

Russellville TURE TRADING POST 256.332.0965 Quality Furniture at Affordable Prices"

24 Month Interest Free Financing! (wac)

PRSRT PAID F 113 W8 Russ

13480 Hwy 43

# FranklinFreePress.net





811 Village Wood Drive

Russellville

332-4949

# **Franklin County Circuit Clerk's** office now processing passport applications on Wednesdays

John Pilati Franklin Free Press

Starting next month, you'll be able to apply for a United States passport at the Franklin County Courthouse, if you're able to visit the courthouse on a Wednesday.

Franklin County Circuit Clerk Derrick Scott's office will begin accepting passport applications on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, between the hours of 8a.m.-3p.m., at the Circuit Clerk's Office on the first floor of the courthouse.

This reinstates a service that was terminated several years ago due to staff cuts and budgetary concerns in

the clerk's office.

According to information from Scott's office, the expected time frame to receive a routine passport book for adults and/or children 16 years and older is between 4-6 weeks. There are specific documents and information you must have in order for your application to be processed. They include:

-completed application in BLACK ink. Don't sign the application until the clerk's office employee asks you

-birth certificate with state seal. Your birth certificate will be returned later in a separate mailing from your passport. A copy of the birth certifi-

See 'PASSPORT,' Page 4

# **Russellville Street Department sets** out eight dumpsters for Christmas paper, box disposal

John Pilati Franklin Free Press

Residents of the City of Russellville will receive a helping hand from the Russellville Street Department to dispose of the mountain of boxes and gift wrap left in their living rooms after all of Santa's gifts are left

Rolloff dumpsters will be available for residents to drop off gift wrap, paper and boxes left over from

Christmas. The dumpsters will be placed in eight locations around the city from Monday, December 23rd through Monday, December 30th. Street Department Russellville Manager Shannon Wilson said. The locations for the dumpsters were announced at the December 16th meeting of the Russellville City Council.

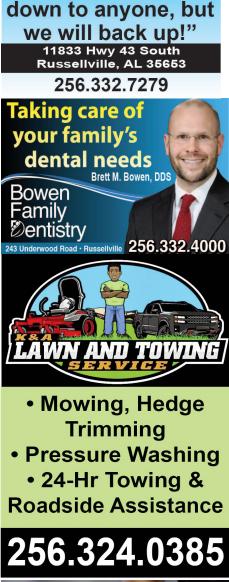
Those locations include: The Chucky Mullins Center, the former College Avenue School lot, Waterloo

World-class dentistry. Hometown care.



Hablamos Espanol





HTTP://CAREERS.CLAYTONHOMES.COM

"We don't back

531 St. CLAIR ST.

RUSSELLVILLE

256-332-6888

# PEST CONTROL



# PREDATOR PEST CONTROL

"The Insect Predator" Eddie Deaton (256) 627-1996

50 Years Combined Experience

Toll Free 1-888-832-5405

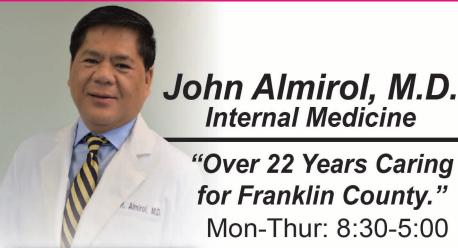
(662) 862-5631

(662) 840-4055

# From Our Family to Yours, We Wish You a Very Merry Christmas!

Holidays bring to mind all that matters most in our lives. At Spry Memorial Chapel, our mission has always been to offer to you, our friends, the service you deserve during those difficult times of saying goodbyes to a loved one. That is why compassion goes into everything we do. We're here because we care and your family is important to us.





Se habla Español

"Over 22 Years Caring for Franklin County."

Friday: 8:30-12:00

Medicare, Medicaid, Viva, BCBS, Humana, and United Healthcare insurances accepted.

Specializing in preventing, diagnosing and treating a wide variety of diseases and health issues affecting adults.

> **Accepting new patients** 256.331.1900

15225 Highway 43, Suite G **Next to Russellville Hospital** 



"In Memory of our loved ones..." brought to you by Atkins Marble and Granite Works and Franklin Memory Gardens

William Leon Elliott, age 84, of Tuscumbia AL, passed away on Friday, December 20, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Norman Fennell, age 89 of Hackleburg, passed away Friday, December 21, 2024. Visitation will be Thursday, December 26, 2024 from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. at Akins Funeral Home where the service will follow at 1:00 p.m.



# **Russellville City Schools Board approves 19 personnel** moves at short meeting

John Pilati Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education approved 19 personnel moves at a short meeting held December 17th.

The board also approved an out-of-state trip request for Russellville High School students to travel to Auburn University to attend the Future Teachers of America (FTA) State Conference

February 11-12, 2025. Participation at the conference is a requirement of the grant the school system received for FTA. board approved the 2024-25 athletic schedule for soccer, tennis, baseball and softball teams. The approval includes allowing coaches and sponsors to take teams and cheerleaders to away games and matches. Students will travel to away games by bus or approved vehicle.



