

Modern Woodmen
 FRATERNAL FINANCIAL

JJ McCormick
 220 W. Tennessee
 Suite 112
 Florence, AL 35630
 256-668-7803
 jeffrey.w.mccormick@
 mwarep.org

Life insurance | Retirement planning
 Financial services | Member programs

Franklin County first responders, employees endure sleepless weekend after severe weather incident including an EF-2 tornado

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

At the February 18th meeting of the Franklin County Commission, Probate Judge Barry Moore began the meeting by delivering a well-earned 'thank you' to Franklin County's first responders for their efforts during and after the weekend storms.

"I want to thank all our employees in the Highway Department, the Sheriff's Office, our volunteer fire departments, and (Franklin County Emergency Management Agency Director) Mary Glass and (Assistant EMA Director) Ron Coats for all your

work during the storm this weekend," Moore said.

"We appreciate all your help along with everyone who got out and cut trees and limbs," he added.

A line of severe thunderstorms that included an EF-2 tornado caused damage in central Franklin County late Saturday night. The tornado damaged at least 23 homes, two of which were completely destroyed. One of those was on County Highway 42 and the other on Rocky Glen Road in Tharptown.

Glass told commissioners there was at least one serious injury, as a rock fireplace collapsed on a homeowner. The man had surgery


See 'TORNADO,' Page 4

Have an opinion?
 Story idea?



Let us know!
We're All Ears!
 256.332.0255

Morgan Chiropractic
 Chiropractic for
 the Entire Family



Dr. Tom Morgan
 811 Village Wood Drive
 Russellville

332-4949

Kiel, Franklin County residents opposed to bill that would exempt college athletes from paying state income tax on NIL earnings

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Consider the stories of two college students in Alabama.

The first student is putting herself through school with a combination of loans and part-time employment. Suppose she's working for a fast food restaurant earning \$13-\$15 per hour.

The second student, who happens to be a star basketball player on full

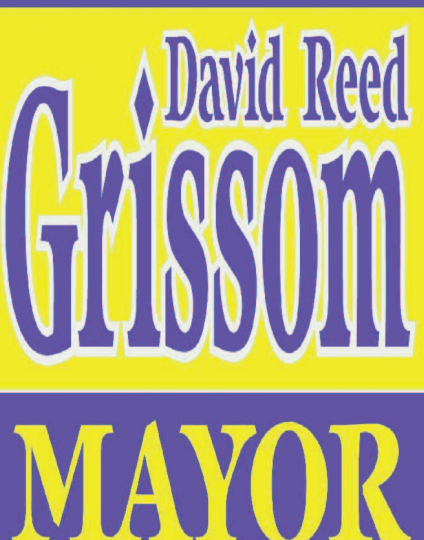
scholarship, is earning more than \$1 million in Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) income for the year.

And only one of them pays any state income tax...

If a bill introduced in the Alabama Legislature becomes law, the athlete would be exempt from any tax obligation to the State of Alabama for NIL income.

HB 240, introduced by Auburn Republican Rep. Joe Lovvorn, would make NIL earnings of college

See 'NIL' Page 9



**David Reed
 Grissom
 MAYOR**

Pd. Pol. Adv. By: David Grissom,
 600 Jackson Ave. N, Russellville, AL, 35653

**Taking care of
 your family's
 dental needs**



Brett M. Bowen, DDS

**Bowen Family
 Dentistry**
 243 Underwood Road • Russellville 256.332.4000



24 HR TOWING

**M&N
 TOWING**
 256-332-7279

**24
 HR**

**"We don't back
 down to anyone, but
 we will back up!"**

11833 Hwy 43 South
 Russellville, AL 35653

256.332.7279

**World-class dentistry.
 Hometown care.**

Hablamos Espanol



**SINGING RIVER
 DENTISTRY**

531 St. CLAIR ST. | RUSSELLVILLE | 256-332-6888



**Clayton
 russellville**

**NOW HIRING
 HOME BUILDING
 TEAM MEMBERS**

STARTING PAY: \$21.50/HR +
 WEEKLY BONUS!

HTTP://CAREERS.CLAYTONHOMES.COM

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

FRANKLIN MEMORY GARDENS



We offer ground burial, mausoleum and cremation spaces. All may be purchased at need or pre-need to include the burial vault and bronze memorial.

Providing a peaceful, beautiful and serene cemetery for the people of Franklin County.

Carolyn Atkins Porter *Since 1960*
2710 Waterloo Road • 256.332.2115

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

REWARD YOURSELF...

GIFT CARDS Available



OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE

Angel Harris

Licensed Massage Therapist LMT #1495
Reiki Practitioner II



256.332.4220
Creative Image Salon
7129 Hwy 43 • Spruce Pine



John Almirol, M.D.

Internal Medicine

"Over 22 Years Caring for Franklin County."

Mon-Thur: 8:30-5:00

Friday: 8:30-12:00

Se habla Español

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**

James Dendy "Bo" Goss, age 84, of Russellville, Alabama, passed away on Monday, February 17, 2025. The visitation will be 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Thursday, February 20, 2025, at Spry Memorial Chapel. The funeral service will follow at 1:00 p.m. in the chapel

Phyllis Allen Peppers, age 85, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, February 16, 2025. The visitation will be 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at Spry Memorial Chapel.

James Ray Vandiver passed away at the age of 83 on Thursday, February 13, 2025. A memorial service will be 2:00 till 3:00 p.m. Saturday, February 22, 2025 @ LaGrange Community Senior Center 1672 Waldrep Loop, Leighton, AL 35646.

Shannon Dale Bray, age 45, passed away on Thursday, February 13, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the customer.



Russellville Hospital
welcomes back
Sandy Evans, CRNP
to our Rural Health Clinic.

- **Accepting New Patients**
- **Same Day Appointments**
- **Family Practice, Primary care Medical Check-Ups, Health Screenings**



256.331.2700
15225 Hwy 43 • Suite 1



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 newsstands 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 hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons 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 Publisher.

Back to the Bible by Larsen Plyler: Matthew 1:1-17

Larsen Plyler
Franklin Free Press

The first chapter of the New Testament opens with a genealogy (genesis in Greek). But, this isn't just any family tree— it is the line of Jesus Christ.

Matthew highlights two key ancestors of Jesus, Abraham and David, because of the great promises made to them. God promised Abraham that He'd bless the whole world through his offspring (Gen. 12:1-3). God promised David that He'd have an heir who would reign on the throne of an everlasting kingdom (II Sam. 7:12-14).

Matthew starts his account with a powerful hook, describing Jesus as the son of David and the son of Abraham and, thus, as the fulfillment of the promises God had made.

