagger's Journey Foundation. Enjoy a scenic ride with multiple stops to draw cards and build your poker hand. The best hands at the end of the run win a cash prize. All proceeds go directly to Jagger's Journey Foundation, supporting pediatric patients undergoing treatment for Aplastic Anemia and related rare diseases. Visit [www.jaggersjourney.net](http://www.jaggersjourney.net) for more details.

 **T**he annual Oka Kapassa Native American Festival is set for Friday-Saturday September 13-14 at Spring Park in Tuscumbia. American Indian culture takes center stage with storytelling, dancing, music, arts, crafts and a torch lighting ceremony. Over a dozen American Indian tribes return to their southeastern homeland for this special event. Saturday is open to everyone from 9-6, with free admission. Friday is 'School Day' from 8-2:30 p.m., primarily for school children. For more details, contact Terry McGee, Oka Kapassa Festival Chairman, at 256-757-4438.

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# Cano crowned 2025 Franklin County Distinguished Young Woman

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The annual Northwest Alabama Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program was recently held on August 17, 2024, at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama.

23 young women from Colbert, Franklin, and Lauderdale counties competed in scholastics, interview, fitness, talent and self-expression categories. One participant from each county was selected to represent her county at the state program which will be held in January 2025. Participants compete based on the county in which they live.



Kimberly Cano was selected as Franklin County's 2025 Distinguished Young Woman. She is the daughter of Hugo and Irma Lily Cano. Kimberly won the scholastics and self-expression categories. She also won the "Be Your Best Self" Essay Contest.

Lara Gunderman of Phil Campbell High School won Second Alternate for Franklin County. Lara is the daughter of Gary Gunderman and Amy and Tim McCollum.

First Alternate for Franklin County was awarded to Ella Goggans of Russellville High School. Ella is the daughter of Neal and Pam Taylor. She won first in the fitness and talent categories.

Colbert County's 2025 Distinguished Young Woman is Ella Colagross of Russellville High School. Her parents are John and Brea Colagross. Ella also won the scholastics, fitness and talent categories.

Second Alternate for Colbert County is Ella Garrett of Muscle Shoals High School. Her parents are Clint and Robyn Garrett.

First Alternate was awarded to Callie Bowling of Muscle Shoals High School. Callie is the daughter of Kevin and Christi Bowling. She placed first in the self-expression category. She also won the "Be Your Best Self" Essay Contest.

Lauderdale County's 2025 Distinguished Young Woman is Claire Retherford of Lexington High School. Claire is the daughter of Joel Retherford and Amanda Jean. She won the self-expression category.

pictured left to right: Ella Colagross, Kimberly Cano, Claire Retherford

Lauren Sutherland of Mars Hill Bible School won Second Alternate for Lauderdale County. Lauren is the daughter of Josh and Danielle Sutherland. Lauren also won the Spirit of Distinguished Young Women Award Scholarship.

Lauderdale County's First alternate went to Amy DeGroote of Florence High School. Amy is the daughter of Bradley and Genna DeGroote. Amy won the scholastics category. Izzie Gren of Florence High School won Lauderdale counties fitness and talent categories. She is the daughter of Dr. Cameron and Mrs. Lori Hollandsworth-Gren.

For more information on scholarship opportunities for young women in this area, please contact Susan Hargett @ 256-710-9239 or Katernia Cole Coffey @ 256-332-8880.

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# County Commission approves new contract for municipal solid waste transfer, disposal while leaving rate hike consideration to new commission

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

At a special called meeting Thursday morning, the Franklin County Commission approved a five-year contract with Republic Morris Farm to transport and dispose of household waste collected at the Franklin County Landfill Transfer Station.

The contract will cost the county \$53.60 per ton of municipal solid waste. That includes transporting the solid waste from the Franklin County Landfill to Republic Morris Farms Landfill in Hillsboro, a facility approved by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to collect municipal solid waste.