The board approved a contract with Reece Coan to work as a School Resource Officer from January 1-September 31, 2025.

Personnel items approved by the board included: Employment: Trina Franklin as RHS math teacher. Leave of Absence for Mea Tucker, WES teacher, from January 6-April 4, 2025, Amy McReynolds, WES counselor, from November 18-December 20, 2024, Tim Griffin, RHS Custodian, from October 28-December 6, 2024, Rebecca Allen, RES special education teacher, from February 6-28, 2025, Alyssa Landry, RES special education teacher, from February 27-May 23, 2025 and Lauren Holland, RHS teacher, from April 24-May 23, 2025. Transfer for Jade Pounds, RHS math teacher to RMS math teacher. Temporary Employment in Position for Mardoqueo Soto, Sr., part-time worker Park and Rec. Dept., Rosa Castro-Mendoza, part-time student worker, Park & Rec. Dept., Jonathan Odom, Saturday School at RHS, Shannea Flanagan, RES/WES Aide for 21st CCLC and WES Afterschool Program, Claire Wiginton, RES special education teacher to fill a leave of absence from February 27-May 23, 2025, Kellie Sturdivant, Lauren Wallace, Ely Alonzo, Melissa Greenhill, RES teachers Afterschool Tutoring, Hannah Hulsey, RES/WES Aide for 21st CCLC and WES Afterschool Program and Karlee Faust, WES teacher, to fill leave of absence from January 6-April 4, 2025.

Email us at franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.



# HOSPITAL

15225 Hwy 43 • Suite I

RUSSELLVILLE

# **Franklin Free Press**

113 Washington Ave. NW Russellville, AL 35653 256-332-0255

The Franklin Free Press is published weekly by Pilati Investments, Inc. Our publication is available at newstands and online at no charge.

# **Publisher**

John Pilati

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

**Sports Editor** 

Kadin Pounders

**Layout Design** 

Michael Rice

**Sales Representatives** 

John Pilati

**Content Contributors** 

Willodean Davis

**Graphic Design** 

Jason Hill

## **Correction Policy**

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

## Letters to the editor

The Franklin Free Press is published by

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

# Copyright Information

Published by Pilati Investments, Inc. Copyright 2024 All materials and content are copyrighted by the Publisher

This publication may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any method, without the express written permission of the



Phil Campbell Water & Sewer Board will be taking sealed bids on a:



2009 FORD RANGER EXTENDED Cab 4.0 V6

Mileage – 132,000 (has transmission issue)

**SOLD AS IS** 

Phil Campbell Water & Sewer Board reserves the right to refuse any bid. Bids will be accept at the Water and Sewer Board Office at 215 McClung St. Phil Campbell, AL.

Bids will be taken thru 4:00 p.m. January 6<sup>th</sup>. Truck is located at Water Dept.

# **'PASSPORT,' From Page 1**

cate can be made at the clerk's office for \$1.

—a passport photo.

—a valid driver's license or identification with your photo and signature. (A teenager 16 or 17 years old must have his or her driver's license and bring a copy of his or her parent's license if not accompanied by a parent or guardian.

—a processing fee of \$35 that must be made in cash.

—a check or money order payable to the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE. The check amount is \$130 for the passport book, \$30 for a passport card and \$160 to obtain both the book and passport card.

Routine passport applications for children ages 15 or younger require both the child and parent be present at the clerk's office. The time frame for these routine children's passports is 4-6 weeks.

The specific documents and items required for a routine children's passport include:

—completed application in BLACK ink. Do not sign the application until directed by the clerk's office employee assisting you.

—birth certificate with state seal. The birth certificate will be returned to the applicant by separate mailing than the passport. A copy of the birth certificate may be made for \$1.

—a passport photo.

—driver's license or some form of photo identification with signature of BOTH parents.

—a processing fee of \$35 in cash.

—a check or money order payable to the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE. The check amount is \$100 for the passport book, \$15 for passport card or \$115 to obtain both the book and card.

Fast delivery passport applications will arrive in approximately 2-3 weeks. Requirements for a fast delivery passport application include:

—all documents listed above except the monetary portion.

—a processing fee of \$35 in cash.

—check or money order to the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE for \$190 for passport book, \$90 for a passport card or \$220 to obtain both passport book and card.

A fast delivery passport application for children 15 and under requires both parents and the child to be present, along with:

—all documents listed above, except the monetary part.

—processing fee of \$35 in cash.

—check or money order payable to the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, in the amount of \$160 for the passport book, \$75 for a passport card or \$175 to obtain both the passport book and card.

An express delivery passport, expected to arrive in 2-3 weeks for adults and children 16 and older requires all documents listed above, excluding the monetary part, and:

—\$66.40 in cash. This amount includes the processing fee and overnight delivery service.

—\$211.36 check or money order payable to the U.S. DEPART-MENT OF STATE.

An express delivery passport for children 15 and younger requires:

—both parents and the child be present.

—all documents listed above.

—\$66.40 in cash, which includes the processing fee and overnight delivery service.

—\$181.36 check or money order payable to the U.S. DEPART-MENT OF STATE.

