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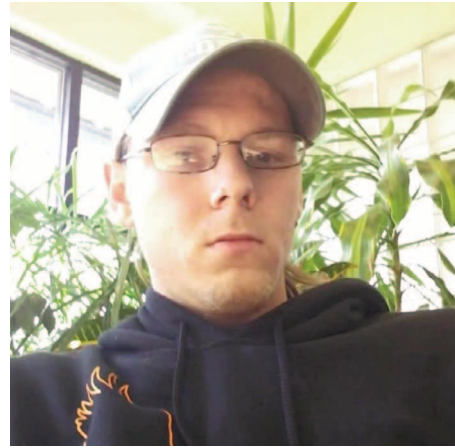
Agonizing one year anniversary comes for family of Gravel Hill man who disappeared last October

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

October 24th was a one year anniversary Robbie Lindsey Head and her family didn't want to see.

Last Thursday marked 365 days since her nephew Timothy Campbell, known to most as 'TO,' disappeared after leaving his family home to ride his four-wheeler before his brother Josh was to pick him up for work later that afternoon.

Campbell was last seen in a video from a neighbor's home at 11:18 a.m., riding his four-wheeler a short way from his house.



Timothy "TO" Campbell
(Courtesy photo)

See 'CAMPBELL,' Page 4

RCS Board of Education honors principals at latest meeting

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Schools Board of Education honored their four principals as part of National Principal's Month at the board's October 21st meeting.

Norman Lier, Russellville High School, Monica Moon, Russellville Middle School, Tiffany Warhurst, Russellville Elementary School and Alicia Stanford, West Elementary School were recognized for the job they do on a daily basis at their four schools. The board also presented each principal with a card and small gift.

Dr. Tim Guinn, RCS Superintendent of Education and a former principal himself, described the pressure-filled responsibilities each principal faces



From left: Board member Radford Hester, Board member Kim Clonts, Superintendent Tim Guinn, RMS Principal Monica Moon, RES Principal Tiffany Warhurst, RHS Principal Lt. Col. Norman Lier, Board members Greg Trapp, Ike Rogers, and Howard Hillman, Jr.

See 'RCS,' Page 5

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Lesha Pennington, 59, passed away October 24th after a lengthy illness. Memories and condolences may be shared at www.akinsfh.com.

Willie Joe Harrison, 72, passed away Friday, Oct. 24th at Huntsville Hospital. Denton. Funeral Home in Red Bay assisted the family with arrangements.

Orbie Jerrel Miller, 93, of Russellville, passed away October 26th at his residence. Visitation will be 11-12 at Spry Memorial Chapel, Wednesday, Oct. 29th, with funeral in the chapel at 12 noon.

David Giovanni Guarcas Cua, 19, of Russellville, passed away Oct. 25th after a motorcycle accident. Visitation will be 5-8 pm, Friday, Oct. 31st, at Spry Memorial Chapel. Funeral will be on Sat. Nov. 1st, 10 a.m., at Iglesia Emmanuel Pentecostal Church.

Dorothy 'Dot' Lexie Holley, 92, of Russellville, passed away Oct. 25th at Arabella Nursing Home. Visitation will be 2-3 on Wed. Oct. 29th, at Spry Memorial Chapel, with funeral at 3 pm in the funeral home chapel.



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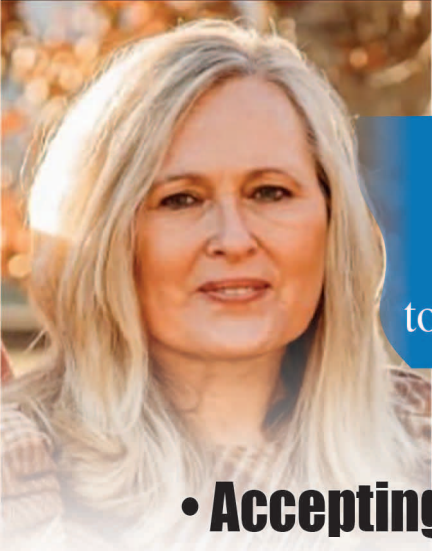
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The Franklin Free Press strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

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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 8:14-22

Peter's mother-in-law had a fever. Jesus healed her and she got up and began to serve. In the evening, crowds flocked to Him. He healed them of their sicknesses and cast out demons. This fulfilled a passage from Isaiah 53.

As the crowd gathered, Jesus prepared to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. One man, a scribe, said he wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus told him to count the cost. He didn't have a home.

Jesus called one to follow Him, but the man wanted to bury his father first. Some good Bible students have concluded that this man's father had not passed yet (because a burial would have quickly followed his death), but the son didn't want to abandon his father. Jesus said that other people, the (spiritually) dead could handle the dead (physically). There was more important work that needed to be done.

Lessons to Learn:

See the nature of Jesus' miracles. Notice that Jesus' miracle occurred immediately and did not require any kind of recovery time or therapy. Peter's mother-in-law's fever broke and she was immediately ready for service. That is the nature of Biblical miracles.

Jesus was able to take care of the full range of issues— medical and spiritual. This continued to certify His power.

Further, His miracles were a fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament. They also served as a preview of the more significant way in which He would bear our problems and issues. He would provide for the healing of our sin by providing forgiveness. Jesus bearing our sins was the way that promise was understood later (for example, 1 Pet. 2:24).

Count the cost of following Jesus. Notice that Jesus did not want this man to follow Him without knowing what it would mean. To follow Jesus means that we will sacrifice whatever is necessary in order to do His will. Jesus does not want to discourage us from following Him, but He does want us to be ready to be faithful wherever He leads.

Don't let anything stand in the way of following Jesus. Jesus wants us to know the cost and to know that there is nothing that should hold us back. Following Jesus may cost someone a close relationship, even a family connection. Following Jesus would certainly merit such a sacrifice.