From verses 2 through 16, we have the ancestry of Jesus, "So and so was the father of so and so," it repeats. If you're a Bible student, you will recognize many of the names and be able to recall their stories. But, many of them seem as simply names on the list.

- Note that Matthew lists three segments of 14 names (see verse 17). He groups them from Abraham to David, David to the captivity period, and the captivity period to the birth of Jesus. There were actually more people in the list than this. Matthew seems to be abbreviating the list for a special reason. Some have suggested that the Hebrew numeric value for David was 14. Thus, Matthew may be reinforcing that this is the kingly lineage.

- There are four women listed in the genealogy, three by name. They each have fascinating, eyebrow raising, stories recorded in the Old Testament. Tamar (v. 3) was mistreated by her father-in-law Judah, by whom she bore her son Perez. Rahab (v. 5) was a Canaanite prostitute who saved the lives of Israelite spies and was saved from destruction. She gave birth to a boy named Boaz. He grew up to redeem and marry the Moabite widow Ruth (v. 5). Also, Matthew records that David bore Solomon by the wife of Uriah (v. 6). Her name was Bathsheba, but Matthew reminds us of who she really belonged to.

Lessons to Learn:

God keeps His promises. It had been 2,000 years since God spoke to Abraham and 1,000 years since He had spoken to David. But, He was faithful. In Jesus, God fulfilled His word to both. God's word is always sure.

The whole Bible is about Jesus. From beginning to the end, Jesus is in view. The Old Testament says, "The Christ is coming." The gospels say, "He is here." The rest of the New Testament declares, "He is coming again."

We are thankful to share in consideration of God's word. It's best if you have a Bible close at hand and evaluate what we say. We always want to go "back to the Bible" for what we teach.

To reach us with your questions and comments or to request a personal Bible study email us at info@backtothebiblepodcast.com



BACK TO THE BIBLE
WGOL 100.7 FM

SUNDAY 8:30 AM
backtothebiblepodcast.com



'TORNADO,' From Page 1

Monday and is expected to recover, Glass said.

"We are working to get everything done. There's snow that's supposed to come in Wednesday, up to one inch," Glass said. "We are meeting today with Franklin Electric. We believe more than 90 percent of their customers have power restored. We're talking with some electric contractors hired by Alabama Power and they're working to get power restored



Pest Solutions

Pest & Mosquito Control

256-332-4008

in the Vina area. There were lots of trucks in Vina yesterday working."

Glass said Winston County EMA was providing a drone that will show an aerial view of the tornado's path and the ensuing damage.

Included in that damage was a Highway 75 home that saw a large

metal storage shed destroyed in winds so strong they hurled an ATV across the property. The storm left extensive damage to hardwood trees in its path, many of which fell on houses.

As the tornado moved northeast, it destroyed several small farm buildings near Highway 78 as well as homes in the McGuire Loop and Rocky

Glen Road area.

It was this area that experienced maximum winds of 115 miles per hour as the tornado reached peak intensity. It appeared to lift west of Highway 87, Glass said.

After the damage update, the business meeting moved forward with commissioners approving the following agenda items:

- approved a bid for a 30" x 24" aluminum plaque to be erected at the door of the Franklin County Archives. The plaque will include the names of the probate judge and commissioners who were in office at the time the Archives was established. A bid of \$2,672 was accepted from Gault Signs.
- approved a bid from Affordable Tree Service to remove eight stumps around the Franklin County



COURTESY PHOTO

Tornado damage to a home on Rocky Glen Road in eastern Franklin County.

Courthouse at a cost of \$7,500.

- approved a resolution authorizing the Franklin County EMA to enter into an updated agreement with the National Incident Management System.
- accepted a low bid of \$15,420 from Tommy Baker Roofing to replace the shingled roof on the Franklin County Rescue Squad Building.
- authorized advertising for a Roadway Maintenance Technician III in the Highway Department.
- accepted the retirement of Vicki Horton from the Franklin County Revenue Commissioner's Office effective March 31, 2025.
- authorized advertising for a non-certified Mapper in the Revenue Commissioner's Office.
- authorized giving the probate judge authority for the Revenue Commissioner to sign a contract with BIS Consulting, LLC, for website updates and maintenance.
- approved the hiring of Kara Le Moody and Michael Seth Ables as Corrections Officer/Dispatcher in the Sheriff's Office, Lindsey Higgins as a temporary Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, the resignation of Deputy Jonathan Copeland, the retirement of Captain Mark Latham in the Sheriff's Office.

"I want to personally thank Captain Latham for his loyalty and dedication to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the people of Franklin County he faithfully served," Sheriff Shannon Oliver said.

- approved the purchase of a body scanner at the Franklin County Jail to be leased for a five-year period at a cost of \$30,000 per year, warranty included. The county will own the scanner after five years. Oliver told commissioners there have been two recent incidents of someone attempting to smuggle drugs into the jail by concealing them inside of their bodies.
- authorized soliciting bids for the purchase of a new landfill scale at the Franklin County Landfill to replace the existing scale that is 34 years old.
- renewed a letter of credit with CB&S Bank.
- accepted a bid of \$2,500 from Frost Electric to move the Franklin County Coroner's cooler used to temporarily store bodies from Akins Funeral Home to Pinkard Funeral Home.



N
Northwest Shoals
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

YOU CAN SPECIALIZE

nwscc.edu

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at www.franklin-freepress.net!

Two hired, two promoted in Russellville Street Department

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved four personnel moves in the Russellville Street Department at its March 17th meeting. Kenneth Hallmark was hired as a utility technician. He was hired in as a Grade 6, Step 2. Cody Logan was hired as a heavy equipment operator II. And Michael McKinney was promoted to heavy equipment operator III and Brandon Reed to heavy equipment operator II. These were promotions from the current list from within the Classified Service.

Other agenda items addressed by the council included:

--contracting with Civil Group, LLC for CE&I performance for the TAP25 sidewalk improvement project.

--authorizing Mayor David Grissom and Street Department Manager Shannon Wilson to negotiate and purchase a knuckleboom truck through a Sourcewell quote for the Russellville Street Department and to authorize advertisement to receive sealed bids for purchase of a used truck and, if necessary, rent a truck in the interim period, contingent upon the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation's final claim report for a January 27th accident. A city-owned knuckleboom truck was severely damaged in that accident and the engine block broke.

Grissom said Ingram Equipment in Pelham has a new truck in its inventory as well as five used 2022 trucks with approximately 40,000 miles. The city was given the option to rent-to-own a used truck and if the city purchases it within 45 days, 100% of the \$4,500 monthly rental will apply toward that purchase.

--heard from Russellville resident Pat Seal, who expressed his appreciation to each City of Russellville Department as well as the three local utility boards for doing 'the jobs you're paid to do and for what you do that you're not paid for.'

