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Franklin County Commission approves \$18.53 million budget with 5% raise for employees

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved a \$18.53 million budget for the new fiscal year that includes a five percent base pay raise for General Fund, Solid Waste and Highway Department employees.

At a special called meeting held Monday morning, commissioners approved the FY2025-26 budget divided into three segments:

General Fund \$10,957,011.03, Solid Waste Department \$3,775,835.96 and Highway Department \$3,801,206.02. (The Franklin County Sheriff's Office is funded through the general fund budget).

Beginning October 1, 2025, all General Fund, Solid Waste and Highway Department employees will see the five percent base pay raise as well as any step raises due in the 2025-26 fiscal year. Additionally, the budget includes pay scale

See 'COMMISSION,' Page 4

Blazing a trail: Hubbard retires after 23 years as courthouse security officer

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Sherry Hubbard's 26-year career in law enforcement, at its core, has always been about serving others and protecting the people in the county she loves.

For the first two years of her career, Hubbard served as a school resource officer in her hometown at Red Bay High School. Two years later, she was hired as one of three Franklin County deputies working security at the Franklin County Courthouse.

Encouraged back in 1999 by then Red Bay Mayor Tommy Nelson and Councilman Johnny Cleveland, Hubbard was offered the SRO job at Red Bay. As a condition of become a school resource officer, Hubbard

would have to attend and graduate from a grueling 12-week academy in order to earn her APOST Certification, no easy task for a 40-year-old.

She successfully graduated from the academy in the same class as fellow Red Bay officers Scottie Belue and Scotty Chandler, so there were some familiar faces with her those 12 weeks.

"There were a lot of physical challenges but I was ready and motivated. The hardest part was being gone from my kids (then in the 1st and 3rd grades) for 12 weeks," Hubbard said. "That was the longest 12 weeks of my life."

When she started with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office in 2001 as a Courthouse Security Officer, her partners in that newly-created posi-

See 'HUBBARD,' Page 9

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Adeline Richardson Scott, 86, of Belgreen passed away on September 22, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family with the arrangements.

Mattie Taylor, age 83 of Russellville, Alabama passed away peacefully at her residence surrounded by her loving family, September 25, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family with the arrangements.

Charles "Wade" Oden, 84, of Phil Campbell, passed away on September 25, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family with the arrangements.

Jackie Burns McDuffa, 79, of Russellville passed away on September 23, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family with the arrangements.



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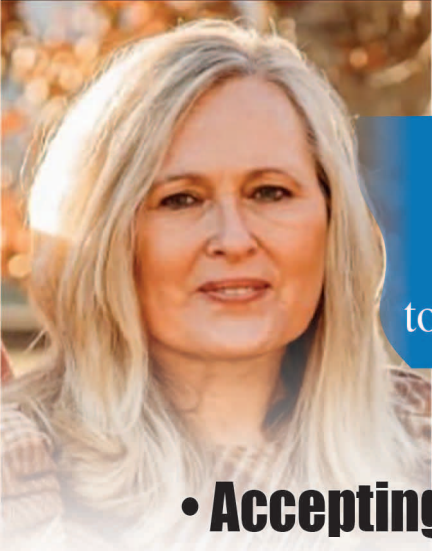
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Correction Policy

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.

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Back to the Bible **by Larsen Plyler:** **Matthew 7:13-14**

Jesus calls those who hear His sermon to enter the narrow gate. You have a choice. The narrow gate will require discipline and sacrifice.

But, there is a wide gate and a broad, easy, way. There is plenty of room there for anyone and everyone and it is "smooth" sailing. Lots of people follow that path. But, it ends in disaster, damnation, destruction.

The narrow gate, the way that is difficult, leads to life. But, there aren't many who follow that path.

This is Jesus' conclusion. He has laid out the path. You can follow this path or the other one. Which way will you go?

Lessons to Learn:

There are only two ways and they lead to opposite destinations. The road we choose is literally a matter of life and death— eternal life and death. Following Jesus is the only way to eternal life. There is no other way to be saved (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). He calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. His will and His way no matter the cost. That's why there are few who follow that road.

Don't follow the crowd. The crowd wants to hold on to too much to follow a hard path and go through a narrow gate.

The poet Robert Frost said, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." Choosing the narrow, difficult path will make all the difference now. It will make all the difference eternally.

Embrace the calling. Jesus knows that what He is calling us to is narrow and difficult. He's not trying to trick us by hiding this in the "fine print." He welcomes me "just as I am," but He will not let me stay that way if I'm going to follow Him.

He knows that persecution, inner transformation, dismissal of worldly praise, investing in the eternal, not the temporary, ridding ourselves of hypocrisy, and loving neighbors like ourselves is a path only few will take. Oh, but the reward is life. So, be one of the few.