The above delivery times are estimates and may be subject to change. For more information on applying for a passport, visit www.travel.state.gov.

Please send your guest columns and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

**DECEMBER 25, 2024** 

# Deadline passes to apply for reim**bursement of stolen Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP) benefits

Submitted

Effective Saturday, December 21, 2024, the Congressional authorization for replacement of stolen Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits expired. The replacement of these benefits was limited to thefts occurring between October 1, 2022 and December 20, 2024.

Therefore, the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) cannot process affidavits with thefts occurring on or after Saturday, December 21. Alabama DHR will continue to process affidavits of theft for incidents that occurred on or prior to December 20, 2024 from households impacted by EBT card skimming, cloning, and similar

Reports regarding these thefts must be submitted to county DHR offices within 30 days of the date the client discovered the fraud. Location and contact information for all 67 county DHR offices is available at dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact.

All reports of skimming, cloning, or similar fraud will require confirmation from the client verifying that all information reported in the request is true and correct. Clients may be contacted regarding their request. Clients who purposefully give false information may be pros-

theft, and other tips, please visit https://dhr.alabama.gov/EBT-fraud/.



Licensed in Alabama & Tennessee

Office Number: 256-757-8898





# Coming Soon to Russellville!

We are offering the fastest internet speeds in Alabama and superior HD phone services at affordable prices.

# Ready to sign up?

www.freedomfiber.com 205-921-6712

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!



# What's Happening

to help tutor and mentor children in day care, head start and schools. Volunteers will receive a tax-free stipend and travel reimbursement. We have openings for several schools for the coming school year. Please call 256-332-6800 for an application.

A shaKiran serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking across Alabama. Their vision is to be a 'ray of hope' by bridging the gap between service providers and culturally diverse communities. Their 24-hour crisis line number is 1-800-793-3010. Learn more about AshaKiran by visiting www.ashakiranonline.org. Consultations are free and confidential, and available in 45 different languages.

Northwest 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. "

Chead Start and Early Head Start, is a non-profit agency serving 3, 4 and 5 year old children absolutely free. We are located at 976 Ronnie McDowell Avenue in Russellville. Our hours are from 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Monday thru Friday. Call for an appointment today at 256-331-0162. Give your child a Head Start on school readiness! We offer top-quality, comprehensive early childhood educational services provided at no cost to your family. To learn more, visit www.capna.org/children-services.



256.383.4473 Ext. 2021 340 Cox Blvd • Sheffield, AL

PRIMARY CARE

# Pick up your FREE copy of the Franklin Free Press at CJ's!!!

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 4a - 7p



- Full Service Deli w/ Breakfast & Lunch Plates
- Ethanol-Free Gas
- Hunting/Fishing Licenses
- Fishing Supplies/ Live Bait

14545 AL 187 @ Intersection of AL 24



# Franklin County Commission

P.O. Box 1028 · Russellville, AL 35653 · (256) 332-8850

Barry Moore, Chairman J Micheal Murray, District I Greg Hovater, District II Le

Joseph Baldwin, District III Tracie Clark, District IV Leah Mansell, Administrator

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

Roadway Maintenance Technician I, Highway Department

Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, Jail

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Wednesday, January 8, 2025.

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 <a href="https://www.franklincountyal.org">www.franklincountyal.org</a> 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 servic

# Pilgrim's Is Hiring! Be Part of Feeding America!

Production wages from \$17.50/hr up to \$20.25/hr, with incentive. (Additional \$2/hr for Third Shift Differential)

Apply in person at our 2045 Hwy 44, Russellville, or Apply online at pilgrimsusa.com!

Benefits include: Medical, Dental & Vision Insurance, Advancement opportunities, 401K Retirement,

Paid Holidaysand Vacations.



# **'DUMPSTERS,' From Page 1**

Residents of the City of Russellville will receive a helping hand from the Russellville Street Department to dispose of the mountain of boxes and gift wrap left in their living rooms after all of Santa's gifts are left behind.

Rolloff dumpsters will be available for residents to drop off gift wrap, paper and boxes left over from Christmas. The dumpsters will be placed in eight locations around the city from Monday, December 23rd through Monday, December 30th, Russellville Street Department Manager Shannon Wilson said. The locations for the dumpsters were announced at the December 16th meeting of the Russellville City Council.

Those locations include: The Chucky Mullins Center, the former College Avenue School lot, Waterloo Road at Russellville High School, Miller's Affordable Furniture on Highway 43 South, Sloss Lake on Alabama 24, the former National Guard Armory location, Hester Heights subdivision and Underwood Road behind McDonald's.

Wilson asked that residents limit deposits in the dumpster to Christmas gift wrap, packaging and boxes. No household garbage, limbs, leaves or other refuse may be placed in the dumpsters

This is a service that's been provided by the City of Russellville the past four years, Wilson aid.

With Christmas and New Year's Day set for Wednesdays this year, household garbage collection and commercial dumpster service will be one day behind for residents whose trash pickup is regularly set for Wednesday. Those pickups will be backed up one day, to Thursday, December 26th and Thursday, January 2nd. Residents with regular Thursday pickup will have a one day lag to Friday, December 27th and Friday, January 3rd.