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 or at info@backtothebiblepodcast.com



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'CAMPBELL,' from Page 1

Since that video, neither the 28-year-old nor his four-wheeler have been seen again.

And every day since her nephew disappeared, Head has kept his name in the public eye with a Facebook post reminding folks about 'TO.'

Over the course of a year, Head's FB posts have become more pointed toward individuals she believes may be responsible for her nephew's disappearance, and they often include a tone of frustration with local law enforcement and how the case is being investigated.

"We know a lot of facts that have come to light the past 6-9 months," Head said. "There's physical evidence. The police say they are 90% sure who was involved with this. And a blood trail leads to who we believe is responsible.

"And we are more than frustrated when it's literally come out of their (the individuals Head believes are responsible) mouths 'Yes, we killed him.' The first night after Tim went missing, (law enforcement) was called out that evening and said they couldn't go into the woods at night and they'd return the next day," she added.

That's the time period when Head believes her nephew's body and his four-wheeler were taken out of the woods by those responsible, and she considers that a missed opportunity by law enforcement to have found him and/or his four-wheeler.

There was a 4' x 4' spot of blood found in the immediate days after Campbell's disappearance. Head said forensic testing confirmed the blood was TO's. She also told the *FFP* the blood spot was found not by law enforcement, but by Tim's father.

Another concern for Campbell's family comes with communication from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office keeping them updated with the investigation. The original investigator assigned to the case is no longer with the Sheriff's Office, and Head said what once was regular communication has descended into limited or no communication.

"We know in our heart of hearts who did this. And the main investigator who had the case is no longer working there. And all the new investigator said is the right thing for my family is just to move on. Frustration is too lenient a word. It's been 367 days since he disappeared off the face of the earth. We want to bring Timothy home," Head said.

A \$5,000 reward remains in effect payable to anyone who provides information that leads to finding Campbell and, as Head explained, 'bringing him home.'

Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver said he and his investigators are passionate about finding out the truth about what happened to Campbell, holding all who may have been involved responsible and bringing justice to the young man's family.

Oliver said the original investigator, Colt Montgomery, accepted a job with another law enforcement agency, but Oliver said the case is not assigned to any one of his three investigators. Instead, he said investigating the Campbell case is a 'team effort' involving every member of his department.

"They have followed every lead two or three times, even some that seemed far fetched. But they've followed up with every one of them. We continue to investigate and build evidence toward a suspect but at this time, there's just not enough to make an arrest and move forward with prosecution," Oliver said.

"This case remains a priority and it would be great to get the evidence to close it and give this family closure. And that's what we continue to work toward every day. We've interviewed numerous people—interviewed some in person, some over the phone. But we've followed up with every one who came forth with information or who we believe could have information," Oliver added.

Oliver said there is some evidence that investigators can't share with family members because 'the whole case could be compromised.' I've explained we want to keep the family informed but there are some limitations on that," he said.

Until the day comes when the case is solved, Head will continue to make daily posts reminding people about her nephew. And she hopes a bad situation doesn't get worse before the case is solved. Head said Tim's father and brother have been harassed and threatened with guns by the individuals she believes were involved with her nephew's disappearance.

"Freddie (Campbell's father). Just wants his child back, either way, so we can get that closure. Gravel Hill is a small community where everyone knows everyone's business. Only the four-wheeler and Timothy are missing. Somebody saw something. If you have any information, please contact the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. And please keep praying and sharing (the posts about her nephew). I pray no family ever has to go through this," Head told the *FFP*.

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'RCS,' from Page 1

everyday.

"I read recently where a principal makes a decision every three minutes during the day," Guinn said. "Today, we recognize their leadership and the countless decisions they make every day for our students and our schools."

October is recognized as National Principal's Month.

Other agenda items approved by the board at its October 21st meeting include:

—approving the Textbook Committee for each of the four schools. West Elementary's committee includes Gayla Mills, Amy McReynolds, Jennifer Willis, Krista Burcham, Jamie Boyles, Kim Eagle and Betty Mendoza. Russellville Elementary's committee includes Channing Wright, Monica Balding, Blair Johnson, Liza Bohannon, LeAnn Little, Jana Hein and Amy Knight.

Russellville Middle School's Textbook Committee includes Kyle Taylor, Michelle Murray, Nicole Jensen, Amanda Ridge, Kayla Odom, Samantha Hartsell and Addie Harbin. Russellville High School's committee consists of Nichole Eagle, Larsen Plyler, Patrice Smith, Jade Bragwell, Alissa Moore, Melanie Malone and Maria Betancourt.

—accepted the lone bid submitted for the surplus property, RHS baseball tarp and roller, from Sheffield City Schools in the amount of \$500.

—approved a contract with Leann Strickland and RHS Band Parents Organization for stadium cleaning services for the 2025-26 school year in the amount of \$425 per event. Events include all home varsity football games and the Northwest Alabama Marching Classic. Fee will be paid out of Band Parents Account.

—approved a contract with Reece Coan, School Resource Officer, from October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026.

—appointed board member Howard Hillman as AASB Delegate and Greg Trapp as Alternate Delegate.

—heard a report from Guinn that Thanksgiving meals will be served at RES Nov. 4-6, WES, Nov. 12-14, RHS Nov. 13 and RMS Nov. 18-20. Guinn recognized Cindy Coan and the system's food service workers for their theme of 'A Taste of the World' during the recent National School Lunch Week, where food was prepared representing various cultures around the world. Guinn also recognized the RHS varsity volleyball team for winning the Area 15 championship. The team was set to play in Hoover on Wednesday, Oct. 22nd against Northside High School, the Area 9 runner-up.

Guinn also announced the RHS varsity football game at Athens High School will now be played Thursday, Oct. 30th rather than Friday, Oct. 31st, at the request of Athens school officials.