There will be joy and peace along the way. But, we will face struggle and sacrifice too. There will be few, but we can find partners on the way. Choose your road (and thus your destination) well.

We're thankful to share these considerations of God's word. It's best if you have a Bible close to evaluate what we say. We want to go "back to the Bible" for all we teach.

Tune in to 100.7 WGOL Sunday at 8:30am for our Back to the Bible Radio Program.

Reach out with your questions, comments, or requests for personal Bible study at backtothebiblepodcast.com.



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48 Franklin County establishments receive ‘satisfactory’ health ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the 48 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the period of August 1, 2025 through September 3, 2025, had scores that fell into the “satisfactory compliance” range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in “satisfactory compliance” and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

48 of 48 Franklin County establishments listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The high score was 99, received by 19 businesses.

The lowest score among the 48 establishments was an 88, received by Jack’s Family Restaurant, 13640 Hwy. 43, Russellville, although this score was within the 'satisfactory compliance' range.

Other inspection scores of Franklin County businesses, in alphabetical order, included:

- B&J Cafe, 1327 Shellnut Loop, Phil Campbell, 97.
- Backwoods Grill & Fish Camp, 2937 Hwy. 43, Phil Campbell, 92.
- Belgreen High School, 14220 Hwy. 187, Russellville, 99.
- Big Star of Russellville Deli, 314 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 97.
- Big Star of Russellville, Market, 314 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 99.
- Broski Inc., DBA 43 Quick Mart, 19460 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 95.
- Cardinal Drive In, 602 4th St. W, Red Bay, 95.
- Casa Fiesta Mexican Grill, 520 4th Ave., Red Bay, 95.
- Dollar General #22991, 10450 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
- Dollar General #25299, 550 Hwy. 19, Vina, 99.
- Domino’s Pizza, 13760 Hwy. 43, Ste. 8, Russellville, 96.
- East Franklin Jr. High School, 1815 Hwy. 89, Phil Campbell, 99.
- El Buen Sabor Latin Cuisine, 104 Montgomery St., Russellville, 97.
- El Jefe Tex Mex, 14204 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91.
- El Patron Tex Mex LLC, 13665 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 97.
- Faelynn’s Place, 3485 Broad St., Phil Campbell, 98.
- Homestead Cafe, 6631 Hwy. 43, Spruce Pine, 97.
- Huddle House, 15485 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91.
- Jack’s #136, 521 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 89.
- Jay Raja, 109 Madison St. NE, Russellville, 96.
- Las Tres Fronteras, 519 St. Clair St SE, Russellville, 98.
- Los Dos Hermanos , 409 Madison St. NE, Russellville, 94.
- Malone Oil, LLC, 23791 U.S. 24, Russellville, 99.
- McDonald’s #23035, 606b 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 96.
- Oliver Creamery, 1121 Hwy. 46, Russellville, 99.

See ‘HEALTH RATINGS,’ Page 5

‘COMMISSION,’ from Page 1

adjustments recommended by a past pay study conducted by the University of North Alabama.

The new budget includes a 4.75% increase in health insurance premiums that will be absorbed by the county and is not being passed on to employees.

The FY2025-26 budget represents a small increase (approximately \$102,125) from the previous fiscal year.

All capital outlay items for the Highway Department, Sheriff’s Office and Solid Waste Departments will be purchased through the departments directly.

Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore expressed his appreciation to those who led the preparation of the new budget.

“I want to thank Leah Mansell and Jessica Thompson for working on the budget so diligently and checking and double checking everything,” Moore said. “We appreciate all the answers they gave to my many questions. Thanks also go out to the department heads for turning in their budgets in a timely manner. We appreciate what they do and the dedication of our employees as well.

“I want to thank the Franklin County Commission for their time and dedication in the budget process. It’s all about working together and they are diligent in their work,” Moore added.

The commission also approved the Franklin County Appraisal budget of \$917,706.49, which will now be sent to the State of Alabama for approval.

In other agenda items at Monday’s meeting, commissioners approved the following:

- authorizing Moore and County Attorney Evan Hargett to sign an Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement with neighboring counties to allow Franklin County emergency personnel to assist other agencies in emergency situations and for those counties to offer assistance with employees and/or equipment in emergency situations.
- approved hiring Shona Weeks as a property clerk in the Revenue Commissioner’s Office.
- approved the resignation of Sheriff’s Deputy Colt Montgomery and Corrections Officer/Dispatcher Alaina James and agreed to advertise for the positions.
- approved a Memorandum of Agreement with Franklin County Schools for School Resource Officer contracts with Brian Vickery(Belgreen), Greg Baker (Phil Campbell), Charles Hamby(Tharptown) and Shane Mason(Vina).