Seal, the former Russellville Utilities Office Manager, shared examples of service above the call of duty demonstrated by the Russellville Police Department, Russellville Fire Department, Russellville Street Department.

Seal also thanked the employees of the Russellville Water and Sewer Board, Russellville Electric Board and Russellville Gas Board for providing excellent service for the public.'

Seal said some people questioned why he would thank public servants for doing the jobs they're paid for, but in Seal's case, he's personally seen performance by these men and women well beyond their job duties.

"We're truly blessed with the departments heads, employees and utility boards we have in Russellville," Seal said. "Thank you for what you do for us every day."

--heard a report from Grissom about Wilson and Street Department employees Jamie Reeves, Ken Hallmark, Marvin McKinney and Trenton McCulloch, who went to Tuscumbia and assisted city workers in the aftermath of severe storms that hit Tuscumbia late Saturday night/early Sunday morning.

"We appreciate what each of you did to help another community after you were up all night working in our city to clear trees from roadways. You went and did an excellent job over there and (Tuscumbia Mayor William Foster) told us how much he appreciated you," Grissom said.

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

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 4a - 7p



**GROCERY
FISHING
SUPPLIES
DELI
256-332-1324**

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

**14545 AL 187 @
Intersection of AL 24**

George Evans, MD

Offering general medical care services for the entire family



**SHOALS
PRIMARY CARE**



**256.383.4473 Ext. 2021
340 Cox Blvd • Sheffield, AL**

freedom FIBER 
connecting the way to a better future

**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**

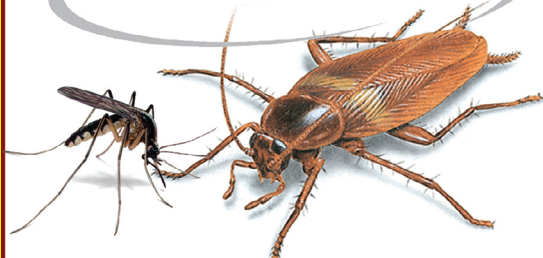
For updates on news
and sports, visit us
online at
www.franklinfreepress.net!

**"The standard for fixed-income
living in Russellville"**



256-332-1561 • 73 Flippen St

Pest Solutions





**Pest & Mosquito
Control
256-332-4008**


What's Happening


256.332.0255

EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS


 **T**he Foster Grandparent Program is seeking volunteers ages 55 and older 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.

 **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. "

 **C**ommunity Action Partnership of North Alabama, also known as Russellville Head 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.

 **T**he North Russellville Baptist Church Youth Group will host a Charity Golf Tournament Four-Man Scramble on Friday, March 14, 2025, at Twin Pines Country Club. Lunch will be served at 11 a.m., and the shotgun start begins at noon. \$400 per team entry, or \$100 per person. All proceeds benefit the North Russellville Baptist Youth Fest 2025. For pre-registration or more information, call Jason at 256-412-9786 or Randy at 938-646-4656.

 **T**HE NACOLG SENIORx MEDICATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SUPPLIES FREE AND LOW-COST MEDICATIONS FOR ANYONE IN ALABAMA WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS REGARDLESS OF AGE THAT REQUIRES DAILY MEDICATION. MEDICARE RECIPIENTS' MAY ALSO BE ELIGIBLE. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT NACOLG SENIORx TODAY! THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS SERVICE. CALL PAULA PARDUE 256-389-0529, 1-800-AGELINE(1-800-243-5463), OR 256-389-0530. THIS PROGRAM IS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE OF ALABAMA & ALABAMA DEPT. OF SENIOR SERVICES.

 **L**ifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on Tuesday, March 4th, 2025 - 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at deborah.lindsey@russellvillehospital.org. Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive a free Long Sleeve Hoodie, an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. There is also a \$40 e-gift card for platelet and double red donors. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES!

Email us at franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.



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.



"We are sleep specialists!"

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

Jeff Elledge's
CREDIT CARS
WE FINANCE NO CREDIT

SLOW CREDIT BAD CREDIT
Down Payments As Low As \$800* to \$2,200*
*According to inventory and any prior history with this dealership.
2506 Woodward Ave • Muscle Shoals
256.383.7979 • 256.710.3711

Send your letters to the editor, guest columns, cartoon panels and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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 Holidays and Vacations.



Pilgrim's

Phil Campbell resident Lara Gunderman crowned 2025 Miss Northwest Shoals

Submitted

Northwest Shoals Community College (NWSCC) dual enrolled freshman Lara Gunderman, of Phil Campbell, achieved a crowning moment on Saturday evening as she was named 2025 Miss Northwest Shoals in the Lou B. Bevill Center on the NWSCC Phil Campbell campus.

"Becoming Miss Northwest Shoals is a dream come true," said Gunderman. "It's an opportunity to grow personally, while growing and uniting our community."

Gunderman has a passion for helping foster children. While at Phil Campbell High School, she started her community service initiative, Lara's Love. Lara's Love is designed to bring awareness to foster care needs in this region. "Having been a sister to 14 foster children, I have seen firsthand the impact that being a foster family can have," said Gunderman.

"As Miss Northwest Shoals, I plan to use my platform to raise awareness to foster care needs. By organizing 'community closets' with Franklin County's Department of Human Resources, foster parents will have items needed to provide care for their foster children. My hope is that my journey will inspire people to open their minds, hearts, and homes to foster care. Everyone deserves love, especially children!"

By winning the title of Miss Northwest Shoals, Gunderman is poised to represent her college and community at the upcoming Miss Alabama 2025 competition later this year. She plans to pursue a nursing degree at NWSCC before transferring to the University of North Alabama.

Reflecting on Gunderman's remarkable achievement, Miss Northwest Shoals Program Director, Savannah Liles, expressed, "Lara's win is not just a victory for her, but for all the lives she will positively impact this upcoming year," said Liles. "We are so proud of all the women and the courage they showed as they competed. They are all amazing young women and we are so glad they are a part of our Patriot family."

Six women vied for the title of Miss Northwest Shoals, showcasing their talents through five stages of competition, including private interview, on-stage question, health and fitness, talent, and evening gown. Alongside Gunderman, other winners were recognized:



COURTESY PHOTO

Ellie Claire Swinney, of Muscle Shoals, second alternate
Livi Boston, of Muscle Shoals, first alternate and outstanding service award
Brookleigh Cockrell, of

Haleyville, talent competition award
Alexis Stewart, of Phil Campbell, most inspirational and leadership award

Aaliyah Prince, of Phil Campbell, bookstore scholarship for exceptional courage in competition

In addition to the prestige of the title, Gunderman receives a bundle of prizes, including a One-Year Tuition Scholarship, Official Custom Jewelry by Creative Jewelers, a year of facial spa treatments from NWSCC Salon & Spa, wardrobe discounts from Cherry Tree Lane, a Bookstore Scholarship, an Official Portrait by Butler Studio Photography, and alterations for the Miss Alabama competition by Savannah Liles. She also receives the Miss America Local Crown, Miss America Crown Pin, Tickets to Miss America Homecoming Dinner and Show in Birmingham on February 22, and other gifts from partners including Judah Nails, Bronze Babes, and the Board of Directors.