In other agenda items at the December 16th meeting, the council:

--authorized advertisement to solicit bids for the most competitive interest rate at local banks for a \$500,000 line of credit for the City of Russellville. The city's current LOC is at CB&S Bank and has a \$0 balance, Mayor David Grissom said last Monday. The LOC is bid out every few years to obtain the most competitive interest

rate.

Any expenses to be used from LOC funds must be approved in advance by the Russellville City Council. Said expenses in past years have

been for the purchase of garbage trucks and dump trucks where grant funding was approved but wasn't received yet.

--Approved a quote of \$64,500 to repair a collapsed storm drain and sidewalk damage in front of the Russellville Police Department on North Jackson Avenue.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be January 6, 2025, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.





Russellville • Moulton • Red Bay

Comprehensive Eye Exams for Adults & Children

Contacts & Glasses

Eye Injuries & Emergencies

Designer & Safety Frames, Sunglasses

Mon.-Fri. 8a.m.-5p.m.

eyecareprofessionalspc.com 15255 Hwy 43 • Russellville • 256.332.5440



See our weekly specials
South Jackson Ave • 256-332-3535



# Dr. Kelly's Urgent Care

Walk-In visits available. We are available to screen and test for COVID-19.

Mon.-Fri. 8-6, Sat. 8-3, Sun. 1-5 13150 Hwy. 43, Suite 10, Russellville 256-331-2092.

Serving your family for more than 30 years. Family Practice, Pediatrics, Newborn Care.

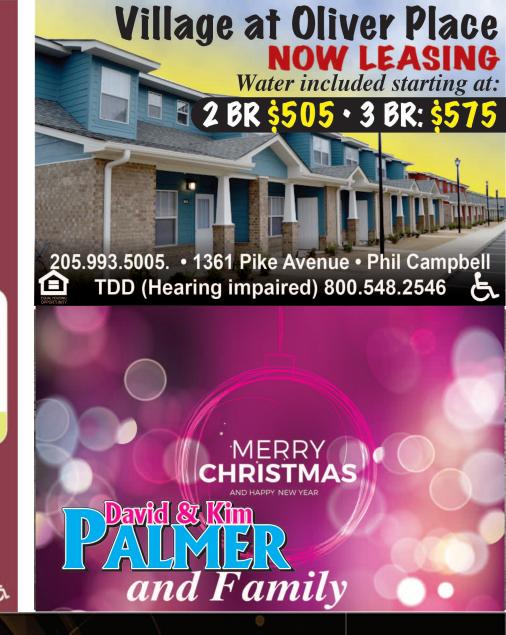
# **PUBLIC NOTICE**

**RUSSELLVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY SECTION 8** (HCV PROGRAM) IS NOW **ACCEPTING PREAPPLICATIONS** FOR A WAITING LIST.

COME IN THE OFFICE MON, DEC 2, 2024 THROUGH MON, JAN 6, 2025 FROM 7 A.M. UNTIL 4 P.M TO DO A PRE-APPLICATION. MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

256-332-1561 73 Flippen St Russellville 

Russellville Housing Authority Incorporated 66



# **HEALTHIER, HAPPIER! EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET IN SHAPE FOR 2025!**











# JOIN NOW For



ENROLLMENT

LIMITED TIME ONLY!

# **YOUR MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:**

- Hammer Strength & Lifetime
   Private Showers Equipment
- · Cardio w/ Individual TV's
- 24 Hour Gym & Tan Access
- Staffed Hours
- Free Tanning
- · Clean, Friendly & Fun Non Intimidating Environment
- ABS/Stretching Area

· Senior Discounts

· Fitness on Demand

 Personal Training Available · Free WiFi



24465 Hwy 24 West Russellville, AL 35653

256-331-9003





BUSINESS • LOST & FOUND • GARAGE SALES • PETS • APPLIANCES • HELP WANTED • SERVICES • APPLIANCES • CLOTHING • FURNITURE

SERVICES

SELLING a
RV, Tractor or
Golf Cart?
ADVERTISE
STATEWIDE
or by region
in over 100
Newspapers,
reaching over
1 million
readers each

week! Run your ad in our Classified **Network for** just \$210 per week! Make one call to this newspaper (participating Ala-SCAN newspaper) or call 1-800-264-7043 to find out how easy it is to advertise

statewide! **BATH &** SHOWER **UPDATES** in as little as ONE DAY! **Affordable** prices - No payments for 18 months! Lifetime warranty & professional installs. Senior & **Military Discounts** available. Call: 1-855-405-8901

NEW AUTHORS WANTED! Our publishing staff will help you selfpublish your own book. FREE author submission kit! Limited offer! Why wait? Call now: 1-877-567-9754

**LONG DIS-TANCE MOV-**ING: Call today for a **FREE QUOTE** from America's **Most Trusted** Interstate Movers. Let us take the stress out of moving! Speak to a Relocation Specialist, call 844-925-3534

WATER DAM-**AGE CLEANUP & RESTORA-**TION: A small amount of water can lead to major damage in your home. **Our trusted** professionals dry out the wet area and do repairs to protect your family and your home's value! If you have water in your home that needs to be dried, Call 24/7: 1-877-727-2344 Have zip code

of service

location ready when you call!