—approved the following personnel moves: Retirements/Resignations/Terminations/Leaves of Absence including Thomas Goode, RHS Aide, resignation, Joey Fretwell, RMS Custodian, leave of absence from August 7-December 31, 2025 and Doris Vincent, bus driver, leave of absence from January 7-16, 2026.

Employment of Jonathan Dill as substitute bus driver, Dawn Thorn as RHS Drivers Education teacher, from 9/29/25 through 12/19/25, Madison Booth as RHS Art Teacher, Lucas Shepherd as RHS Custodian and Keri Traglia as WES Special Education Teacher, contingent upon Alabama certification. Temporary employment in position (part-time and as needed) of Jonathan Herbert and Daimar Valdez as Park and Rec student workers

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 **T**he Russellville First Methodist Church will have a 5th Thursday Food Giveaway on Thursday, October 30th, at 311 N Jackson Ave., Russellville, AL, beginning at 1 pm. Please use the back entrance from Washington Ave. Remain in your car, have your ID ready, and allow our volunteers to serve you. Note: In case of inclement weather, the giveaway will be rescheduled.

 **L**ove Packages Ministry is in need of donations of new and used Bibles (in any condition). They will be sent to ministers and missionaries around the world who will distribute them. Donations can be dropped off in the church office of Red Bay First Baptist Church or Russellville First Baptist Church.

 **F**rankfort Community Center will host a fund raiser Bean Plate supper with free live music on Saturday, November 1st. Serving begins around 12 pm. Bean plates are \$10 and include beans and ham, slaw, corn, turnip greens, cornbread or Mexican cornbread, dessert and drink. Live music from the group the Hands of Time will start around 2 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Frankfort Community Center raising money for a French drain to keep water out of the building. Support your community and come see us!

 **J**oin New Beginnings Church and Anchor Investments for Trunk or Treat, Wednesday, October 29th, from 5-7 pm in the Franklin Shopping Center. This event has free admission and all ages welcomed.


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Lifetime lesson learned after gasoline flash fire results in second degree burns

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As I lay on my driveway Wednesday afternoon with melted skin on my hand and burns on my face, all cut and bruised on my legs from diving onto a gravel surface, you might be surprised to hear the words that came to mind: “Wow. I got lucky.”

The dangers of using gasoline to ignite a leaf pile, or any fire for that matter, have been preached to me since I was a kid. I’ve written several articles about local residents who were severely burned using gasoline as a fire starter. These people shared their stories to promote awareness of the dangers of doing just what I did Wednesday afternoon.

It was a momentary lapse in common sense as I discarded what I’ve heard my entire life and thought “I’ll just use a little to get the fire going.”

I poured about half a cup of gasoline on the small pile of leaves in my ditch, stood to the side of the pile, reached down and used a 12-inch fire starter to get it going.

Big mistake.

Within one, maybe two, seconds, the gasoline fumes caught fire and sent an inferno right toward my face. I used my right hand to shield my face as much as possible from the flames and immediately dove to the ground, as it felt like my hand and hair were on fire.

My hairline was singed, my forehead burned, as well as a burn at the corner of my eye, not severely though, and my hip and leg were all cut up and bruised from my swan dive into the gravel.

I first looked at my left hand. Some burns, but didn’t look severe. My right hand was another story. Pieces of skin dangled off and, almost immediately, the pain was intense.

I called my wife, a nurse, and told her I needed help. Honestly, I didn’t know what to do—apply aloe or antibiotic ointment, jump in the shower or wrap it the best I could and head to the emergency room.

Fortunately, she made it home about 20 minutes later after she told me to take a shower with cool, not cold water, which I did. There was no pain relief. I remained in significant pain. The smell of burned hair and skin lingered in my bathroom—a smell I’ll never forget.

After I ran cool water on my hand for about 20 minutes, she applied some antibiotic ointment and dressed my wounds as much as possible. The problem with burns, though, is you can’t use anything that will adhere to the burned skin, so you’re limited on how to dress the wounds unless you have a box of no adhesive transparent dressings sitting around, which we didn’t. So she trekked to the store and returned with some much needed first aid supplies.

It would be the next morning before I could pick up a prescription for some silvadene cream, which is specially formulated for burns. For the remainder of the evening, and through the night, I laid down with my hand elevated above my heart after taking a strong dose of ibuprofen.

Burns create a unique kind of pain that seems to remain constant.

There was some relief the following day after the silvadene cream and fresh dressings were applied. Then the blisters started. Massive blisters filled with something called serum, an amber-colored liquid that separates out from coagulated blood as the body’s response to fight pathogens or toxins.

By Friday, blisters the size of golf balls remained on my hand. As discussed, they are your body’s effort to fight infection where skin was burned or damaged, so you resist the temptation to pop them.

So what happened? Gasoline vapors are heavier than air and they linger any time gasoline is used. I thought standing to the side of the pile, using only a small amount of gas and leaning down to start the fire would protect me. Not so much.

With those fumes already lingering, as soon as I clicked the lighter, they ignited. And they’re faster than I am. Fortunately, I was able to reduce my facial burns with my dive, but my right hand was the sacrificial lamb in that process.

If you’re faced with a leaf pile you want to burn this fall, you probably don’t need any ignitable substance. You can use a small piece of paper or hold a match to a leaf. If that doesn’t work, a small amount of lighter fluid may be used as a much safer alternative to gasoline. But if your leaves are dry, you may not need any accelerant.

Since my injuries, I’ve read a host of news articles about people suffering horrifying burns and even death by doing what I did so foolishly two evenings ago.

I shouldn’t have to have been reminded burning leaves with gasoline can be deadly, with a high risk of explosion and flash fires, as well as the potentially harmful effects of inhaling smoke from gasoline and burning leaves. There’s a warning on every gas pump you’ve ever used: “Highly Flammable.”