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.

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at www.franklin-freepress.net!

'NIL,' From Page 1

athletes in the State of Alabama exempt from Alabama's five percent state income tax for income above \$3,000.

Lovvorn's bill is similar to one recently passed by the Georgia Legislature. His justification for introducing the bill is that Alabama colleges and universities are at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to recruiting against states that have no state income tax, like Tennessee, Texas and Florida. While Georgia does have a flat 5.39% state income tax, it's now waived for college athletes' NIL income.

At first glance, the obvious solution for lawmakers concerned about Alabama schools' ability to recruit against non-state income tax states would be to eliminate Alabama's state income tax outright.

Quite simply, though, that's not going to happen. Instead, the proposed answer is to create an exemption for a class of students most of whom are receiving their education at little or not cost to begin with.

The Franklin Free Press asked its readers their opinions on HB 240, and the reviews weren't kind. Most share the opinion that if part of the population has to pay state income tax, everyone should.

Even with our state's passion for college athletics, folks draw the line when it comes to having to do something when other folks, many of whom are earning significantly higher incomes, don't have to pay.

Kim Lindsey shared her opinion on the FFP Facebook page and it was the overriding message from those readers who responded

to our question.

"Anyone working or earning money should have to pay all taxes and file. If they don't have to, why should anyone else?," Lindsey said.

Consider that many of Alabama's top NIL collegiate athletes are not Alabama residents. Yet HB 240 would shield them from any state tax obligation while saddling most Alabamians with continued tax obligations.

"Why should they be allowed special privileges just because they can play ball?," asked Jeremy Seal. "Can they repair your HVAC system? No! Then why should I have to pay taxes on my hard earned money when they don't have to. Absolutely ridiculous."

House District 18 Representative Jamie Kiel agrees with his constituents and said he will oppose the legislation if and when it comes to a vote.

"This bill brings to light how out of control the NIL situation is," Kiel said. "I don't like the way it works now. I don't like NIL paying players like we have now. At some point, the federal government has to intervene and regulate how amateur athletes are compensated and we need a level playing field."

"As far as exempting athletes from state income tax, the working people across our state would also like to be exempted from state income tax. I get up and go to work every day just like thousands of others in our state. To exempt some and not exempt others is just not fair," Kiel added.

HB 240 has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Education Committee. There's no guarantee if or when it will make it out of committee, but there's some solid support for the bill, and much of that will come from lawmakers representing districts with major universities.

When asked whether eliminating Alabama's state income tax was a possibility, Kiel said that wasn't a realistic possibility. And looking at the 'big picture,' Alabama remains one of the nation's most affordable states in which to live.

"We are the second-lowest taxed state in the country. We tax our citizens at the second-lowest rate," Kiel said. "We have a state income tax, but very low other tax rates. Florida has no state income tax, but their property tax is outrageous, so much that it sends their citizens to Alabama to live because it's cheaper to pay our 5% state income tax than pay Florida's property tax."

With the value of NIL deals soaring, there's no measurable method to calculate how much state tax revenue HB 240 would cost Alabamians.

And what message would that send to working class families and college students who are working their way through school.

Former Red Bay varsity football coach Dale Jeffreys has another idea, completely opposite of what HB 240 would do.

"Here's a better idea—tax the NIL money these privileged athletes receive and earmark that money for scholarships to kids in need," Jeffreys said.

John Thornton, who also opposes the bill, added a little humor to the debate in his FB post.

"I think we should possibly look at grading each player on every play and if they perform well, such as a TD or a sack, they could get a credit for a tax reduction," Thornton said.

"Then again, if they make a boneheaded play such as a dropped pass or a missed block resulting in a sack or fumble, they should pay more tax," he joked.



Franklin County Commission

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

Barry Moore, Chairman Joseph Baldwin, District III
Micheal Murray, District I Tracie Clark, District IV
Greg Hovater, District II Leah Mansell, Administrator

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

Senior Equipment Maintenance Technician, Highway Department

Roadway Maintenance Technician III, Highway Department

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until the position is filled.

Non-Certified Mapper, Revenue Commission Office

Deputy, Sheriff's Office

Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Friday, March 7, 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 www.franklincountyal.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 service

Have an event we can help publicize? Call us at 256-332-0255.



Classifieds

256.332.0255

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 AlASCAN 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 self-publish your own book. **FREE** author submission kit! Limited offer! Why wait? Call now: 1-877-567-9754
LONG DISTANCE MOVING: 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 & RESTORATION: 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 meet 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 (M-F 8am-6pm ET).
HEALTH/BEAUTY
ATTENTION OXYGEN THERAPY USERS! Discover Oxygen Therapy That Moves with You with Inogen Portable

Oxygen Concentrator s. **FREE** information kit. Call 1-855-405-8647
Attention: VIAGRA and CIALIS USERS! A cheaper alternative 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 condition. Asking \$2,500. Call 256-412-0390.
AFFORDABLE TV & INTERNET. If you are overpaying for your service, call now for a free quote and see how much you

\$59.99/month! **Free Installation!** 160+ channels available. Call Now to Get the Most Sports & Entertainment on TV! 844-594-7108
NEED NEW FLOORING? Call today schedule a **FREE** in-home estimate on Carpeting & Flooring. Call Today! 1-877-568-2248
UPDATE YOUR HOME with Beautiful New Blinds & Shades. **FREE** in-home estimates 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. Plus 10% Senior & Military Discounts. Call 1-833-683-2005
 Prepare for power outages 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. Comprehensive lifetime warranty. Top-of-the-line installation and service. Now featuring our **FREE** shower package and \$1600 Off for a limited time! Call today! Financing available. Call

Safe Step 1-844-871-6175
 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
DENTAL INSURANCE from Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. Coverage for 400 plus procedures. Real dental insurance - NOT just a discount plan. Do not wait! Call now! Get your **FREE** Dental Information Kit with all the details! 1-877-817-4697 www.dental50plus.com/alabama #6258

Donate your car, truck, boat, RV and more to support our veterans! Schedule a **FAST, FREE** vehicle pick-up and receive a top tax deduction! Call Veteran Car Donations at 1-877-724-3049 today!
 Replace your roof with the best looking and longest lasting material steel from Erie Metal Roofs! Three styles and multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited Time Offer up to 50% off installation + Additional 10% off install (for military, health workers & 1st responders.) Call Erie Metal Roofs: 1-833-955-3163

LAND FOR SALE.