**MEDICARE PLANS HAVE CHANGED!!!** Make sure your plan will meets your needs in 2025. Our licensed agents can review the changes, address your needs and make sure you aren't overpaying! For a free quote, Call now! 1-877-730-0711

**EDUCATION** 

**ATTENTION ACTIVE Duty** & Military **Veterans!** Begin a new career and earn your Degree at CTI! Online Computer & Medical training available for Veterans & Families! To learn more, call 866-475-1014

HEALTH/BEA UTY

(M-F 8am-

6pm ET).

ATTENTION
OXYGEN
THERAPY
USERS!
Discover
Oxygen

Therapy That Free Moves with Installation! You with 160+ chan-Inogen nels avail-**Portable** able. Call Oxygen Now to Get Concentrator the Most Sports & s. FREE information kit. **Entertainment** Call 1-855on TV! 844-405-8647 594-7108 Attention:

VIAGRA and

**CIALIS** 

**USERS! A** 

cheaper alter-

native to high

drugstore

prices! 50 Pill

Special - Only

\$99! 100%

guaranteed.

CALL NOW:

1-855-405-

9791

**FOR SALE** 

Car for Sale.

1994 Buick

Regal

Custom. Blue

in color.

99,000 miles.

Good condi-

tion. Asking

\$2,500. Call

256-412-0390.

AFFORD-

**ABLE TV &** 

**INTERNET. If** 

you are over-

paying for

your service,

call now for a

free quote

and see how

much you

can save! 1-

866-816-3535

**DirecTV** 

Satellite TV

Service

Starting at

\$59.99/month!

NEED NEW FLOORING? Call today schedule a FREE inhome estimate on Carpeting & Flooring. Call Today! 1-877-568-2248

UPDATE
YOUR HOME
with Beautiful
New Blinds &
Shades.
FREE inhome esti-

mates make it convenient to shop from home.
Professional installation.
Top quality - Made in the USA. Call for free consultation: 1-855-405-8839. Ask about our specials!

Eliminate gutter cleaning forever! LeafFilter, the most advanced debris-blocking gutter protection. Schedule a **FREE** LeafFilter estimate today. 20% off Entire Purchase.

Standing, from left: Tracie Clark and Joseph Baldwin

Seated from left: Greg Hovater, Barry Moore and Michael Murray.

~ The Franklin County Commission

Plus 10% Senior & Military Discounts. Call 1-833-683-2005

power out-

ages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a **FREE 7-Year** warranty with qualifying purchase\* Call 1-877-323-5516 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move.

Safe Step. North Americas #1 Walk-In Tub. Comprehensi ve lifetime warranty. Top-of-theline installation and service. Now featuring our **FREE shower** package and \$1600 Off for a limited time! Call today! **Financing** available. Call Safe Step 1-

Call
LeafGuard
and say
goodbye to
gutter cleaning for good.
No cleaning.
No leaking.

No water damage. No more ladder accidents. Get LeafGuard today and be protected for life. FREE estimate. **Financing** available. 20% off total purchase (Restrictions may apply.) Call 1-844-679-2490

# Merry Christmas to You & Your Family! Thanks for the opportunity to serve you!

# **NEW BUSINESS LOCATION:**

Foster's Service Center is now located at 15891 Hwy. 43 North, in the former MPE Services building. Come see us for ATV, lawnmower, generator or tiller repair, or when it's time to winterize your ATV or

RSRT STD US POSTAGE

PAID Franklin Free Press
Russellville Al 35653

# FranklinFreePress.net

# **SPORTS**

12.25.24

# RV girls' varsity wins tight contest against Belgreen

Kadin Pounders Franklin Free Press

The Russellville High School varsity girls' basketball team (4-7) eked by Belgreen (13-3) at the Russellville Middle School gym on Friday night, defeating the visitors 66-63.

The young Russellville team led by seven points at the halftime break, but the experienced Lady Bulldogs battled back to tie it up in the third to set up a thrilling fourth quarter fight between the two Franklin County teams.

"I'm extremely proud of (the team)," Russellville head coach Jermaine Groce said.

"Belgreen's a great team. Probably gonna make the elite eight (in Class 2A). So, you know, it's good to come out and compete and just be scrappy," Groce added. "We came out and we battled them. That's a tough team and we were able to do it tonight."

Down 33-26 at the halftime intermission, Belgreen came out of the locker room for the second half shooting, outscoring Russellville 21-14 to tie the game at 47-47 at the end of the third period. Belgreen went ahead 30 seconds into the fourth quarter but the Lady Golden Tigers didn't back down and kept the visitors close.