And you shouldn’t have to be reminded. But I hope this article serves as that reminder and spares just one person from a completely avoidable tragedy.

“Wow. I got lucky.”

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Letter to the Editor:

"The Swamp That Wouldn't Drain"

Dear Editor:

When the slogan "drain the swamp" first echoed through Washington, it promised a cleansing — a reclamation of integrity in the seat of American power. Yet, years later, the swamp still teems. Its waters are not receding; they are rising, thickened by partisanship, lobby money, and self-preservation.

Corruption in Washington no longer slinks through the shadows — it swims openly in the brackish tide of political survival. The revolving door between Congress and K Street turns endlessly, sucking in new officials and spitting out seasoned consultants. Each campaign cycle brings a fresh wave of pledges to purify the system, but the tide always flows the other way. Reformers, too, learn to breathe the swamp's air.

The tragedy is not simply that the swamp remains — it's that stagnation has made it foul. A stagnant swamp does not merely stay the same; it decays. Without the oxygen of transparency and the current of accountability, the institutions that once nourished public trust have grown anaerobic. Bureaucracy multiplies like algae, while truth suffocates beneath the surface scum of spin and selective outrage.

What was once a metaphor for corruption has become a diagnosis of dysfunction. The swamp endures because too many depend on its waters — lobbyists, media manipulators, and legislators who find its murk a convenient cover. It is not a place outsiders can drain; it is a place insiders must choose to purify, at the cost of their own comfort.

Until that happens, Washington's swamp will remain — not a wetland of life and renewal, but a foul and festering marsh, deepening with every unkept promise and every policy crafted to serve the few over the many.

*Rick Neighbors
Hackleburg, Ala.*



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Help your pet remain safe and happy on Halloween with these tips

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

It's Halloween week, and in Russellville, that's a big deal each year.

With a busy calendar of trunk-or-treat events, fall festivals and traditional trick-or-treating, parents will face a busy schedule with lots of options for their families.

For many families, though, Halloween is also celebrated with another family member—their pet.

According to pet trendologist Charlotte Reed, host of the "Pet Buzz," a syndicated radio show that airs every Sunday at noon locally on WGOL-FM 100.7, Americans will spend just over \$13 billion (yes, billion with a B) on Halloween this year. Of that amount, approximately \$860 million will be spend on Halloween costumes by pet owners.

As with human costumes, there are certain pet costumes that are all the rage for Halloween 2025, and they share a bit of an old school theme.

"This year, everyone is obsessed with 'Fright Night,'" Reed said. "Jason from Friday the 13th, Freddy Krueger, killer clowns, this year is all about classic horror movies, including 'Halloween' and 'Nightmare on Elm Street.'"

And there's no shortage of pet owners who include their four-legged friends as part of their Halloween celebration.

"Dressing pets up for social media photos, going to events for pets, decorating their pets with pet paint in traditional Halloween colors—they're all popular with pet owners. And this year with 125th anniversary of the book 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,' don't be surprised if you see a lot of dogs dressed as Dorothy this Halloween," Reed said. "And you'll see some pet costumes with the Tin Man or the Lion. And there are always the traditional costumes like a hot dog, pumpkin, bee or ghost."

But Reed cautions that pet costumes are not appropriate for all pets. Some dogs don't tolerate costumes at all, but Reed said there are Halloween themed leash and collar sets if your dog doesn't like wearing a costume. And you can always use a Halloween-themed bandana and that's enough for your pet to be styling for Halloween. Before purchasing pet costumes, many of which can set you back \$100 or more, Reed said there's one thing you must do first.

"The most important thing is you've got to measure your pet. Get a tape measure out and measure your pet's natural collar size, girth and length from the base of the neck all the way to the tail," Reed said.

"You don't want costumes that are dragging or costumes with balls or parts that can easily be chewed. Also, before next Friday, let your dog wear the costume a little to get used to it. And if you have a snub-nosed dog like a French bulldog that has breathing issues, they need time to get used to it and don't need any headgear on their costumes," she added.

Reed also cautions pet owners to closely monitor any Halloween treats shared with their dogs.

"The big dangers are chocolate, raisins, and sugar free candy with xylitol, but also gummies can be a choking hazard and these are dangers you have to know about," Reed said.

She also warns about some dangers to cats on Halloween night. Reed recommends if you have a feral cat that usually stays outside, put him or her inside for Halloween night. Some cats, in particular black cats, face danger from pranks or worse on Halloween night, another reason to keep them indoors.

Some pet-friendly people will give out Halloween treats not only to trick-or-treaters but to dogs as well. Reed warns not to give your dog any treat that you don't know the ingredients for.

Some dogs get extremely nervous on Halloween, between the steady visitors at the front door and the costumes they wear. Reed suggests a natural supplement called Vitality to keep your nervous dog calm on Halloween.

Whether your pet is an active, or unwilling participant in Halloween activities, it's best to be prepared to help him or her enjoy the holiday, or just make it through a nervous night.

To learn more about Halloween pet safety, or to hear archived episodes of The Pet Buzz, visit <https://thepetbuzzradioshow.com>.

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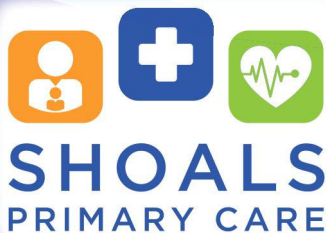
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Russellville finishes region runner-up, clinches first round home playoff game

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

For the seventh time in eight years, a first round playoff football game will be played at Golden Tiger Stadium.

In a battle for runner-up in Class 5A Region 7 and for the right to host the opening round of the AHSAA postseason, the Russellville High School varsity football team (6-3, 5-1) came out on top on its Senior Night Friday night, beating the visiting Priceville Bulldogs (6-3, 4-2) by two touchdowns, 27-13.