30 acres of land with frontage on Highway 24. \$90,000. Text or Call 205-551-1026. Text messages preferred. Owner financing available with down payment.

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 side-by-side.

Two burial plots for sale at Franklin Memory Gardens. Located in Prayer Garden. Lot #142B, Graves 3&4.

Two adjoining plots. \$3,000. Please call 256-668-3203.

save! 1-866-816-3535
 DirecTV Satellite TV Service Starting at

New RHS girls' varsity soccer coach Guynn confident about upcoming season

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

After a winning, double-digit victory campaign last season, the Russellville High School varsity girls' soccer team is looking forward to another positive year in 2025.

Under the leadership of new head coach Casey Guynn, assisted by Kat Sanchez, the Lady Golden Tigers are optimistic that they have everything to play for this year.

"We're gonna win the area," Guynn told the Franklin Free Press confidently.

Moving into a different area this year, Russellville will battle against the likes of Lawrence County and Priceville for the Class 5A Area 15 title, two teams Guynn feels the Lady Golden Tigers hold an edge over.

"We do very well against Lawrence County, and I've looked at Priceville—looked at their win-loss record and scouted out their previous areas and previous wins. I think we can beat Priceville, for sure," she said "I fully expect an area championship."

Chasing that season-long goal of a first area crown since the 2022 season, Guynn, a former high school soccer player herself, said a big strength for this team are its passing and communication skills.

"None of the teams I've been on have been

See, 'SOCCER,' Page 13

Season ends for three Franklin County teams at Northwest Regional Basketball Tournament

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

Basketball season has come to a close for local schools this week after the three Northwest Regional tournament qualifying programs from Franklin County were eliminated in Hanceville.

On Tuesday night, the Belgreen High School girls' basketball team and the Red Bay High School boys' basketball team were beaten; then on Wednesday morning the Phil Campbell High School girls' basketball team was defeated, as well.

The Lady Bulldogs from Belgreen tipped off around 6 P.M. on Tuesday night against the top-ranked team in Class 2A, Decatur Heritage Christian Academy. Belgreen, led by 14 points from senior Dacota Green, fell by the final score of 57-34.

BHS, ranked No. 8 in Class 2A, led after the opening eight minutes 14-12 but struggled to find the basket in the second period; the Lady Bulldogs



COURTESY PHOTO

The Phil Campbell Lady Bobcats stand for the national anthem at the NW Regional Basketball Tournament last week.

See, 'TOURNAMENT,' Page 12

Bobcat varsity softball team looks to continue steady improvement as 2025 season arrives

*Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press*

After two wins in 2023 and nine wins in 2024, the Phil Campbell High School varsity softball program is aiming to continue that improvement in 2025, using the upcoming campaign as another stepping stone to a consistent and successful program.

"We're really looking forward to having a fantastic season," Phil Campbell head coach Jason Lindsey told the Franklin Free Press.

"The type of ball we're trying to instill at Phil Campbell, these girls have been in it now," Lindsey added. "They know what we expect of them, they have the hunger to win, and the work ethic they have is phenomenal."

This year the Lady Bobcats have set their aspirations higher, working in the offseason to prepare themselves to achieve their set goals.

"Our first goal is to try to make it to a subregional—or the regional," Lindsey said. "That's a goal all the kids set for themselves in the summer."

The 2025 PCHS roster is a fairly young one as the Lady Bobcats have just three seniors—Siddalee Rogers, Mia Ambrosio, and Kadence Taylor—and one junior. Phil Campbell's senior class may be relatively small, but Lindsey said the group's leadership ability could prove a big difference.

"Each one of them play hard, they play loud, and they don't care to be heard in the dugout," the head coach said. "They're not belittling, but they lead and they tell people what they see and what they need to do."

See, 'SOFTBALL,' Page 14

Have an opinion?
Story idea?



Let us know!

We're All Ears!

256.332.0255

Village at Oliver Place

NOW LEASING

Water included starting at:

2 BR \$505 • 3 BR: \$575

205.993.5005 • 1361 Pike Avenue • Phil Campbell
TDD (Hearing impaired) 800.548.2546 



Shoals Primary Care

welcomes

Dr. Zaman Shah

to the practice
in Sheffield



Board certified in Internal Medicine,
Dr. Shah is an exceptional physician and
a close family member of Dr. Syed.

He will be continuing Dr. Syed's legacy
of excellent and compassionate patient
care with Shoals Primary Care.

Monday-Thursday 8am - 5pm

Walk-ins are Welcome

MOST INSURANCE ACCEPTED
MEDICARE PATIENTS WELCOME



342 Cox Boulevard
Sheffield
256-383-4473

shoalsprimarycarellc.com

361231-1

'TOURNAMENT,' From Page 11

were subsequently outpaced 11-3 to trail 23-17 at halftime.

In the second half, aided by Belgreen turnovers and Decatur Heritage finding its range from beyond the arch, the state's No. 1-ranked team opened up a commanding lead. DHCA jumped up to a 19-point lead after three quarters and finished with a 23-point advantage.

"We came out in the first quarter and led and then played it close ti halftime, but (DHCA) is a great team," Belgreen head coach Chad Green said. "They had good speed, good length, and they were good around the basket. You kinda have to pick your poison on what you're gonna try to defend, but we couldn't defend everything."

In addition to Green's team-high 14 points, junior Makenna Fisher scored nine and Lilliana Willingham added eight points. Willingham also led the Lady Bulldogs with six rebounds and junior Bryn Scott had two assists.

Belgreen ended its first season in Class 2A with an area championship to its name and finished with a 24-9 record.

"I'm proud of the girls. They had a great season," Green said. "24-9 (record), won the county championship for the second year in a row, won the area, beat some good teams throughout the season. Didn't get as far as we wanted to, but I think the girls played good all year.

"They're great kids to coach. They're not only successful on the court but good Christian kids, as well. Proud to be a part of this team and be around them," he added.

The Red Bay boys tipped off after the conclusion of the Belgreen-DHCA game and took on Tanner.

The Tigers, ranked No. 6 in Class 2A, led for most of the game but ultimately fell victim to a second-half comeback by the Rattlers, who outscored Red Bay 33-25 in the final 16 minutes.

With 2:26 to go in the third quarter, Tanner tied the game up and then a minute later took its first lead since the opening minutes. Through the end of the third and into the fourth period the Rattlers opened a lead as high as five points, but with 1:22 to go in regulation Red Bay's Khalil Luster hit a three-pointer to tie the game 51-51.