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'HEALTH RATINGS' from Page 4

- Phil Campbell School, 55 School Avenue, Phil Campbell, 98.
- Red Bay High School, 800 8th St., Red Bay, 99.
- Russellville Elementary School, 133 Chucky Mullins Dr., Russellville, 99.
- Russellville High School, 1865 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 99.
- Russellville Middle School, 765 Summit St., Russellville, 99.
- Russellville Senior Center, 201 Washington Ave., SW, Russellville, 99.
- Sabor Latino Taqueria (Mobile Unit) 100 US 31 North, Athens, 99,
- Sonic Drive In of Russellville, 15376 Hwy 43 N., Russellville, 91.
- Swamp John's, 5181 Hwy. 24, Red Bay, 93.
- Taco Bell #037190, 13831 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 93.
- Taqueria Cano's El Centro, 113 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 93.
- Tharptown Elementary & High School, 145 Hwy. 80, Russellville, 99.
- The Ville Nutrition, 112 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 99.
- Tienda Latina Mi Refugio, 412 Madison St. NE, Russellville, 99.
- Tokyo Sushi and Steakhouse, 14001 Hwy. 43, Ste. 17, Russellville, 94.
- Tropical Nutrition, 15480 Hwy. 43, Ste. C, Russellville, 99.
- Vina High School, 8250 County Road 23, Vina, 99.
- Vulcan Food Mart, 28485 Hwy. 24, Russellville, 94.
- Wendy's of Russellville, 13679 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, 97.
- West Elementary School, 1340 Clay Ave., Russellville, 99.
- Willi's, 5680 Hwy. 243, Phil Campbell, 97.

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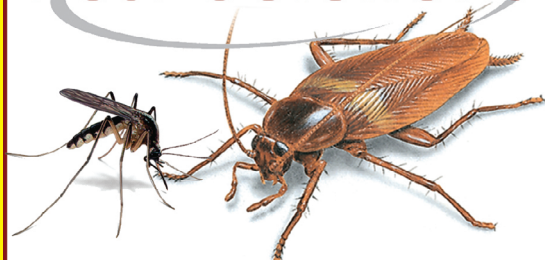
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 **T**he Foster Grandparent Program is seeking volunteers ages 55 and older to help tutor and mentor children in day care, head start and schools. Volunteers will receive a tax-free stipend and travel reimbursement. We have openings for several schools for the coming school year. Please call 256-332-6800 for an application.

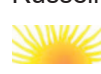
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 **Y**ou are invited to Revival at Gateway Church, October 5-8, 2025. Sunday October 5 at 10:30 am and 6:00 pm October 6- October 8 @ 6:30. Gateway Church is located at 15988 Hwy 43 Russellville. For more information call 256-627-7935.

 **M**y Father's House will host 'Friends and Family Day Fall Festival,' Friday, October 17, 2025, from 6-8 p.m. Come join them for a great time of fellowship and fun! Bouncy house, games, cake walk, hayride, food, candy and fun! Everyone is welcome. For more information or if you need a rise, call 256-460-1376.

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County will host a Trunk 'R Treat on October 31, 2025, starting at 5 p.m. There will be candy-filled decorated trunks and fun for all ages! Church is located at 25100 Highway 24, Russellville. For more information, call Michelle at 256-668-2344.

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County invites you to a Judgment House Experience Chili Cook-Off, Saturday, October 25th, at the church, located at 25100 Hwy. 24, Russellville. Bring your best chili, if you dare! Chili drop-off by 4 p.m. Judging begins at 4:30 p.m. 'Judgment House: The Last Ride, a hayride drama experience will begin immediately following the Chili Cook-Off. Free admission. Family-friendly Western-themed fun with a powerful message of eternity. For more information, call Jean at 256-275-0730.

 **Y**ou're invited to the Littleville Festival Car Show, sponsored by Why Knot Show 'Em Off, Saturday, October 4th, 8am-12pm at the Littleville Community Center, 1400 Old Jackson Highway. Everyone welcome. Cars, trucks, bikes and RatRods. There will be trophies and door prizes, 50/50 drawing. \$20 registration paid the day of show for entries. More info? Call 256-668-2585

 **T**here will be a Car Show as part of the Leighton Fire Department's 2nd annual Fall Festival, Saturday, Oct. 25th, 4-8 p.m., 2225 Railroad Street, Leighton. Sponsored by Why Knot Show 'Em Off. Free to spectate. \$20 registration paid day of show in person. Cars, trucks, bikes & RatRods. Trophies, door prizes, 50/50 drawing. Call 256-668-2585 for more info.