With 3:32 left to go and down by a point, a technical foul by Belgreen sent Sadie Odom

See, 'RV GIRLS,' Page 14



# Belgreen 9th grade boys', girls' teams sweep county tournament

Kadin Pounders Franklin Free Press

The Belgreen High School ninth-grade girls' and boys' basketball teams won the Franklin County junior high basketball tournament hosted by Tharptown on Saturday, December 21st. The Bulldog teams twice defeated East Franklin to earn the silverware and take county bragging rights for a whole year.

The girls' basketball championship was played first. Belgreen head coach Chad Green said for the younger players, the county tournament is the biggest competition of the season.

"It's really big for the kids. It's like their state tournament," Green said. "We have an early, opening tip-off tournament and we have a lot of regular season games, but (the Franklin County tournament) is really what you're working for all year long, so that's their state title."

Led by 10 total points from Kiera Smith, the Lady Bulldogs, who went 15-1 this year, took it to the Lady Rebels early, outpacing East Franklin 19-7 in the first quarter. Neither team found the basket often in the second period—the Lady Rebels led that period 3-2. But Belgreen found its stride again after the halftime break, scoring 13 points to East Franklin's three. Belgreen's Marlie Terry scored five of her eight total points in the third. The final period of play looked much like the second with East Franklin slightly outscoring Belgreen 8-6, but it wasn't enough for a Lady Rebels comeback as the Lady Bulldogs captured the 40-21 victory.

"At the first of the game we started off strong. We hit a couple of big shots early: Kayla Canelas hit a three-point shot and then Kiera Smith hit a three-point shot; and we got a couple of steals and lay-ups, so we jumped up to a 10-0 lead in the first minute and a half of the game, and we felt good about that," Green said. "After halftime we came back out and got us a quick little burst again. That definitely helps your momentum in the ballgame when you can get that."

Kylee Santiago led runners-up East Franklin with 10 points and Bailey Jewell ended with eight

See, 'BELGREEN,' Page 12

# Martinez, Baker and Phinizee earn All-State honors for Golden Tigers

Kadin Pounders Franklin Free Press

Three members of the Russellville High School Golden Tiger football team found their way to the 2024 Alabama Sports Writers Association All-State Team, which was announced on Saturday, December 21st.

Senior offensive lineman Neyland Baker, junior running back Cameron Phinizee, and senior kicker Manny Martinez were selected by the ASWA to represent RHS on the Class 5A team. Baker and Phinizee were both named to the First Team, the first time Russellville has placed two players on the First Team in the same year since Brent Calloway and Daniel Hollimon back in 2010. Martinez was an Honorable Mention.

"We as coaches send in our nominations and to be selected, to be considered one of the best players in the state, I think it's a great honor," Russellville head coach Dustin Goodwin said. "I think it shows the success that your team had because it's hard to make it if the team's not successful. But it's a testament to the hard work and the caliber of players these guys are, and the consistency that they've shown day in and day out.

"Really happy for all three of them," Goodwin added.

The All-State selection was the second one for Phinizee, who was a First Team running back in 2023, as well. The junior tailback, averaging 10.1 yards per carry and 211.9 yards per game over 11 games, finished the 2024 campaign with over 2,300 rushing yards this season and scored 28 touchdowns on the ground. He was the Class 5A Region 7 Offensive Player of the Year this season, an FFP All-Franklin County First Team running back, and he was recently named the Class 5A-7A Player of the Year by a local real estate company and the Athlete of the Year by 256 Sports Radio.

Baker, who officially inked with the University of North Alabama football program on National

See, 'ALL-STATE,' Page 13

**DECEMBER 25, 2024** 

# **'BELGREEN,' From Page 11**

points. The Lady Bulldogs' Elisabeth Davis scored seven points and both Kayla Canelas and Alexa Gault finished with six points in the win.

Green said he was proud of his team for winning the game, but he also expressed his satisfaction in how the players have progressed throughout the season

"What you're doing in junior high is you're developing for one day to play at the varsity level, so we've got several girls at the junior high level that's definitely improved from the beginning of the year to the end of he said. the year," "That's what's so good about coaching junior high—you see so much improvement from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.



COURTESY PHOTO

"They get in there and they work. They work during P.E. time, they work after school and so hopefully (winning the tournament) will give them motivation going ahead," Green added. "They're a good little group and fun to coach.

The boys' championship bout between Belgreen and East Franklin was a tighter affair with the Bulldogs coming out with a 49-41 win.

Like his coaching colleague Green, Belgreen boys' head coach Will Bonner said his team was motivated to compete in the championship game and proud to pull out the victory.

'These guys, they won the county last year in eighth grade, so that's all they talked about this year was being able to do it again," Bonner said. "It's a really good group of kids. They've been playing together forever, but they just really know how to play together."



The Bulldogs, competing with a squad limited to six players, jumped out to a 16-12 lead to the contest; Andrew Enriquez, with two three-points in the opening period, led Belgreen by scoring six of those points. East Franklin, however, rebounded with another 12-point second quarter and held Belgreen to eight points, sending the COURTESY PHOTO 24-24.