Unfortunately for the Tigers, Tanner's Daquaylon Malone sank a lay-up to hand the Rattlers a 53-51 lead with just two seconds remaining. Jeremiah Robinson's desperation heave at the buzzer to win it was no good and the Tigers were eliminated.

Luster finished the game with a double-double, dropping 15 points and grabbing a game-high 16 rebounds, while Jaxon Vinson added 10 points for the Tigers. Connor Humphries led RBHS with five assists.

On Wednesday morning, the Phil Campbell High School varsity girls' basketball team started the day's action against Holly Pond, the No. 8-ranked team in Class 3A, and were defeated 40-37.

The Lady Bobcats led at halftime 17-13 but were victims of a second half comeback by the Lady Broncos, who outscored PCHS 27-20 in the final two periods of play. Phil Campbell scored 10 points in both the third and fourth quarters, but it wasn't enough to hold off Holly Pond, who hit six threes in the game.

"We played really hard, the ball just didn't bounce our way at the end," Phil Campbell head coach Craig Thomas said. "Had a few mistakes here and there and had a few turnovers that came back to bite us. So, in the end things just didn't go our way."

Leela Baker, who played all 32 minutes of the game, finished with a game-high 20 points and also led the team with six total rebounds. Senior Macy Hardy led Phil Campbell in assists with four and had a game-high five steals.

The Lady Bobcats ended their 2024-25 campaign with a 23-11 overall record.

"This bunch maybe overachieved, you might say. At the beginning of the year we didn't know if we'd have a 15-15 season and this group came away with 23 wins," Thomas said. "They're gutsy, play hard, and they put everything they had on the line every game. I'm well pleased with the way the season went and proud of this group."

'SOCCER,' From Page 11

able to pass and to communicate as well as these girls have been able to do that," Guynn said. "I'm constantly telling them they've got it, they can do it; they've just gotta get out of their heads that they can't and they've just gotta keep pushing.

"Their communication is phenomenal. They can pass with each other, communicate with each other and they anticipate each other," she added. "So, I think we're ready."

One area Russellville has been focused on is shooting. The Lady Golden Tigers have to replace their two leading goal-scorers from last season, graduates Nadia Mendez and Ermelina Ponce, who accounted for nearly half of Russellville's goals last season.

To put the ball in the back of the net this year, Guynn said, the Lady Golden Tigers will be looking to senior Emily Martinez, junior Kimberly Mojica, and sophomore Maricela Jose Andres, who tallied four goals as a freshman last season. But RHS has been working to prepare every player for their chance on goal when it arrives.

"What we work on the most is passing the ball and getting as close to the goal and then taking shots and following through," Guynn said. "The past three days (of practice) has been taking tons of shots—everybody," she added. "Even defenders have been out taking shots because that's only gonna help with their goal kicks, so just working on putting more shots on goal."

Russellville also feels good about its defense, which will be anchored by senior Jessenia Mateo as sweeper—almost like a defensive midfielder that sits behind the back line and fulfills roles in both defense and attack.

"(Mateo) will hang out in the back and mainly play defense but she can move up as needed," Guynn said. "She told me she's a defender, to me she looks like a striker. She's mostly gonna play as a defender, but I asked her to trust me; she can come up to the midfield and turn to offense as needed. She's a really good communicator at the back and she runs that defense, but she'll move up for me to play offense, as well."

The Lady Golden Tigers also have decent depth. While still fairly young—there are six seniors on this year's roster—Guynn knows she has a deep bench to pull from.

"It's a building year, but I've got plenty of subs. I've got enough subs for my strikers, enough subs for my midfielders, enough subs for my defenders—so if needed, I've got them," she said. "I've got 18 on the varsity roster and 22 on the JV roster, and there's some girls on the JV that I can move up to varsity, absolutely."

No matter who's on the pitch for Russellville this season, they are sure to get valuable playing time and improve considering the teams RHS has on the schedule this season. The Lady Golden Tigers, amidst the all-important area matches, will face some tough non-area opponents like Jasper, Florence, Mars Hill, and Hartselle. Those games, Guynn said, will only help the Lady Golden Tigers in their push to the postseason.

"We play some good teams and against teams like that, the more time we spend on the field together the better they're gonna be," the first-year Russellville head coach said. "The more time we spend together the better their communication is gonna be, the better their connection with each other, their chemistry, their appreciation of each other, and I just anticipate they're gonna get better and better the longer they're playing together this year."

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



JOIN NOW For

\$0 ENROLLMENT
LIMITED TIME ONLY!

Some restrictions apply. See club for details.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- Hammer Strength & Lifetime Equipment
- Cardio w/ Individual TV's
- 24 Hour Gym & Tan Access
- Staffed Hours
- Private Showers
- Free Tanning
- Clean, Friendly & Fun Non Intimidating Environment
- Personal Training Available
- Senior Discounts
- Fitness on Demand Room
- ABS/Stretching Area
- Free WiFi



24465 Hwy 24 West
Russellville, AL 35653

256-331-9003



256-331-9003

24465 Hwy 24 RUSSELLVILLE

'SOFTBALL,' From Page 11

"They did that last year when we had just one senior, but they're just good leaders. They lead by example. They're there working all the time. Some leaders are silent but these three aren't afraid to speak their mind, and that's a good thing with how they use it," he added. "The rest of the team respects them, looks up to them, and follows them real well."

Not lacking in leadership ability, the Lady Bobcats don't lack experience either. While PCHS doesn't have a ton of upperclassmen, it's not like the Lady Bobcats don't have innings logged on the field. What Phil Campbell does lack in total years of experience Lindsey is optimistic the team makes up for in ability.

K&S TREE SERVICE
253 Laurelwood Drive
Russellville, Alabama
KARL RAGAN 256.332.9064
Trimming • Topping • Removal
Bucket Work • Stump Grinding

"We just had one senior last year, so our team is pretty much intact in terms of who's coming back," he said. "While we're still young, we're a year older. It wasn't a heavy turnover, so the experience is there."

"Over half my team will be sophomores, freshmen, and maybe an underclassman or two," Lindsey added. "But they're athletic, they're smart, they play the game well. We just need to learn to finish some games this year."

Finishing games—"growing up"—Lindsey said, has been one of the focal points for the Lady Bobcats this offseason. Detail to "the small things," Lindsey believes, will help PCHS to wrap games up in its favor.

"Last season there were 10 ball games that if we just finish the ball game, we're looking at a totally different outcome to our season," Lindsey said.

"We've been working on the small things, the small details. How to get out of pressure situations, how to make sure that things don't snowball on us and we can finish a game. We're close to winning, we've just gotta grow up in that area," he added. "It all comes down to can we mature enough to finish in those situations and win those games we should win."

Phil Campbell will be aided in its efforts by the return of both starting pitchers from last season, sophomores Addi James and Shiloh Madden. Last season James was a Franklin Free Press All-County Honorable Mention pitcher, while Madden was a First Team All-County utility player.