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4-H Youth Are Beyond Ready: Franklin County Joins National Celebration of Leadership, Learning, and Service

Submitted

Russellville, AL — From fairgrounds to classrooms, community gardens to robotics labs, 4-H youth in Franklin County are proving they're not just ready for the future – they're Beyond Ready. During National 4-H Week, celebrated Oct. 5–11, 2025, local clubs will share how 4-H equips young people with the skills, confidence, and resilience to lead in a world full of opportunity and change.

As America's largest youth development organization, 4-H empowers 6 million young people nationwide with hands-on learning experiences through clubs, camps, school programs, and community events. Through the Beyond Ready initiative, 4-H will help prepare 10 million youth for work and life by 2030. In Franklin County, 4-H provides opportunities for youth to develop public speaking skills, lead community service projects, practice financial literacy, raise livestock, wood working projects, compete in STEM challenges, horse club, archery club and much more.

Katernia Cole Coffey, Franklin County Extension Director says, "National 4-H Week is more than just a celebration—it's a powerful reminder of the impact youth development programs have on our communities. As the County Extension Director for Franklin County, I've seen firsthand how 4-H helps shape confident, capable, and community-minded young people. The values learned through 4-H—like responsibility, teamwork, and service—don't stay confined to the classroom or project space. They carry into college, careers, and every aspect of life

4-H isn't just about learning how to show an animal, cook a meal, or grow a garden. It's about learning how to do things well, how to work as a team, and how to lead with integrity. Personally, being involved in 4-H helped me develop the skills to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and follow through on my goals. These lessons became the foundation of who I am today.

For my family, 4-H was a legacy. My parents, sister, aunts, and uncles were all part of 4-H, and the values they gained helped lead them into careers of service to others. That's the kind of generational impact 4-H can have.

I want the youth enrolled in 4-H here in Franklin County to have those same opportunities—experiences that can take them wherever they want to go in life. Whether they dream of becoming doctors, teachers, farmers, business owners, or community leaders, 4-H equips them with the mindset and skills to succeed. The program prepares youth to be beyond ready for college, careers, and life by focusing on real-world skills: leadership, critical thinking, adaptability, and civic engagement.

During National 4-H Week, let's celebrate the incredible potential of our young people—and recommit to giving them meaningful 4-H experiences that empower them to lead and thrive, wherever life takes them."

NWSCC PR & Marketing Department earns six awards

Submitted

The Northwest Shoals Community College (NWSCC) Public Relations and Marketing Department received six awards for outstanding marketing and public relations efforts by the Alabama Community College System Public Relations Association (ACCSPRA).

Earlier this month during ACCSPRA's annual conference in Orange Beach, Ala., NWSCC Director of Public Relations and Marketing Trent Randolph accepted four Pyramid Awards and two Awards of Merit.

The College was presented awards in the following categories for marketing and public relations materials created and/or used during the 2024-2025 year:

Pyramid Award (1st place)

- Annual Report
- Outdoor Advertising
- Public Relations and Marketing Campaign
- Student Success Story

Award of Merit (2nd place)

- Online Advertising
- Viewbook

The Pyramid Awards ceremony recognized best practices from Alabama Community College public relations and marketing professionals who submitted marketing and public relations materials to an independent panel of judges.

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Ability to: operate a motor vehicle; read; safely fire a weapon; communicate on telephone and radio; generate written documents such as reports and tickets; bend, crouch; stretch; stretch; walk; run; respond to emergency situations on short notice; and do the essential functions of the job as directed in this description.

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Possess the ability to obtain an Alabama Police Academy diploma or its equivalent

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Russellville, AL 35653

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'HUBBARD' from Page 1

tion were Andrea Bolton and Darryl Hagood. They were the first courthouse security team and, at times, the public wasn't thrilled to see a security checkpoint as they entered the courthouse that year.

Last Friday, September 26th, was bittersweet for Hubbard, as it was her final day on the job before her retirement takes effect September 30th.

And her co-workers and fellow courthouse employees hosted a reception in Hubbard's honor to say 'thank you' to someone who has helped keep the Franklin County Courthouse secure and safe in an era where incidents of courthouse violence are all too frequent across the country.

Most people only see the courthouse deputies when they enter the building, but the day-to-day duties of protecting the courthouse are far more intricate than just sitting at a metal detector all day.

The courthouse deputies serve as bailiffs when called on by the three judges in Franklin County. Hubbard and her co-workers are called on to escort jury members, witnesses and sometimes crime victims concerned about their safety in proceedings where they will face those accused of harming them.

They assist deputies with escorting inmates transported from the local jails to court. They can also find themselves dealing with a medical emergency one minute and a dispute between adversarial parties the next.

The courthouse has no shortage of tense situations for the public, from legal proceedings to payment of property or vehicle taxes, especially when those tax amounts have increased from the previous year. Hubbard said a dangerous situation can arise with a moment's notice, and she's seen more than her share, including physical altercations in court proceedings, inmates and juveniles in custody escaping from the courthouse and even a bomb threat.