"I'm really proud of our coaches and players for how they prepared this week and how they played," Russellville second-year head coach Dustin Goodwin told the *Franklin Free Press*. "Hats off to Priceville and Coach (Seth) Parker; they're a very good football team, and they're sound in a lot of ways, so we're really happy to get this one."

The game was billed as one that could potentially be a knock-down, drag-out between two similar and well-playing teams, but the Golden Tigers took care of business and seemed in control of the contest throughout, never trailing and never looking back.

The Golden Tigers went up 14-0 in the first half thanks to two rushing touchdowns by junior running back Devin Morris.

Morris' first score was from a yard out, set

See, 'RHS FOOTBALL,' Page 12

Historic Russellville volleyball campaign ends in North Super Regional

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

All good things must come to an end.

For the Russellville High School varsity volleyball team, an historically good thing came to an end on Wednesday.

The Lady Golden Tigers, in a record-breaking, area tournament-winning, playoff-qualifying campaign, fell to Guntersville in the second round of the AHSAA North Super Regional tournament, capping a 41-16 year.

"This season was incredible," second-year Russellville head coach Madison Lamon said. "Ending with a 41-16 record is something we'll always be proud of, but the way these girls fought every game, communicated, had positive attitudes and high energy helped us become more successful."

"This group of girls, their grit, determination, and chemistry, there's something special about them. I've never seen a team that fights this hard and has such a strong bond," Lamon added. "As far as the key to our success, it really comes down to consistency, having that confidence and believing in each other. We set high standards from day one and worked toward those goals every day. The girls pushed through every challenge and celebrated every victory, which kept the momentum going. What they achieved together, as a team and individually, is something this program will remember for a long time. I am proud of how each one has carried themselves on and off of the court."

On their journey to Hoover, where the North Super Regional was held, the Lady Golden Tigers broke the program record for wins in a season on September 20, won several regular season tournaments, and won the regular season Class 5A Area 15 title.

Russellville, which won the program's first area tournament title on October 16 after beating

See, 'VOLLEYBALL,' Page 13

Phil Campbell secures region's final playoff berth with blowout win over Hanceville

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

On Friday night the Phil Campbell High School varsity football team was faced with a 'win and you're in the playoffs' scenario when the Hanceville Bulldogs came to Parrish Stadium for both teams' region finale.

The stakes were high for PCHS with the fourth and final playoff spot in Class 3A Region 5 on the line, but if there was pressure the Bobcats didn't look like they felt it. On Senior Night, PCHS put Hanceville away swiftly and ultimately won the game 76-29.

"It's very exciting and I'm really proud of the kids," third-year Phil Campbell head coach Jacob Hamilton said. "(Making the playoffs) was one of our goals, and I'm really happy for our seniors that on Senior Night they got to make their mark and they'll get one more game. "It was a great team effort and I'm excited for my kids," he added.

Hamilton had high praise for his senior class of players who were honored before the game. Without those players, Hamilton said, the Bobcats would not be where they are at this point in the season.

"I've got a great group of seniors. They're our leaders and they mean everything to us," he said. "They're great kids, great leaders, they do things the right way and I believe that's the reason why we're having the success we're having now."

"I told them that this senior class is setting the standard, setting the tone for what Phil Campbell football is going to be in the future," Hamilton added. "They're leaving their mark on this program."

When the game did kick off the Bobcats got off to a flying start.

Junior quarterback Hayston Scott, after slightly overthrowing a wide open receiver on the

See, 'BOBCATS,' Page 14

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'RHS FOOTBALL,' from Page 11

by a long run by his cohort Tarus Davis, to make it 7-0 with 1:39 to go in the first. His second rushing touchdown was a longer one, this one from 24 yards out to put the Golden Tigers up two scores with 5:54 remaining.

Morris would end the night with four carries for 31 yards.

"Being able to score early was big. It put us out ahead and got that first-score monkey off our back, so to speak. That was huge," Goodwin said.

A short field on the ensuing kickoff gave Priceville a decent chance to get points before the halftime intermission, but Russellville was able to keep the Bulldogs out of the endzone and forced them to settle for a 35-yard field goal as time expired in the first half.

Up 14-3, Russellville kicked off to begin the second half, but the RHS defense, which played well all night, made the visitors punt on their opening drive of the third quarter.

Pinned down at their own nine yard line to start their own offensive possession, the Golden Tigers needed just two plays to go 91 yards and increase their advantage to 18 points. A quarterback keeper by sophomore quarterback Whit Goodwin on first down fooled the Priceville defense and Goodwin was able to scamper 61 yards before he was finally dragged down.

Goodwin's long run set up the next one, a 30-yard touchdown rush by Davis, his first of the night and his seventh rushing touchdown of the campaign.

Davis would end the game with 11 carries for over 100 yards, making it his fourth 100-plus-yard rushing game this season.

Priceville added another field goal to make it 21-6 and cut its deficit back to two scores in the third, but the hosts were only interested in touchdowns; the Golden Tigers scored their fourth and final TD on the first play of the fourth quarter on a 15-yard run by Goodwin, his fifth rushing score of the season.

Between Morris, Davis, and Goodwin (who finished with around 100 yards rushing), RHS tallied over 240 yards rushing on the night, the best ground performance by Russellville since the Lawrence County game in week three.

After beating West Point the previous week mostly through the air, Russellville's ability to knock off Priceville with an efficient and effective ground attack shows that the Golden Tigers can and will attack an opponent in whichever way works best for them.

"That's the importance of being multiple," Goodwin said of his offensive philosophy. "Each defense is going to have its strengths and weaknesses, and whatever those may be you have to have a way to capitalize on those things."

"I thought our kids did a really good job of making some adjustments throughout the game which allowed us to do things in the air and on the ground," he added. "If we can be a two-headed monster like that then I think we should generally have success moving the football, and then it just comes down to finishing drives, knowing your assignment, and playing with effort, which our kids have done a great job of this whole year."