The new contract begins October 1, 2024. The current contract, which ends on September 30, 2024, includes a \$30.48 per ton transport and disposal cost, so that amount will almost double starting in October.

Republic Morris Farm entered into a three-year contract with the Franklin County Commission in 2018 at the \$30.48/ton rate and the parties agreed to a three-year rollover at the same cost in 2021.

The other item on Thursday's agenda was consideration of an increased fee schedule for all residential and commercial garbage collection, as well as increases in the per ton cost of construction and demolition debris, limbs, etc, transported to the landfill by county residents.

Franklin County Solid Waste Manager Gene Ward said an increase is necessary due to the significant increase in disposing of municipal solid waste the county will soon incur. He proposed increasing residential monthly garbage fees to \$25, \$15 for an extra can, and a \$5 late fee. Ward requested that all dumpster fees increase \$30/month. Current costs are \$110 for four-yard dumpsters, \$140 for six-yard dumpsters and \$170 for eight-yard dumpsters.

Ward also requested an increase in the per ton cost for debris transported to the landfill by county residents from \$25/ton to \$35/ton.

Residential monthly garbage costs of \$15 have not increased since 2005, Ward said.

But the commission voted 4-0 to table any consideration of fee increases until November 2024. The significance of that date is the new Franklin County Commission will be in office starting with the November 2024 meeting.

New commissioners Tracie Clark and Greg Hovater will join Joseph Baldwin and the winner of the District One general election between Republican Michael Murray and Democrat Charles Mitchell on the commission.

Ward urged commissioners to go ahead and approve the cost increases. Otherwise, the county will begin paying \$53.60 per ton for municipal solid waste on October 1st without any corresponding revenue increase.

"If we don't do something soon, we'll have to shut down the transfer station," Ward said. "We can't keep taking garbage from other entities if we're not going to go up on our cost."

But outgoing commissioners Chris Wallace, Jason Miller and David Hester believe any decision on rate increases should be made by the new commission, as they will be the ones in office.

"They may have some other ideas on what should be done and how to address these issues going forward," Wallace said. "It makes sense to allow them to make these decisions."

Wallace said he voted to approve the new contract because there would be no process in place to transport municipal solid waste beginning in October.

For Ward and his department, though, the commission's approval of a new contract with significant increase to the county, combined with no action to increase fees charged to residents and businesses, means the Solid Waste Department will begin a new fiscal year with a significant shortfall in the budget.

Approximately 18-20 loads of municipal solid waste are transported each week from the Franklin County Landfill Transfer Station to Republic Morris Farms. The transfer station receives garbage not only from Franklin County, but the towns of Hackleburg, Phil Campbell, Red Bay and Russellville.

"It's a difficult position for sure. I hope to see a resolution soon. We're going to have to get something done very soon," Ward said.

Hovater, who will take office as District Two Commissioner in November, and Murray attended Thursday's meeting. The new commission term will begin on Wednesday, November 13th.

Hovater expressed his concern about the current commission approving a new contract with significantly increased costs while tabling any vote on fee increases.

"It's really a disservice to the county because they voted to accept a new contract and then allowed the county to lose money for however long it takes for us to get into office," Hovater said. "And there is a risk the landfill would have to close down as a result. It puts the county in a difficult situation."

The incoming commission, at the earliest, would be able to approve a fee increase after November 13th.

"Even if we (approve) an increase in November, it won't go into effect until the next billing cycle, so we'll be paying to haul garbage for at least two months," Hovater said.



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# 'LIBRARIES,' From Page 1

laws for Alabama public libraries and K-12 public school libraries. The bill prohibits any access to minors of books deemed to violate 'contemporary community standards.'

The bill provided for criminal penalties for library employees or agents, ranging from a Class C misdemeanor to a Class A misdemeanor, in cases where they received notice of material deemed to be obscene and have failed to remove it within seven days.

The new APLS Chapter 520-2-2, Supplemental State Aid to Public Libraries, places certain requirements on all public libraries and public library systems that must be complied with in order to qualify for state aid.