In times of crisis, the courthouse deputies are often the first and only law enforcement on the scene, so there's a tremendous amount of trust and respect required between those officers.

For the past 14 months, Franklin County Deputy Matt Crum has worked daily with Hubbard. It didn't take long for him to realize what a valuable partner she is each and every day.

"She's been a good partner from my first day. With 24 years' experience in this job, she knows every aspect of the job," Crum said of Hubbard.

With a 17-year law enforcement career, Crum is no rookie, but when he started last year in courthouse security, Crum said it didn't take long to see Hubbard's character.

"It doesn't matter who you are or why you're there—she treats everyone the same—with respect," Crum said. "She's so kind and makes sure people find where they're going. She's very patient with everyone. We have a lot of non-English speaking individuals coming into the Franklin County Courthouse and she breaks through the language barrier to help them with the same patience and respect she shows anyone who walks through the front door.

"It's really cool to see how she relates to the public every day," Crum added. Hubbard's servant heart has led her to adopt the food pantry located in the courthouse front hall. The pantry provides free non-perishable foods to anyone who needs them. And it's a special project for Hubbard, as her fellow courthouse security officer Charles Michael explained.

"She keeps up the food pantry and always make sure it has enough in it for anyone who needs it," Michael said. "Not only that, but Sherry encourages other courthouse employees when they come in to support it and bring what they can to help others."

Retirement will allow Hubbard to spend more time with her husband Jeff, their two children Sierra and Zachary and their families, including her five grandchildren.

The county's loss is Hubbard's family's gain. And Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver realizes he's saying goodbye to one of his most valuable employees, at least in a work capacity.

"Sherry has been a huge asset to the Sheriff's Office and to the citizens and to the citizens of Franklin County," Oliver said. We appreciate her and her service and wish her the best in her retirement!"

When she woke up Monday, September 29, Hubbard didn't prepare to go to work for the first time in more than a quarter century. She will miss the job, but has no second thoughts about her decision.

"I'm going to miss the people here. You don't a job for 24 years without developing friendships and relationships with people and that is part of what I'll miss. I really liked my job. And that makes a big difference. I never dreaded coming to work, but for my family, retiring now was the right decision," Hubbard said.



Sherry Hubbard and her family in front of the Franklin County Courthouse. (Courtesy Photo)

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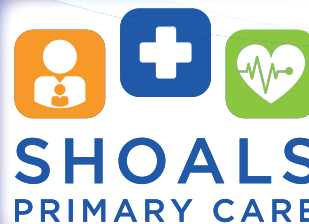
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Red Bay delivers 42-22 beat down of rival Belmont to improve to 4-1

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

The Red Bay High School varsity football team routed state-line rival Belmont 42-22 at Fred Bostick Jr. Stadium on Friday night to improve to 4-1 this campaign.

Red Bay dominated on both sides of the ball to earn the victory over Belmont (4-1). Senior running back Jaxon Vinson ran wild over the Cardinals' defense, adding three more rushing touchdowns to his tally for the season; senior quarterback Jeremiah Thorne connected with sophomore Davien Colburn on a long touchdown pass; and the Tiger defense created two scores of its own in the victory.

"That was a big win for us," first-year Red Bay head coach Tyler Jeffreys told the *Franklin Free Press*.

"I didn't really know what to expect. I thought it would be a little bit closer game, but hats off to our kids—they played really hard," he added. "We got better this week, and we've just got to continue to do that."

After both teams traded lost fumbles on their opening drives of the game, the hosts opened the scoring in the first quarter on a short touchdown run by Vinson to make it 6-0.

The visitors tied the game up on their second possession, scoring on a short run into

See, 'RED BAY,' Page 12

Tharptown snaps 22-game losing streak with 40-12 win over Vina on Homecoming

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

"They got the monkey off their back now."

That was first-year Tharptown head coach Brian White's message to his team, as told by him on the Football in the South Scoreboard Show, after the Wildcats snapped their 22-game losing streak on Friday night. Tharptown (1-4), with a run-heavy attack, defeated Vina (0-5) 40-12 to secure its first win since September 1, 2023.

"That was the first win in two years. They've got the monkey off their back now, so we can settle down and focus on the process," White said on the radio show.

The process for Tharptown against Vina Friday night was pretty simple: Get the ball into the hands of Cody McClusky.

We had a good game plan," White told the Franklin Free Press. "We felt like we had a couple of things we could do to them to score pretty quick, and we did."

Vina drew first blood, getting a touchdown on their opening possession to make it 6-0. But the Wildcats responded quickly, tying the ball game up on a touchdown run by McClusky on their second play from scrimmage before converting on the two-point try to take an 8-6 lead.