Priceville tacked on a late touchdown with 6:42 remaining in the game to make it 27-13. (RHS missed the extra point after its final touchdown.)

But the Bulldogs' ensuing onside kick attempt was recovered by junior Keifer Hallmark, and RHS was able to drain a lot of the remaining clock away before giving it back. Priceville's final fruitless drive ended in a turnover on downs and allowed the Golden Tigers to get into victory formation.

Priceville's 13 points were its third fewest in a game this year, coinciding with the Bulldogs' three defeats. Russellville's defensive effort to hold a team that averaged 33.5 points per game going into the contest was a tremendous one.

"I thought our defense played really, really well," Goodwin said.

"Priceville's a good football team. They have a good offense that does a lot of things well. They've got a lot of good players, a lot of speed, so to hold them to two scores was huge," he added.

The victory gave the Golden Tigers the added bonus of a win on Senior Night. And it won't be the last game at Golden Tiger Stadium for the class of 2026, either, as the Golden Tigers will host Boaz, the third place team from Region 8, in the first round of the playoffs on November 7.

"You have the familiarity of the place and you get to play in the comfort of your own home, so we're extremely excited about the opportunity to get another home game. The fact that it's the playoffs makes it even sweeter," Goodwin said.

But first the Golden Tigers have one more regular season game to play. RHS will travel to Class 6A Athens for its regular season finale on Thursday, October 30.

Goodwin said the idea is to try to go in and beat a good playoff-caliber opponent but at the same time the Golden Tigers want to make sure they are ready for the playoffs in two weeks time.

"For and foremost we need to stay healthy," Goodwin said. "It's a non-region opponent, but it will be a good game against a good opponent. Coach (Cody) Gross is a good coach and has been doing it for awhile."

"It's going to be a good test going into the playoffs...but we want to get out of there at full strength so we can give a playoff run everything we've got," he added.



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'VOLLEYBALL,' from Page 11

Lawrence County 3-1, advanced to the regional tournament for the first time since 2014 and opened the competition against the Area 9 runner-up Northside Lady Rams, a match that had to be one of the closest and hardest fought of the regional.

Russellville got off to a hot start in the first set against NHS, opening up an 8-0 lead before the Lady Rams got on the board. RHS maintained an eight-point advantage for a little longer until, about halfway through the set, Northside went on a run to cut Russellville's lead to 15-12.

The Lady Golden Tigers needed a run of their own to give themselves a little more breathing room again, but both sides traded blows until sophomore Blevyn Sappington ended the set with a kill that gave RHS the 25-20 win.

The second set was bookended by Northside runs that would see the Lady Rams level the score.

In set two, NHS went up 4-0 to start and held a 12-9 advantage before RHS started to attempt a comeback. A quick burst from Russellville saw the Lady Golden Tigers tie and then take their first lead of the set, 14-13, after a Northside attack error. But after trading a few points, NHS got streaky again late and outscored RHS 10-3 to close the set out, winning it 25-18.

The match tied at 1-1, Northside took the momentum into the third set—a set the Lady Rams ultimately won, but RHS contested to the bitter end.

After RHS took the first point of the set, NHS put together a slew of rallies that saw the Lady Rams go up 11-6 before Russellville was able to find a firm foothold in the set.

Cutting Northside's lead down to two points, 11-9, after a service ace by senior setter Fatima Ramirez, that's where things stood in a near stalemate that lasted until the end of the set. Late in the set, Russellville tied the game up from behind five times—three times on kills by senior Laila Hill—and at one point held a 24-23 lead, its first since the opening point.

Unfortunately for RHS, Northside used a timeout and two service aces to help retake the lead and finally won on an attack error by Russellville.

From 1-0 up to 2-1 down, the Lady Golden Tigers now faced a monumental fourth set—and it didn't get off to a great start for Russellville.

Just like in the second set, Northside jumped out to a 4-0 lead and went up 8-4 before a service error allowed the Lady Golden Tigers a path. From that point, Russellville—aided by a block by eighth-grader Samantha Wilson, errors by Northside, and three aces from Ramirez—went on a 10-2 run to go up 15-10.

Russellville maintained that advantage and then extended it late thanks to a couple of blocks by Bella Malone, two aces by Sappington, and kills by Hill and Wilson, Wilson's kill being the point that won RHS the set 25-19 and tied the match back up at two sets apiece.

The tiebreaking fifth and final set, the result of which would end one team's season, played out with as much drama as the previous four.

After Northside took the opening point, the two teams battled point for point and at no time in the set did either lead by more than three.

Russellville went down 5-3 before clawing back to take a 9-6 lead. But Northside didn't go down without a fight; the Lady Rams tied the match back up 10-10 to force a Russellville timeout.

Lamon's called break ultimately worked in her team's favor. RHS scored the next three points after the timeout to go up 13-10 before kills by Hill and Wilson ended the set 15-12 and the match 3-2 in Russellville's favor.

In the end, the five-set thriller came down to just a handful of runs, individual effort plays, and crucial momentum swingers.

"I think some of our strong servers picked us up there, and my girls are just diving for the ball and getting there to block and recover," Lamon told the Franklin Free Press a few minutes after the match.

The Russellville crowd, especially the students, can also take some credit in the Lady Golden Tigers' first round victory. Golden Tiger fans filled up the row of bleachers set up just behind the visitor side endline and were there to badger every Northside player that went back to serve, resulting in more than a few serves into the net.

"I also want to take a moment to thank our parents, administration, coaches, student body, and all of our supporters and fans. It changes the atmosphere of the game when you have a crowd like we had. Their encouragement and belief in this program mean the world to us. We couldn't have accomplished any of this without their support," Lamon said after the day was over.