Those requirements include establishing written policies for materials selection, including selection criteria for minors and how they will be safeguarded from sexually explicit or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth.

Libraries must approve a physical location within the library for any sexually explicit or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth. Additionally, each library board must approve a policy to approve, in advance, any materials recommended, displayed or otherwise actively promoted to youth.

Written guidelines must be in place to ensure library sections accessible to minors remain free of material containing obscenity, sexually explicit, or other material deemed in appropriate for children or youth. Age appropriate materials regarding religion, history, biology, or human anatomy should not be construed to be against this rule.

The board also approved written guidelines that establish library cards for minors under age 18 that include parental approval before a card is permitted to be used to check out materials from the library's adult section.

Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) supported HB385 and he's defended criticism that the bill violates First Amendment free speech protection and would create an atmosphere of fear for Alabama public librarians if passed.

"It's intended to allow parents to trust their local library," Kiel told the FFP in July. "We have great libraries here. But parents should be able to trust that their child, when they go to a local library, is not being exposed to books that contain explicit sexual content.

"Someone needs to know what the context is of books and materials we are distributing to our children. And I think we're already doing that. Would a reasonable person find the material, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. If it does, it would be deemed harmful to minors," Kiel added.

Russellville Public Library Executive Director Joshlyn Bowen and her staff have removed all books that may violate the new regulations and placed them in a restricted area accessible only to patrons 18 and older.

Library staff removed all questionable content from the young adult fiction section. The materials were either removed from library inventory or moved to the adult fiction (over 18) section.

The Russellville Public Library has more than 31,000 books on the shelves. The young adult fiction section is for ages 13-17, and an adult fiction section now exists for ages 18 and over. Books in the adult fiction section are not available for minors to borrow without prior approval from parent or guardian.

Even with the new APLS regulations, access to certain materials deemed 'harmful to minors' can still be accessed online through Libby, an app that allows users to borrow books through a digital format on a smart phone or tablet.

And some materials removed from Alabama public library shelves also remain on shelves at bookstores or department stores with no mechanism in place for age restrictions.

The new regulations also require Alabama public libraries to be open at least 30 hours per week for cities, including Russellville, with populations from 10,000-24,999.



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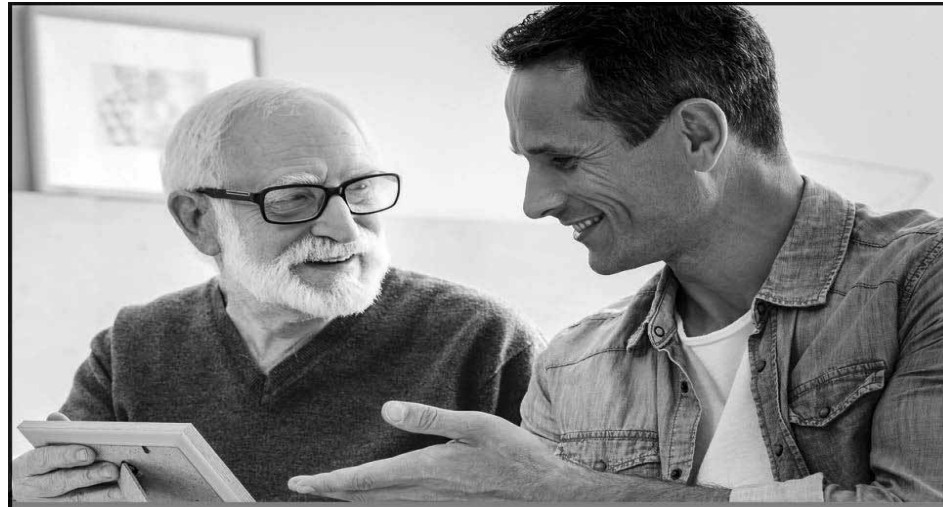
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## Week 2 features first matchup of Franklin County teams

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

Belgreen (1-1)  
 at Tharptown (0-2)

Date: Friday, September 6, 2024  
 Time: 7 p.m.  
 Location: Tharptown Stadium

Last week: After a historic win at home in their season opener, Belgreen couldn't recreate similar magic in its first road game against Sumiton Christian. The Bulldogs were defeated 49-18.