From that point on, Tharptown had firm control of the game. The Wildcats, led by the quarterback McClusky, took a 24-6 advantage into the halftime intermission. After the break, THS extended its lead to 40-12 early in the fourth quarter. McClusky accounted for four of the Wildcats' five touchdowns, rushing for three and connecting with Christian Willoughby for one passing touchdown. Austin Chaney, who finished the game with 10 carries for 52 yards, accounted for the other THS touchdown.

The Wildcats pounded the Red Devils on the ground all night, amassing 284 total rushing yards between McClusky, Chaney, and Anthony Bonilla—who finished with nine carries for 56 yards—among others.

See, 'THARPTOWN,' Page 13

Phil Campbell earns 26-10 Homecoming victory over rival Hackleburg

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

The Phil Campbell High School varsity football team (2-3) grabbed a big Homecoming win over rival Hackleburg (3-2) on Friday night, beating the Panthers 26-10 at Parrish Stadium.

It was a complete team effort for Phil Campbell, who scored on offense and special teams and held the No. 9 team in Class 1A to one touchdown.

Third-year PCHS head coach Jacob Hamilton said he was proud of his team for staying focused throughout the week of preparation, despite all week-long Homecoming festivities, and for performing at a high level on Friday night.

"I thought we had a really great week of practice. Our kids were locked in and focused. They want to beat Hackleburg and they want to win on Homecoming," Hamilton told the Franklin Free Press. "Our school spirit has been fantastic this year. I can't brag enough on our students and staff and administrators and everybody at the school implementing that. Our students wanted a big win on Homecoming, and obviously it's a rivalry game—they want to beat Hackleburg. So, even with all the distractions and letting the kids have a lot of fun, we had a great week of practice and preparation and worked really hard toward our goal of winning the game, and we accomplished that. It was a great night in Phil Campbell."

The Bobcats started off the game with a special teams score, a 97-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by junior Chandler Benford to put the hosts up early.

"That was a huge momentum setter," Hamilton said of the play.

Senior Hagen Raper, catching a pass from junior quarterback Hayston Scott, scored the next PCHS touchdown to make it 14-0 in the first quarter before Hackleburg got on the scoreboard with a safety—a "bad play call" by Hamilton, the coach admitted—cut Phil Campbell's

See, 'PHIL CAMPBELL,' Page 12

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‘RED BAY,’ from Page 11

he endzone but failing to convert on the two-point conversion.

After the Belmont score, it was all Red Bay for pretty much the remainder of the game. Colburn scored the next two touchdowns for the Tigers when, on offense, Thorne, who finished the game with 70 yards passing, found him for a 51-yard touchdown pitch-and-catch.

“Offensively, I thought we started out a little bit slow, but we got better as the game went along. We had that fumble on the opening drive, but after that it seemed like we were clicking,” Jeffreys said. “I thought Jeremiah Thorne played well, I thought Jaxon (Vinson) played well, and Davien Colburn has played his guts out the last two weeks. He’s just a tenth-grader, so I’m excited to see him for the next two years.”

After his receiving touchdown, the next time the ball hit Colburn’s hands the sophomore was on defense. Looking for an open receiver, the Belmont quarterback instead found Colburn, who picked it off and ran it back for the score to make it 22-6, Tigers.

“The pick-six from (Colburn) was huge for momentum,” Jeffreys said.

Red Bay’s defense scored the next touchdown, as well, this time on a scoop-and-score. Sophomore defensive lineman Hayden Sartin penetrated into the Cardinals backfield and sacked the Belmont QB, forcing a fumble. It was junior Jamyce Anderson who snatched the ball up and ran it the short distance for the score to make it 30-6, Red Bay, after the successful two-point try.

Right before halftime, Vinson, who finished the game with 197 yards on 21 carries, would get his second rushing touchdown of the evening, breaking tackles and running by defenders for a 34-yard touchdown to increase Red Bay’s advantage to 36-6. Red Bay took that 30-point lead into the halftime break.

Vinson’s third rushing touchdown of the night, a 48-yard scamper, would come in the third quarter and would cap the scoring for the Tigers at 42-6.

The game already out of hand, the Cardinals would go on to score two late touchdowns in the fourth quarter to make the score line more respectable. Jeffreys said he was proud of the defensive effort he saw from his team Friday night, holding Belmont to just one score through three quarters.

“We worked hard all week to be better on defense because we’ve been giving up too many points in the past two games against good teams,” the RBHS coach said. “I challenged them tonight to not give up more than 14 (points) and they didn’t. We gave one (touchdown) up late with the (second string defense), and I told them that’s why it’s important to practice as hard as you can every day in practice because you never know when your time to play will be. But I’m proud of our guys for achieving that goal we set for them.”