In the circle, James and Madden have distinct skill sets that Lindsey said can confuse opposing batters.

"They're two different styles of pitchers and that's a great thing about it," he said. "If you have pitchers with the same speed, same pitchers, same delivery, it doesn't throw anybody off much. If you have the same mechanics, you're just mirroring. But these two pitch different, they deliver different, they have different pitches."

"It's nice to be able to pitch one for three or four innings and then you can bring the other one in to close it if she can. But you've got options with them, and that's just from the growth we've had in a year's time."

In addition to his two aces Lindsey added he has some more arms he can throw into the mix, as well.

"Our strength this year is gonna be our defense, our pitching," Lindsey said.

"We've got both pitchers back but I've got some young pitchers playing JV that will come up and pitch for us from time to time," he added. "(James and Madden) pitch to win games and whoever's on or (depending on) whoever we're playing, that's who we put out there. But I've got two younger girls, a seventh and an eighth grader, too—Myah Hamilton, a seventh grader, and Tinsley Pierce, an eighth grader. So, we've built something that wasn't there before I got here, and that's a staff of girls who can pitch."

Offensively the Lady Bobcats may be a little weaker, especially at the beginning of the campaign. Phil Campbell has several multisport athletes who haven't been participants in much of the team's preseason prep and may need some time to get into a rhythm on the diamond. That, of course, could determine how at least some of the Lady Bobcats' season starts.

"We're a small school so a lot of our athletes play multiple sports, so we've worked with 50 percent of our team or less," Lindsey said. "I think that's gonna affect us more offensively."

"Things are gonna depend on what our pitching does and when our hitting clicks. It could click the first game; they could step right off the basketball court and click—or they could take a few weeks to knock the rust off their bats," he added. "That's gonna be the tale to our season."

However the tale of the 2025 season plays out, Lindsey wants the upcoming campaign to be another building block in the program he's constructing at Phil Campbell. That means winning, of course, but it also means making the Lady Bobcats softball family one students want to be a member of.

"When I first came (to PCHS) all I heard was that we only had enough (players) for one team. Last year we had two teams and this year we've got two teams. That's kinda rounding off a bit but that's simply because it's a program now. There are expectations and it's hard work," Lindsey said. "Softball's not an easy sport. It's a hard sport. You're on an island a lot it seems, especially when you make an error or strikeout or make a bad pitch. You need the girls on the team that have been through it to get the girls who aren't playing out, and that's what we've been able to do."

"I want these kids to enjoy this sport; to build a family; to have a team where 10 years down the road they look at what they did as a softball program," he added. "You know, winning is fun and losing is not fun. But trophies, they sit in a case and are great to talk about, but number one we want to build a family where these kids love playing the game everyday; where they hate their season is over because they can't play the game anymore. To me, that's just as successful a season as winning every game or winning a championship."

"Championships are what you want and what you strive for and they're important at the varsity level, but if you don't miss the game then, to me, you don't have a program that's worth playing for. You've gotta build a program that you hate you have to hang up your cleats at the end of the season because you enjoy playing so much. And if we can have that program, build that environment, get kids out to play and build that family, that's success."

Village at Oliver Place
NOW LEASING
Water included starting at:
2 BR \$505 • 3 BR: \$575
205.993.5005 • 1361 Pike Avenue • Phil Campbell
TDD (Hearing impaired) 800.548.2546

EyeCare Professionals
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

Experience combined with youth defines this year's RHS varsity softball team

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

Young but undaunted, the 2025 Russellville High School varsity softball team is aiming to continue its momentum from the successes of the 2024 season, a campaign that saw the Lady Golden Tigers eliminated in the North Regional tournament.

Senior-less this year, Russellville will be looking to a large group of experienced underclassmen to help propel the Lady Golden Tigers this time around.

"We really wanna build off the success of last year, even though we lost the three seniors that were invaluable to us and led in just about every offensive and defensive category for us. We have a good core group of returners coming back. Defensively in the outfield we've got two starters coming back: Ticelee Gholston and Khristyan Huerta. Khristyan will also serve time behind the plate as a backup catcher," Russellville head coach Rick Lawson said.

"My oldest player is a junior and I've just got a couple of those. Replacing my seniors from last season—Jaycee (Moore) in the circle, Emma Campbell behind the plate, and Paislee James in center field—that's a challenge. But we have some younger players who will fill those roles," Lawson said.

"We are a really young team. A majority of our team is freshmen and sophomores, but they all have good experience playing coming in from last year and traveling with us. Their transition has been really good so far. We've also added some players that didn't play last year like Bri McCulloch and Blevyn Sappington, so they've added some more athleticism to what we had last year, too."

Like many team spring teams around the county, Russellville began its preseason preparation without some of its multisport athletes. So far, that has helped with the development of the much younger players and created some competition.

"We've got quite a few softball girls that have been out there playing basketball and cheerleading, so it's been a great opportunity for our middle school kids to get some really great practices in and it's given the non-basketball players—high school players—a good opportunity to gain an edge," Lawson said.

When all the Lady Golden Tigers get together, Lawson thinks Russellville's offense will be its strength this season.

"I think our offense is gonna be our real strong suit," he said. "We've done a good job recognizing the strike zone and knowing what we wanna do at the plate. Our base running should be a plus for us, also. That athletic ability on the base paths will be big for us this season."