What to watch: Coming off a loss, Belgreen could set the tone early in a matchup that could become a great football rivalry in Franklin County.

Series history: This is the first meeting between Belgreen and Tharptown.

Next week: **BYE**

Phil Campbell (0-1)  
 vs. Vinemont (2-0)

Date: Friday, September 6, 2024

See, 'WEEK 2,' Page 14

## Former Golden Tiger Williams thriving as part of UNA football program

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

Many high school student-athletes, regardless of the sport they compete in, dream of doing it at the collegiate ranks. However, relatively few ever get the opportunity to pursue those dreams at the NCAA level.

One former local football standout, though, has been able to live out his dream of playing college football, and he's been able to do it close to home.

Former Russellville High School football player Ashaad Williams is a red-shirt junior for the North Alabama football program and has seen significant action with the Lions since he joined the team after graduating from Russellville in 2021. As a Golden Tiger, Williams was named all-area defensive back four times and, as a senior, helped Russellville win a Class 5A Region 8 title on its way to an appearance in the playoff quar-



WILLIAMS

COURTESY PHOTO

See, 'WILLIAMS,' page 12

## Mars Hill drops Golden Tigers 28-14, improving to 3-0 all time against Russellville

Kadin Pounders  
 Franklin Free Press

Sometimes a team just has an opponent's number. The Russellville High School varsity football team, for the third year in-a-row, fell prey to the Mars Hill Bible School Panthers on Friday night, losing 28-14 as the Golden Tigers dropped to 0-3 all-time against the Class 3A private school.

Russellville (1-1), after defeating Deshler in come-from-behind fashion in its season opener, couldn't repeat the feat against Mars Hill (2-0) in game two. The Golden Tigers were able to lean on a dominant running game against Deshler, but Mars Hill, if not able to stop him completely, focused on containing Russellville's top offensive weapon. Junior running back Cameron Phinizee, who finished the game with around 150 yards rushing against the Panthers—still no number to sneeze at—was held to less than half his total production from the previous week.

"Credit to them for doing some of the things they were able to do to disrupt our run game," first-year Russellville head coach Dustin Goodwin said. "They're really good in the box and forced us to throw the ball some. Fortunately we were able to do that some but not well enough to open enough running lanes and score as many points as we'd like."

The Golden Tigers, playing with two quarterbacks at the moment—freshman Whit Goodwin and sophomore Tripp Cleveland—have yet to create much of an aerial threat thus far this season. However, Russellville's passing game hasn't been totally impotent through two games; both Goodwin and Cleveland have one passing touchdown each to their credit.

Some of Russellville's offensive woes against the Panthers Goodwin placed on himself. "There were some calls I'd like to take back, but hindsight's 20/20," said Goodwin, who calls

See, 'RUSSELLVILLE,' Page 13

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## 'WILLIAMS,' From Page 11

terfinals.

As a Lion, Williams has seen more and more of the field each year. As a freshman defensive back he played in all 11 games for UNA and as a sophomore his production jumped significantly; Williams finished the year with 22 tackles, including 15 solo tackles, and he recorded 3.5 tackles for loss. At the end of last year's campaign he really came on strong, recording a career-high seven tackles, and against the No. 4 Florida State Seminoles he added five tackles and a forced fumble.

UNA, as a team, hasn't seen quite as much success on the field—the Lions have gone 18-40 since making the leap from Division II to Division I in 2018—but Williams feels that the current cohort of players under third-year head coach Brent Dearmon will be the ones to take the next leap forward.

"With Coach Dearmon and under his direction and with his staff, I definitely feel like we're the team and the group of guys that are supposed to change things around here," Williams said. "I feel like we kinda did that last year in a small way, but we didn't always get the job done. But this year I definitely feel like we're going to change things around here."