The Tigers have now won three consecutive games after a week two loss to University Charter School and have won four out of their opening five games for the first time since 2022.

A late addition to the calendar, Red Bay will face Tupelo Christian Prep in its next game on Friday, October 3.



Red Bay defense (Photo by Caleb Ramey)

‘PHIL CAMPBELL,’ from Page 11

lead to 14-2.

Scott, who finished with 12 completions for 133 yards and 117 rushing yards on 18 carries, used his legs to give the Bobcats a 20-2 lead before halftime, an advantage they would take into the intermission.

“We ran the ball well—I wish we ran it a little better—but our passing game has really evolved and I’m very proud of that,” Hamilton told the *Franklin Free Press*.

In the second half, Hackleburg got back in the game with a touchdown right after halftime to make it 20-10. It would prove to be the only offensive score for the Panthers, who came into the contest averaging over 31 points per game.

“It was a great defensive effort tonight,” Hamilton said after the game. “We had three interceptions on the night. We made some big hits. I was very, very, very proud of our defensive effort tonight in a huge win.”

Phil Campbell would cap the scoring in the fourth quarter on a rushing touchdown by Logan Cooper to make it 26-10 and seal the win for the Bobcats.

The win over Hackleburg, Hamilton believes, will serve as a momentum and confidence booster for Phil Campbell as it heads into the back half of its 2025 regular season schedule. The Bobcats will play at home in four of their final five regular season games, including the October 17 contest against No. 5 Gordo. Hamilton is confident the home-field advantage will be massive for his team.

“Our schedule is really front-loaded and last year we were riddled with injuries very early; fortunately, we’ve only had one go down to injury this year which is good,” Hamilton said. “We also have a lot of home games this year. We only have to go on the road one more time. We’ve gotten our travel out of the way, so the second half of our season we get to play at home and play in our environment. We get to play in front of our fans, and that’s huge for our momentum.”

“We’ve got a good stretch of winnable games, especially at home. And when we play a defensive effort like we did tonight, and our offense is clicking and balanced—tonight we had 200 yards rushing and 133 passing. That’s very balanced, and I love that and our kids love that and it’s hard to prepare for,” he added. “So if we’re clicking like that, playing at home, getting the momentum going, we’ve got every chance of accomplishing our goal of making the playoffs and having a winning season. We’ve just got to keep working hard and hopefully stay healthy.”

Phil Campbell hosts the Midfield Patriots in its next game, a region contest at Parrish Stadium on Friday, October 3.



PCHS quarterback Hayston Scott (Courtesy Photo)

'THARPTOWN,' from Page 11

"We know what we're gonna lay our hat on and that's running the football," White said. "We did a good job of that Friday night. We knew we had some plays where we could get quality yards and we did. We had just a couple of short pass plays to keep the linebackers honest, and we were able to complete those. That kept them honest, kept the linebackers in conflict, and kept them from overflowing on some of the main stuff we were doing."

On the other side of the ball, White pointed to some mistakes that the defense made, but all-in-all he was satisfied with the effort and performance he saw from that unit.

"The defense played pretty good. I think we gave up less than 100 yards rushing," he said. "They did throw some deep passes on us and got behind our secondary with their eyes in the wrong place at couple times, but overall our defense played well."

"We ran to the football, we gang tackled pretty well at times. That's something we've been driving to the kids—running to the football and gang tackling—and I think we did a pretty good job on those things," White added.

Five games into the season, Tharptown has undergone some changes since the opening weekend, especially on offense. The Wildcats started out the campaign running the triple option with a young quarterback under center. This was part of White's plan to get back to the basics, back to the fundamentals.

"We just wanted to get their feet wet," he said.

After three weeks, White and his staff decided, with the aid of some extenuating circumstances, to shake things up. During Tharptown's bye week, the Wildcats prepared the offense to run more plays out of gun formations and put McClusky back behind center.

"We told (the players) during the offseason that about halfway through the season we'd run more gun stuff, but they needed to learn the system and the fundamentals of how to run the system first," White said. "Our young quarterback went down with an injury in a junior varsity game...so that helped us make the decision to go ahead and move to some of our gun stuff and put McClusky back there in that role as a dual-threat quarterback that a lot of people are utilizing nowadays."

As a result of that change, Tharptown's offense has become more formidable. The Wildcats have scored a combined 66 points in the last two weeks, compared to just eight points through the opening three contests.

"It's really helped open our offense up," White said. "I wasn't sure how long it would take (McClusky) to pick up the things that we were teaching him, but he really did a great job of picking it up quick. There were some frustrations early, but it just so happened that we made the change during the off week, so the timing worked out and we had an extra week to prepare before the Decatur Heritage game."

"We're still going through some growing pains, but the growing pains don't hurt as bad as they did a few weeks ago," White added.