In a cliched turn of phrase, in a match that could've gone either way, Russellville's result against Northside could've just come down to something as simple as who wanted it more.

"I'm so proud of them for not giving up," Lamon added of her players. "They showed grit even when our backs were against the wall. They pushed through, and they're showing they really want it, they want to be here and that they deserve to be here."

Celebrating the program's first regional tournament victory couldn't last long, however. Less than two hours after taking Northside the distance, the Lady Golden Tigers were set to face off against Guntersville, who came into the match with a 58-5 record and ranked No. 1 in Class 5A by MaxPreps.com.

Whether due to the physically and emotionally taxing nature of the Northside game or because the Guntersville Lady Wildcats are an incredibly good and talented team—probably a combination of both—Russellville was unable to keep pace with the five-time state champs and were eliminated in straight sets.

GHS doubled up on Russellville 25-12 in the first set; won the second set 25-19 after beating back a Russellville comeback attempt; and defeated RHS 25-12 again in the final set.

"The Guntersville match was intense," Lamon told the FFP. "We went into the game with a lot of emotion after the previous match, and I know it took a lot out of us physically and mentally. But our girls are tough—they fight through adversity like no other group I've coached.

"Honestly, every game this season has been a lesson in resilience, and they showed that yet again in the Guntersville game, especially in the second set," she added. "They knew it wasn't going to be easy and knew it was something that they were going to have to fight for and be on their 'A' game and it just didn't fall in our favor."

The loss to Guntersville ended Russellville volleyball's campaign but didn't do anything to take away from what the Lady Golden Tigers achieved in 2025.

In fact, there were still two more individual achievements reached on October 22. Joining sophomore libero Bri McCulloch, who set the single-season digs record in September, seniors Laila Hill and Fatima Ramirez, in their final two matches for RHS, broke the single-season records for kills and assists, respectively.

Both seniors, Lamon said, not only etched their names into the program's record books but also into the program's foundation for the future.

"Our seniors, Laila and Fatima, are the heart and soul of this team. Both of them have reached milestones that speak to their dedication and hard work, and they've set such a high bar for future players," the RHS head coach said. "They've poured everything into this program, and their leadership has been part of the glue that held us together at times through the ups and downs.

"They've left a legacy, not just with their individual accomplishments, but in the way they've mentored and inspired some of the younger players. They'll always hold a special place in my heart and in the history of this program, as well," Lamon added.

While the two seniors played vital roles for the Lady Golden Tigers this past year, they were the two oldest of a young squad overall. The rest of the squad consisted of three juniors, seven sophomores, and an eighth-grader. This season, the aforementioned sophomore McCulloch finished her campaign as the program's career leader in digs and led the state in that category; sophomore Blevyn Sappington finished behind Hill as the team's kills leader; and sophomore Bella Malone was a team leader in blocks, just to name a few.

The young Lady Golden Tigers aged only a few months over the course of the campaign but grew years in experience and maturity—and played like it, too.

"It's easy to forget how young we are because this group plays with such maturity. Our younger players have been phenomenal this season, and honestly, I think they've exceeded expectations. The way they've stepped up has been inspiring," Lamon said. "Thinking ahead to next season—there's so much potential with this group. We'll take what we've learned from this season and build on it, focusing on developing that depth and continuing to grow both individually and as a team. Our foundation is strong, and I'm excited to see where this group can go in the coming years."

The future of Russellville volleyball, it's safe to say, is bright. But whatever success the Lady Golden Tigers achieve in the future, it will all point back to what this group of Russellville players and what they were able to accomplish in an historic 2025.

"It's just been an amazing year," Lamon said. "This team is more than just a collection of players, they're a family. They've broken records, laid a foundation, and now it's time to continue pushing forward."

'BOBCATS,' from Page 11

first play from scrimmage and having his rushing touchdown called back later in the drive, found senior Hagen Raper for a 28-yard touchdown pass-and-catch to put the hosts up 7-0 after the extra point.

Almost immediately the Bobcats regained possession thanks to an interception thrown on Hanceville's first play from scrimmage. That gave the Bobcats fantastic field position and they took advantage of it a couple plays later. A Scott completion to receiver Austin Elliott took the ball down to the HHS two-yard line where running back Braxton Downey was able to cap the drive with a rushing touchdown to put PCHS up 13-0 with 9:55 left in the first.

A Bulldog safety a little later in the quarter gave the Bobcats a 15-0 lead and led to Hanceville kicking the ball off to PCHS. On that kick, Raper recovered it from the PCHS 48-yard line and took it all the way back for a special teams score.

Raper's second touchdown of the first quarter gave his team the 21-0 advantage.

Hanceville was able to pull a touchdown back with 4:11 still left to play in the opening period, but Bobcats were once again able to strike quickly and respond. On the first play from scrimmage after the kickoff, Scott hit Elliott for a long, 61-yard touchdown to put PCHS back up by three scores.

From there the rout was really on (if it wasn't already). PCHS would go on to score 48 more points in the game. Scott would finish the game with 14 completions, including four for touchdowns which were caught by senior Jayden Taylor, junior Chandler Benford, Raper, and Elliott.

On the ground, Downey ended his night with 13 carries for 178 yards and Raper had three rushes for 86 yards and a score. Scott also recorded a rushing touchdown.

"We were able to execute our offense. We were throwing it really well and efficiently but also able to keep the ground game going. It was a great offensive night," Hamilton said.

The PCHS head coach added that a lot of younger and inexperienced players were able to get game-time reps and contribute, as well.

"We were able to get the young bucks in and I'm glad that everyone got to play, everyone got to get the experience," he said.

In addition to clinching a postseason berth and getting a big win on Senior Night, Phil Campbell's victory also set a new program record for points scored in a game. The Bobcats' 76 points broke a mark set last year in their 64-22 win over Red Bay.