Transforming the UNA football program at the Division I level may be a tad tougher than how Williams described his transition from high school to college ball. Williams credited his time in the Golden Tigers' football program for making his pathway to the next level smoother.

"Coach (Paul) Czervionke coached me and he coached a lot of my uncles and cousins and stuff like that. He really helped me a lot. I'd say he was the one coach that really helped me the most," Williams said. "Another thing was the strength and conditioning we had at Russellville. You know, the weight room and the field, it's some of the nicest in the state of Alabama. I think just those things and the condition we had, that really helped out a lot and was a big plus in helping me transition to the next level."

Of course, there were some bumps early. The biggest difference, Williams said, was the mental approach and preparation.

"It hasn't changed too much if you know the game. I love football and this is all I've wanted to do since I was in middle school," he said. "I think the biggest thing for me is...this is really like a job. You've gotta treat it like a job, and you've got to take it real serious. If you don't take it real serious and prioritize then it'll definitely get away from you."

Now as an older player on the team, Williams said he tries to impart that information on recent high school grads coming into the squad.

"That's one thing I tell the young guys when they come in. They come in and think it's like high school, but you've gotta come in and buckle up," he said. "You've got to mature. That's the toughest thing—treating it like a real job."

As Williams matures as a player at UNA, it's not just his mentality and his approach that has gotten stricter but also his expectations for himself. Going into his junior season, Williams has set his sights higher for what he, as an individual, can accomplish.

"I really just want to add those accolades on to the work that I'm putting in," he said. "I want to be an all-conference guy, an all-American. Those are really some of my goals that I'm shooting for this season that'll help me get to the next level and stuff like that."

Whatever happens on the field for Williams and the Lions this year and in the future, he said he is blessed to have the opportunity to continue his playing career in college, and his advice to others seeking the same dream he had is to never give up.

"Never give up. Don't quit. Don't ever let someone tell you what you can or can't do," he said. "At one point I was that kid in high school... going into my senior year I was wondering what I was going to do for the rest of my life. God blessed me with the chance to keep playing the game, and I'm so thankful for that. So, just never give up. Whatever you want to do, as long as you put your mind to it and put the work into it, you can do it."

# 'RUSSELLVILLE,' From Page 11

the offensive plays for the Golden Tigers. "That's part of it. I'll get better, too."

Host Mars Hill got off to a brilliant start, scoring on its opening possession of the game, but Russellville didn't back down. The Golden Tigers answered with a score of their own—a one-yard run by Phinizee—in the second quarter to tie it up, but the Panthers would retake the lead before the half with another touch-down.

In the second half, Russellville pushed into the red zone and tied it up again 14-14 after freshman quarterback Whit Goodwin, on a quick pass to the outside, found receiver Gunner Sappington, who ran it into the endzone from around 10 yards out.

However, Mars Hill retook the lead later in the third quarter to make it 21-14. The Golden Tigers had another chance to equalize, but a sack fumble by quarterback Goodwin late squashed the opportunity. The Panthers took advantage and scored on the ensuing possession to double their lead. The Russellville head coach again took part of the responsibility for the turnover.

"That was one of the things I made a mistake on," he said. "I put our guys in a bad situation and they had the right defense called for what we tried to run and it didn't work out for us. Unfortunately, that happens sometimes."

Despite the loss, Goodwin said he felt his team—and Golden Tiger fans—gave it all they had on the road.

"I thought we played extremely hard, and that's something we've seen a lot of," he said. "I'm really proud of them for that and their great effort. They laid their body on the line, but unfortunately we didn't do quite enough to make as many plays as the other side. We'll work to get better at that."

"It was a great environment. The fans showed up and cheered us on well," he added. "We just came up short, and we didn't do everything we needed to do to be successful and win, myself included."

Russellville opens up region play in its next game against Lawrence County next Friday.