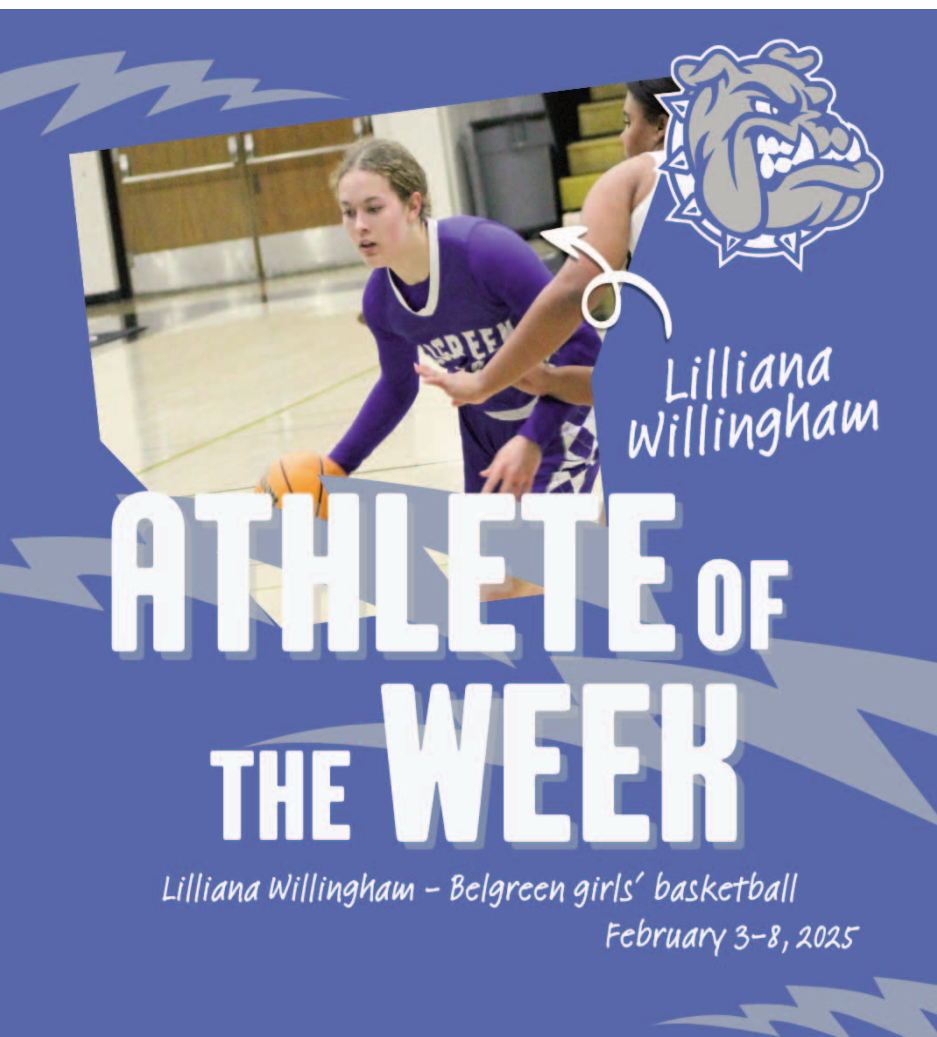
On the defensive side, the RHS head coach said there is some uncertainty given the multisport student-athletes the team has been missing during preseason work, adding those queries can only really be answered when the whole team hits the diamond.

"You have some thoughts inside your head about where everyone will be, but until you physically get everyone out there there will be some question marks about what it's gonna look like," Lawson said.

Lawson said Russellville's success this year, at least early on, will depend on how quickly the team comes together.

"We've got experienced players, it's just how fast can they mature and how quickly can we get them to gel," he said. "Offensively we're doing a phenomenal, phenomenal job. It's just defensively where we've got question marks and it's gonna be about finding that chemistry and where everyone fits in."


"In our area I think Lawrence County is probably the favorite, but I think we can give them a run for their money this year. It's all gonna depend on how our girls mature and how quickly they can gel together, especially defensively," Lawson added.



ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Lilliana Willingham

Lilliana Willingham - Belgreen girls' basketball
February 3-8, 2025



John Almirol, M.D.
Internal Medicine

"Over 22 Years Caring for Franklin County."

Mon-Thur: 8:30-5:00
Friday: 8:30-12:00

Se habla Español

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

Speed concerns lead to new four-way stop at College Ave./Jefferson St. intersection

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

New stop signs on College Avenue to the north and south of the Jefferson Street intersection were recently installed, making a four-way stop for all traffic.

According to one resident though, the stop signs are being ignored as College Avenue motorists are not aware the intersection is now a four-way stop.

Chris Waldron, who lives at the College Avenue/Jefferson Street intersection, many vehicles on College Road are blowing right through the new stop signs, something he attributes to drivers being unaware they have been erected.

"There are now stop signs both ways on College Avenue and it's a four way stop now, but people are running it at a 50% rate. They didn't install any flashing lights on the signs," Waldrep said.

After several residents contacted Russellville District Two City Councilman Darren Woodruff with concerns about vehicles speeding on College Avenue, Woodruff called Russellville Police Chief Chris Hargett and police patrols were increased in the area.

Several months later, though, the stop signs were erected on College as residents still shared concerns about speeding.

"I decided it would be safer to go ahead and install a four way stop at College Avenue at Jefferson," Woodruff said.

The new stop signs were erected by the Russellville Street Department and remained covered for three weeks for local drivers to get used to having to stop all ways at the intersection.

Woodruff said the signs were covered to draw attention to them as being something new on College Avenue.

"There is normally a short time needed for everyone to get used to having a new stop sign in an area they live or work in," Woodruff said.

According to a study by the National Library of Medicine, stop sign violations account for approximately 70% of all crashes, with police responding to more than 700,000 motor vehicle crashes each year.



COURTESY PHOTO

RCS Board approves personnel moves, field turf replacement contract at March 18th meeting

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Schools Board of Education approved 11 personnel moves at a short meeting on February 18th.

Included among those was a contract with Jonathan Willis to provide public relations services for the Russellville City Schools system for the period of February 1, 2025 through February 1, 2026. Willis will be paid on an hourly basis, not to exceed \$20,000 for the 12 months, according to RCS Superintendent of Education Tim Guinn.

Other personnel moves approved by the board included: Employment of Lowell Michels, bus driver, Michael Conner, JROTC SAI (10-month), Emily Holder Craft, ELA teacher at Russellville High School, Kelly Bragwell, substitute bus driver at RHS. Temporary Employment in Position of Janice Aaron, RES/WES aide for 21st CCLC and WES Afterschool Program, Danilo Buezo, Victor Vargas-Cruz, Dayaimi Valdez, Matias Francisco as student workers in the Parks and Recreation Department, and Karlee Faust, WES teacher for Pre-K Before/Aftercare Program.

--approval of a one-time supplement payment to Gayla Mills for additional duties as interim assistant principal at West Elementary School during the fall semester of 2024.

--approved trip requests including 2025 athletic schedule for golf team, February 27-28 for RHS HOSA students to compete in state leadership conference in Montgomery, April 10-12 for RMS Band students to attend and compete in the 2025 All-State Band Festival in Mobile, April 15-17 for RHS FBLA students to attend and compete in the Alabama FBLA State Leadership Conference in Mobile.

--approved a facility use request for use of RHS facilities on September 20, 2025, for the RHS Band Parent Association to host the Northwest Alabama Marching Classic.

--approved an addition to the RCS Policy Manual regarding Academic Integrity and the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence.

--approved a contract with Warner's Athletic Construction Company for football field turf replacement at the stadium.

Guinn shared some upcoming events with board members, including the Miss RHS Pageant on Friday, March 7, at 7 p.m., in the auditorium, RHS Prom on Saturday, March 15 at 7 p.m., at Florence Lauderdale Coliseum.

The next regular meeting of the RCS Board will be Tuesday, March 18, at 8 a.m., with work session on Thursday, March 13 at 3:30 p.m.