Coming out of the intermission, Belgreen nearly doubled East Franklin's total in the third period, outscoring the Rebels 15-8. Leading 39-32 heading into the final period of play, the Bulldogs iced the game by scoring 10 more points, one more than the Rebels could manage, to win the game by eight.

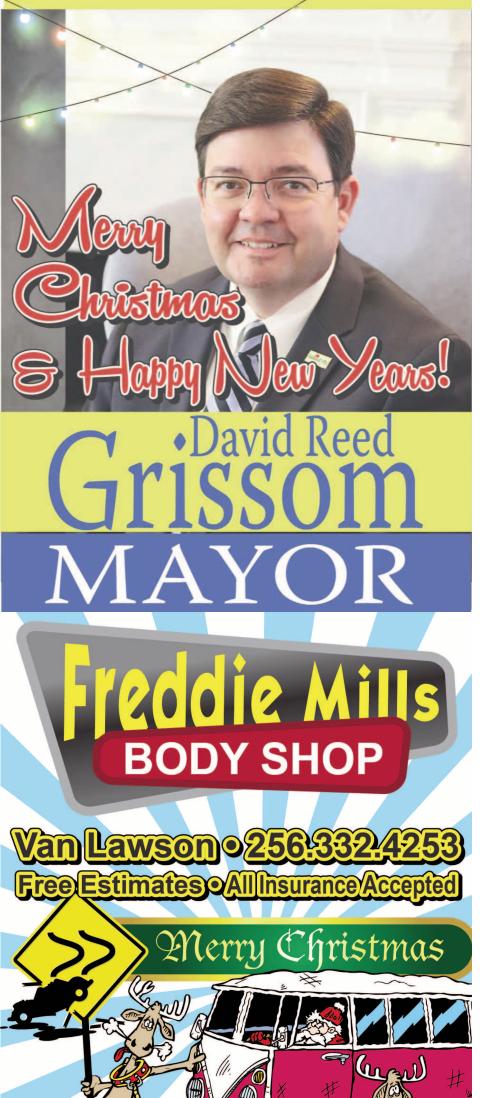
"It was pretty much a back-and-forth game," Bonner said. "Our guys were very tired. We only had six guys and we got into foul trouble a little bit at the end. I think our pressure—we pressed the whole game. I think our pressure really affected (East Franklin).

"We beat them early on in the year, and then we went and played them at their house and they beat us there; so, I think our guys were hungry to play them again and try to win the county," Bonner added.

Enriquez ended the game as Belgreen's top scorer with 15 points. Rush Berryman and Colton Ashton both finished with 12 points for the Bulldogs, while Miguel Cordoba scored 10 points. East Franklin's Miles Duboise was the game's joint top-scorer matching Enriquez's 15 points. Braxton Downey added 10 points for the Rebels in the defeat.

Bonner felt a big reason for Belgreen's success in the county tournament was his team's work ethic, which has led to vast improvement this campaign.

"We're working to get better for varsity, we're working on player development and things like that," he said. "These guys have made a major stride from the beginning of the year to now. Our record, I don't think, was the greatest, but I think the work they're putting in every day at practice shows why these guys could win the county and why these guys are gonna be successful when they get older.'



Since 1978

# **'ALL-STATE,' From Page 11**

Signing Day, is Russellville's first First Team offensive lineman since Edgar Amaya in 2020. The senior big man was the Golden Tigers' leader in the trenches, helping pave the way for over 3,100 rushing yards and 41 rushing touchdowns. Baker never allowed a sack this past season and graded 93 percent for the year. He's coming off an appearance in the AHSAA North-South All-Star Game in Mobile where he helped the North All-Stars to a 45-24 victory. Baker was also a 2024 Class 5A All-Region 7 First Team selection and a member of the FFP's All-Franklin County First Team.

Manny Martinez was an Honorable Mention kicker on the All-State team, Russellville's first special teams selection since Marvin Betancourt in 2015.

"Everyone knows that Cam is a special talent and people have come to know Neyland; he's getting the opportunity to play at UNA, so he's a really good player, as well," Goodwin said of his running back and offensive lineman.

"Sometimes kickers can be the scapegoats or the heroes, but, you know, Manny is one of my favorite players on our team," the head coach added of his special teams all-rounder. "He has a good attitude every day, he shows up and does what he's asked to do, and he's a good person."

Martinez, the Class 5A All-Region 7 First Team kicker and punter, hit 48 of 49 extra point attempts this season and nailed four of his six field goal attempts, the longest of which was over 40 yards. The FFP all-county selection also had seven touchbacks on kickoffs.

"He's been very consistent. I think he missed one extra point, but with the exception of that I think he hit just about every kick we asked him to make this year. He even hit a 42-yarder in a rain game," Goodwin said. "He punted for us and he kicked off for us, as well. I thought he did a really, really nice job, and he's definitely got the talent to help somebody at the next level and I think he deserves that."

With their performances during the 2024 campaign, Baker, Martinez, and Phinizee join a long, impressive list of All-State players from RHS. All-State nods are a great moment for the individual players, but Goodwin adds it's acknowledgement that the program can be excited about, too.