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

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# 'WEEK 2,' From Page 11

Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Parrish Stadium

Last week: Phil Campbell opened its season at home against Hamilton. The Bobcats lost to the Aggies 55-40.

What to watch: The Bobcats didn't get the result they wanted against Hamilton last week, but look for Phil Campbell to come out of the gates fast against region foe Vinemont this week. It'll be important for the Bobcats to get off to a good start in a tough region.

Series history: The Bobcats are 2-0 all-time against the Eagles. The two previous meetings were in 2000 and 2001, when Phil Campbell won 17-0 and 28-14, respectively.

Next week: Phil Campbell travels to Oakman next Friday for its second region contest of the season.

Red Bay (0-1)  
vs. University Charter School (0-1)

Date: Friday, September 6, 2024  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Tiger Stadium

Last week: Red Bay traveled to Lamar County for its season opener, falling 50-32 to the Bulldogs.

What to watch: Red Bay knew its matchup against Lamar County would be tough—and it was. Still, with a new quarterback, the Tigers were able to put up quite a few points against the Bulldogs. The same should be true against UCS and don't expect the Trail Blazers to put up 50.

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

Next week: Red Bay begins region play next Friday, traveling to Winston County.

Russellville (1-1)  
at Lawrence County (2-0)

Date: Friday, September 6, 2024  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Red Devil Stadium

Last week: The Golden Tigers' first road test of the season ended in a disappointing 28-14 loss at one of Class 3A's top teams, Mars Hill. A two touchdown swing in the second half following a Russellville turnover put the Golden Tigers behind the eight ball late, and the visitors were unable to recover. It was Russellville's third loss to Mars Hill in as many years.

What to watch: No doubt Russellville and first-year head coach Dustin Goodwin will want to get back to winning ways after a disappointing defeat at Mars Hill last week. Based on Goodwin's comments in the past and what happened last week, it can be expected that Whit Goodwin and Tripp Cleveland will continue splitting duties at quarterback. After what could be described as a "quiet week" for Cameron Phinizee running the ball against Mars Hill, expect the Golden Tigers to try to reestablish dominance on the ground in their region opener.

Series history: The Golden Tigers own a 26-5 series advantage over Lawrence County. Russellville and Lawrence County have met every year since 2010 when the two became region mates. In the last 14 region games against the Red Devils, the Golden Tigers have lost just once, in 2017, when LCHS won 25-6 at Golden Tiger Stadium.

Next week: Russellville will be on the road for the third straight week, traveling to region rival East Limestone in Athens.

Tharptown (0-2)  
vs. Belgreen (1-1)

Date: Friday, September 6, 2024  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Tharptown Stadium

Last week: After suffering a 68-0 shutout at Danville in the season opener, Tharptown stiffened up on defense a little more at home vs. Waterloo last week, allowing 34 points. However, the Wildcat offense was still unable to get into the endzone, extending their scoring drought.

What to watch: After a dismal start to the season for the Wildcats, Tharptown would like nothing more than to beat the Belgreen team that players said in the summer they were most looking forward to playing. Given that enthusiasm for this matchup, expect it to be a hard-fought game.

Series history: This is the first meeting between Tharptown and Belgreen.

Next week: BYE

Vina (1-0)  
at Phillips Bear Creek (0-1)


Date: Friday, September 6, 2024  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: James E. Glass Stadium

Last week: Vina picked up a thrilling 52-44 home victory over Brindlee Mountain that needed five overtimes to decide the winner. It was the program's first win in a season opener since 2016.

What to watch: Vina has the opportunity to go 2-0 to start the season for the first time since 2016, and they'll get the chance to do it against a top region rival. Red Devils head coach Cody Renfrow said Vina will use its season-opening overtime win as a confidence booster, but there's no lack of motivation on his team for beating Phillips. Like last week, look for Vina to try to establish its running game and wear down the Bears.