Looking at Tharptown on paper, the Vina win is the most obvious sign of improvement. But White said you have to go back to the Decatur Heritage game for the first real signal of noticeable improvement—and emotional investment—with this group of Wildcats.

"I think (the players) knew this was working when we scored 26 points on Decatur Heritage. I'm not taking anything away from (DHCS) but that game could've been greatly different," White added, explaining that half a dozen turnovers was what doomed THS in that contest.

"But even in the loss, that game gave us some ammunition for positivity. And for the first time we had kids literally crying after the ball game because we got beat," he added. "In the past it was like, 'Well, we lost another one.' But seeing those kids crying on the field after the loss to Decatur Heritage, that told us that we were ready to turn a corner."

"Now, how much of a corner we're ready to turn, I don't know yet. But I think we'll find out a lot (Monday at practice) because the last couple of years it's been lose, lose, lose, lose—well, it's just another loss. Now we've won a game—and won convincingly. Now lets see how we react to a win. Are we going to be satisfied with one win or are we going to come in and keep doing the things it takes to win and improve and see if we can't get us another win or two?"

That question could be answered after Tharptown's next contest, a home region contest against Tanner on Friday, October 3.



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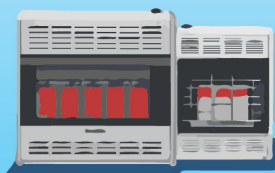
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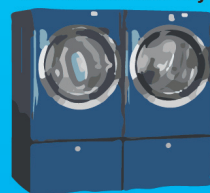
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Belgreen JH, JV volleyball teams win county tournament

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

For the second straight season, the Belgreen junior high and junior varsity volleyball teams have won the Franklin County Tournament crown.

The county tournament, hosted at Tharptown High School on Saturday, September 27, saw Belgreen's junior high team defeat Phil Campbell 2-0 (25-17, 25-14) in the semifinal and defeat Tharptown 2-0 (25-19, 25-16) to win the junior high tournament.

In the junior varsity tournament, Belgreen defeated both Vina and Red Bay 2-0 on the way to the championship round where the Lady Bulldogs faced Phil Campbell. Belgreen secured the Franklin County title with a 2-0 (25-16, 25-15) victory over the Lady Bobcats.



Belgreen junior varsity volleyball team.
Back row, left to right: Kirby Schucker, Brooklyn McGaughy, Caleigh Lawson, Lily Green, Alexa Gault, Charley Hogan
Front row, L to R: Marlie Terry, Taylor Vandiver, Kendra Williams, Kiera Smith, Ellie Pounders (Courtesy Photo)



Belgreen junior high volleyball team.
Back row, L to R: Sylvie Smith, Evey Fisher, Marlie Terry, Ellie Pounders, Makayla Hammond, Ella Walker, Hazel Hall
Front row, L to R: Nicole Britton, Anna Claire King, Debonhi Barrios, Maddie Braly, Caroline McDonnell (Courtesy Photo)

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Limited space available, register by Wednesday, October 15, 2025

Call 256-332-8880



The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. If you need a reasonable accommodation or free language access services, contact Franklin County Extension Office at 256-332-8880.



Franklin County

Agriculture Workshop

Thursday, October 9, 2025
10:00 AM-3:00 PM

Chucky Mullins Center, 814 Hamilton Street,
Russellville, AL 35653.

IPM Smart Strategies

- Controlling Pests in Fruits and Vegetables
- Controlling Worms in Small Ruminants

Join us for effective, sustainable strategies for managing internal parasites in small ruminants and pests in fruits and vegetables. The event will feature expert-led sessions on tools like FEC and FAMACHA scoring, integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, and practical farm-level solutions to reduce chemical use, enhance productivity, and support long-term agricultural resilience.



Free Registration

www.aces.edu/go/5414

OR

call: 256-320-8051



Fall in Bloom: Floral Arranging

When:

Wednesday, October
8th @ 1:00pm

Where:

Lauderdale County
Extension Office
802 Veterans Drive,
Florence, AL

Registration Fee:

\$30

Celebrate the beauty of fall by creating your own stunning bouquet of fall blooms. In this hands-on workshop, you'll learn floral arranging techniques while crafting a vibrant fall bouquet perfect for your home! All materials and supplies will be provided.



**To register scan the QR code
or call 256-766-6223**

OCTOBER

- ☐ Fertilize established strawberry plantings
- ☐ Check landscape plants for damage caused by insect and disease
- ☐ If winter or spring weeds were a concern, apply preemergent herbicides to lawn
- ☐ Plant perennials and biennials, divide old clumps of perennials
- ☐ Plant spring flowering bulbs late this month in North Alabama
- ☐ Plant carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnip seeds