"It's recognition that the team can be proud of," Goodwin said. "We like to see our kids have success, and we like other people to notice that success because they put a lot of time and effort in—a lot of blood, sweat and tears into what we ask them to do. There's a certain level of commitment that's required to reach your potential, so to see guys recognized for their on-field achievements and the way they produced on Friday nights, it makes us happy because they're happy. We enjoy seeing guys be successful and get that recognition."

Since 1960, Golden Tigers have earned ASWA All-State recognition 120 times. According to AHSFHS.org, Russellville has the third-most total all-state players all-time with 160.



The Sleep Clinic at Russellville Hospital provides complete sleep health management including sleep studies, diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders.

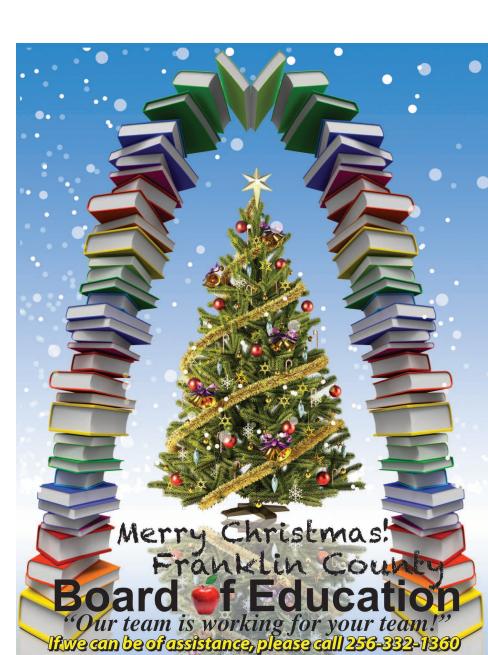
Our sleep experts are here to help you take control of your sleep health. Most insurance companies do not require a referral to meet with one of our board certified sleep physicians.



Our experience and knowledgeable physicians provide expert advice for a multitude of sleep-related disorders, including: Insomnia, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, periodic limb movement syndrome (PLMS), sleepwalking and pediatric sleep problems.

The Sleep Clinic

www.russellvillehospital.com 15225 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL (256) 332-1611



# **'RV GIRLS,' From Page 11**

to the line for Russellville. The freshman sank both free throws allowing RHS to retake the lead 56-55. The Lady Golden Tigers, playing tough defense and grabbing vital rebounds, were able to retain the advantage for the remainder, scratching by with the three-point victory at the final buzzer.

The result snapped a nine-game winning streak for a Belgreen team coming off back-to-back 20-point-plus wins, and it ended a three-game losing skid for Russellville.

"Our last four games have come down to the last minute and we've lost all of them with the exception of tonight," Groce said. "We talked a lot about how to compete and how to finish in the closing minutes. The girls did a heck of a job defending there late. Did a heck of a job on the board, and we hit just enough free throws to close out the game."

Belgreen was led by senior Dacota Green, who scored 20 points in the loss. Groce praised his young squad for their efforts to keep the standout Lady Bulldog in check in addition to individual efforts that helped push the Lady Golden Tigers—competing without one of their best players—over the line and avenge the loss to Belgreen earlier in the season.

"We looked out there and said it's a bunch of ninth- and tenth-graders out there and all of them were able to do it right there in the closing minutes. Angeleah (Smith) hit great shots. Sadie (Odom) came off and attacked the rim tonight—she probably had double-digits tonight," Groce said. "Alexia (Groce) and Jemma (Moore) did a heck of a job defending Dacota. The first game she played against us I know she had 25 (points). I don't know what she had tonight, but I like to think we probably held her below what she's normally scoring and that's a testament to (Groce and Moore).



"Ella Copeland came in and was able to help us out tonight.

She didn't play in game one against them, so her ability to handle the ball and hit key shots and get our team set up, it just helped us facilitate our offense

"Tonight our starting center (Laila Hill) was out," Groce added. "You know, to come in and finish this game without her—a kid that has probably, the last five games, averaged a double-double. To be able to do that going into the Christmas break is big. It's exactly what we're looking for about midway through the season, and hopefully we can do the same thing in the Christmas tournaments we're gonna be playing in next week."

Angeleah Smith led Russellville with 14 points in the game; Sadie Odom and Jemma Moore scored 13 points and sophomore Ella Copeland added 12 points. Belgreen's Bryn Scott and Lilliana Willingham each scored 13 points.

After Christmas Russellville will play in a tournament at West Morgan and Belgreen will play in a tournament at Haleyville.





# Wishing You Case Single Season of This Bright & Beautiful Season from the City of Russelville





# 2025 Important Dates:

Monday, Jan. 6th: Teacher Work Day.

Tuesday, Jan. 7th: Students Return.

Monday, Jan. 20th: MLK Holiday.

Monday, Feb. 17th: President's Day.

Monday, Mar. 24th-Friday, Mar. 28th: Spring Break.

Friday, April 18th and Monday, April 21st: Spring Holidays.

Friday, May 23rd: Early Dismissal, Graduation Ceremonies.

Contact our central office at 256,331,2000