Series history: This will be the 65th meeting between Vina and Phillips, making it the Red Devils' second-longest running rivalry behind Hackleburg. This series dates back to 1949 and the two teams have played every year since 1996. Vina is 17-47 against the Bears with its last win in this matchup an 8-7 road victory in 2019.

Next week: Vina returns home to Franklin-Hester Stadium for a region game against Shoals Christian.



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# Red Devils win thrilling four-overtime classic in season opener

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

There are few things in sports more exciting than the prospect of overtime football. Fans of the game aren't generally dismissive of more football, and the do-or-die nature of OT can get the adrenaline racing in anyone with a beating heart.

For the Vina High School varsity football team, a thrilling, four overtime win over a bigger school in the season opener just might be what the Red Devils need to get new life pumped into the program—and that's just what the football gods prescribed on Friday night.

Facing the Class 3A Brindlee Mountain Lions (0-2) at Franklin-Hester Stadium, the Vina Red Devils (1-0) started the game well, took a small lead into halftime, survived a scare and got a huge defensive stop at the end of regulation, and then, ultimately, battled through multiple overtime periods to defeat the visitors 52-44.

Vina second-year head coach Cody Renfrow said it was the first step in changing how the outside regards the programs.

"We talked all week about changing the reputation of our program," Renfrow said. "I told them at halftime, being up 14-12, not to be too excited and proud of what we were doing. If they want to change the reputation of Vina then we have to finish. Going into overtime, I relayed to them pretty much the same message. It's a great opportunity to change the reputation and to do it we've got to go out there and finish."

And finish is what the Red Devils did in overtime—though it took a few tries. Tied 28-28 at the end of regulation, Vina had a chance to end it in the first overtime period but stopped short of the goal line. Three overtime periods and three rushing touchdowns later, however, the Red Devils were able to manage the vital stop, too, and emerged victorious.

Senior running back Trevor Baker scored all three touchdowns for the Red Devils in OT, and played a huge role on both sides of the ball for Vina in the win.

"Trevor got stronger as the game went on," Renfrow said. "In the past he's had issues with cramping and staying hydrated and hasn't been able to play a full game. Well he finally did play a full game (on Friday) and it showed. He scored the three touchdowns in overtime, and he was big for us, not just on offense but on defense, too."

Baker, just one of the key contributors for the Red Devils, in addition to his three touchdowns, ended the game with 18 rushes for 120 yards and three catches for 30 yards, plus six tackles on defense. Senior quarterback Christian McCarley threw for 115 yards and three touchdowns, rushed for over 40 yards, and added a pick on the defensive side. McCarley's three touchdown passes went to senior Tristan Farr (2) and freshman Branson Vick.

On the defensive side, senior Cai Lawler was a force, leading the team in tackles in addition to his offensive contributions.

Aside from getting the win, Renfrow said the fight his team displayed in the overtime periods was just as gratifying.

"Both teams played their hearts out, and I hated a team had to lose that game," Renfrow said. "But I think if we had to go through eight or 10 overtimes, our team wouldn't have shown any quit. We were bound and determined to win that game, and they never thought about giving up."

The victory over Brindlee Mountain was Vina's first season-opening win since 2016. During the summer, Renfrow and some of Vina's veteran players talked about using the team's 2023 season finale victory over Waterloo, their only win of that season, as a springboard into the 2024 campaign. That certainly appears to have done the trick with the Red Devils now on a two-game winning streak, but Vina can't rest on its laurels now, Renfrow said. Vina can use the Brindlee Mountain game as motivation and momentum, but the focus has to turn to region rival Phillips and its next game on September 6.

"For them to play a great, close game against a 3A football team and go into four overtimes and win, that goes such a long way for our program and reminding us what we can do," Renfrow said. "We're very excited about it, but now we've got to start moving ourselves forward to Phillips next week. I know they're very excited to get back to work and to try to go 2-0 and 1-0 in the region."

Vina will travel to Phillips' James E. Glass Stadium on Friday with kickoff set for 7 P.M.



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