"We set the school record again for points in a game. We did that last year against Red Bay, and it was another goal the kids had at the beginning of the year—they wanted to break that record again. I'm glad we were able to do that," Hamilton said. Speaking of Red Bay, that's who the Bobcats will wrap up their regular season against next week.

After blowing out a two-win Tigers team last campaign, Phil Campbell will be up against a much-improved Red Bay that has claimed a region title and will boast an 8-1 record heading into the matchup.

Both teams have clinched postseason berths but neither are looking past each other in this regular season finale rivalry game.

For Hamilton and the Bobcats there's also more than just bragging rights at stake; a win over the Tigers would give PCHS a winning regular season for the first time in three years.

"We're going to be heavily focused on this Red Bay game just because it means so much," Hamilton said. "(A win) would give us a winning season; it's Red Bay, it's a rivalry game, and they've gotten so much better. Coach (Tyler) Jeffreys has done a really great job, and they're a really good football team.

"It's going to be a great game, an intense game," he added. "Obviously we're excited to make the playoffs, but we're not finished yet. Our goal is a winning season and Red Bay is in the way of that.

"We've got to have a great week of practice and we've got to be prepared because we want that one. It's also potentially our seniors' last night playing in Parrish Stadium, so we want to go out with a bang. The kids know the task at hand, they know Red Bay is a good team and we've got to be ready for them. We'll wait to start looking at Piedmont (PCHS' first round playoff opponent) after that."

PHIL CAMPBELL FOOTBALL



HAYSTON SCOTT

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

ATHLETE
of the
WEEK

OCTOBER 20-25, 2025



The FFP Athlete of the Week for October 20-25 is Phil Campbell football's Hayston Scott, who accounted for 356 yards of total offense and 5 touchdowns in the Bobcats' 76-29 win over Hanceville. The junior quarterback finished the game with 267 yards through the air with 4 TDs and rushed for 89 yards on three carries and a touchdown.

Red Bay completes perfect region campaign, beats Tanner on the road 44-21

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

The Red Bay High School varsity football team (8-1, 5-0) continued its winning ways on Friday night, dispatching the Tanner High School Rattlers 44-21 in its region finale to record a perfect region campaign for the first time since 2019.

The hosts Tanner (3-6, 2-3) kept within striking distance for much of the game, but the Tigers were ultimately able to come away with the 23-point victory.

"I think we started off pretty good, but we kind of let them back into the game. Hats off to (Tanner's) team; they played a really good game, and played hard—they've got a good football team," first-year Red Bay head coach Tyler Jeffreys told the *Franklin Free Press*. "We made some adjustments to get the win, but we made too many mistakes that we can't make.

"Tonight I thought we had several kids that stepped up for us and helped us win," he added.

The Tigers got off to a hot start with three unanswered touchdowns before the first quarter buzzer sounded.

Senior Jaxon Vinson opened the scoring in the contest on a six-yard touchdown run in the first quarter to give the visitors a 7-0 advantage after the extra point. It was Vinson's 21st instance of finding the endzone on the ground this season.

Vinson's TD was followed up by a long, 76-yard touchdown pitch-and-catch from senior quarterback Jeremiah Thorne to sophomore receiver Davien Colburn, who tip-toed down the sideline and made two or three defenders miss along the way to put the Tigers up 15-0 after the two-point conversion.

The quarterback Thorne had a hand in Red Bay's third touchdown of the quarter, hitting his brother Joshua Thorne on a screen pass that went for 56 yards and the score with 0:38 left in the opening period of play. That touchdown made it 22-0, RBHS, after the extra point.

"Joshua Thorne stepped up for us tonight and made some big plays," Jeffreys said.

Tanner answered with its first score in the second quarter to make it 22-7 at the halftime intermission.

After the break, the hosts cut their deficit to one score on a touchdown to start the second half, making it 22-14.

Red Bay responded with its second rushing touchdown of the game, but this time it was the receiver Colburn who took the pitch on the end-around and went 48-yard for his second touchdown of the night. That put the Tigers back up 28-14 in the third quarter.

Jeremiah Thorne added a rushing touchdown to the two he had already tossed to make it 36-14.

The two teams would trade scores in the final period of play.

Tanner scored on a long touchdown pass to make it 36-21 before Joshua Thorne capped the scoring with a short touchdown run from inside the five yard line with 38 seconds left to give the game its final 44-21 scoreline.

Red Bay, who has still yet to break into the Alabama Sports Writers Association's top 10 in Class 2A despite receiving votes over the last few weeks, has known its early playoff fate since last Friday night, October 17, when it demolished region foe Decatur Heritage to claim the region title. Now the Tigers know who they will host in the first round of the AHSAA playoffs on November 7: Sand Rock High School of Region 7.

However, there is still one more team left for the Tigers to play in the regular season before they can host the Wildcats; that's rival Phil Campbell, who beat the Tigers 64-22 last year.

Jeffreys said the Tigers aren't looking two weeks ahead; the focus is now on the Bobcats.

"We can't be complacent," he said. "Our kids have definitely come on and done a great job—I feel like I say that week in and week out. But at this point every game is a playoff game. Phil Campbell is a good team, they're a playoff team, and they're that caliber of team.

"It's as simple as this: (Phil Campbell) is a good football team. They're capable of getting after us, and we've just got to take it as another game and we can't do anything different," he added. "It's a rivalry game. We've gotta prepare for them and keep doing what we do. We're not gonna do anything different."



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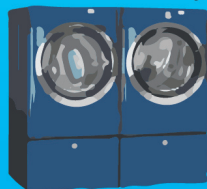


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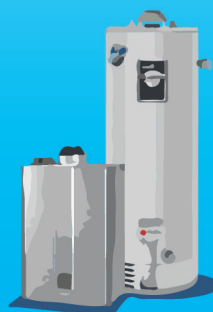
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