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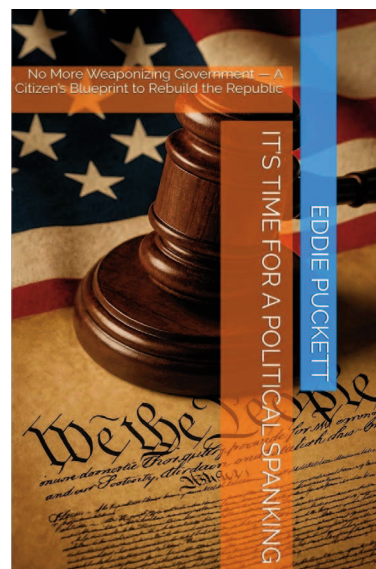
RUSSELLVILLE

Vina author's new release focuses on reforming American government

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With the divide between the two major political parties in the United States at an all-time high, one Franklin County man offers a pathway to reforming government in his new book.

Vina resident Eddie Puckett's latest release, "It's Time for a Political Spanking: No More Weaponizing Government—A Citizen's Blueprint to Rebuild the Republic," pulls no punches, with a scathing review of American politics and its continued erosion as a result of partisan politics.



See 'REFORM,' Page 4

FCCDC grant recipients include Russellville Middle School, Tharptown band

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Community Development Commission met November 21, 2025, and awarded grants to multiple schools and first responder agencies.

The commission, which includes Brad Bolton, Jeremy Campbell and Red Bay mayor Mike Shewbart, meets quarterly to review grant applications. The commission is comprised of two appointees from Franklin County's legislative delegation and a rotating seat between the mayors of Russellville and Red Bay. Sen. Larry Stutts reappointed Bolton and Rep. Jamie Kiel reappointed Campbell to another four-year term.

With the most recent grants, more than \$3,170,760.08 has been returned to Franklin County since the inception of the funding. The funds come from in lieu of tax payments from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Grant awards for the November 21st meeting included:

- \$500 to Tharptown High School Band for new uniforms.
- \$800 to Belgreen Elementary School for computer lab upgrade to equipment.
- \$250 to Red Bay basketball for TipOff Club sponsorship.
- \$800 to Russellville Middle School for purchase of translation devices.
- \$800 to Belgreen High School for materials for Math Resource Library.
- \$800 to Franklin County Sheriff

See 'FCCDC,' Page 4



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Mildred Jeanette Hood, age 100, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, November 23, 2025, at Russellville Hospital. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Patricia Dean Lane, age 81, of Russellville, passed away on Sunday, November 23, 2025, at her residence. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Ruby Lee Streetman Britton, age 92, of Belgreen passed away on November 23, 2025. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Betty Fancher, 94, died Sunday, November 30, 2025 at Generations of Red Bay. Deaton Funeral Home assisted with the arrangements.



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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 9:18-34

A synagogue ruler came to find Jesus because his little girl died. But, he had confidence that Jesus could raise her. On the way to the house, a woman with a 12 year blood issue touched the fringe of Jesus' garment, seeking healing. When she touched Him, Jesus turned, saw her, and commended her faith which He said had made her well. Perhaps He wanted her to know it wasn't magic or superstition that had healed her. It was her faith in Him.

When Jesus made it to the ruler's house, there was a commotion of weepers. Jesus said they should leave because she was just asleep. They laughed. But, Jesus went in and raised her like He was waking her from sleep.

Jesus left and two blind men cried out for mercy from the "Son of David." They were blind, but they saw who He was. They had faith in His ability. Jesus touched their eyes and they were healed. He wanted them to keep to themselves about it, but they spread the word.

Leaving there, folks brought a man who was mute from demon oppression. Jesus cast out the demon and the man spoke. The crowds were amazed and said nothing like what was happening had ever been seen in Israel.

Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees, said He did this by the devil's power. Jesus will address that accusation later.

Lessons to Learn:

Jesus— more than a carpenter. If Jesus was only a carpenter from Nazareth, the only help He could have offered was to build a casket. But, He was more. He was able to wake her from her sleep. That's all death for those who have Christ will be (I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:13-18).

Remember that Jesus' healings and miracles, whether it is raising the dead or healing the blind, point to His ultimate spiritual power. He longs to give us true life and real sight.

Notice the opposition against Jesus. They were so hard-hearted and closed to Jesus that they would say seemingly anything to keep others from believing in Him. We must be careful that we do not let our ways, traditions, or pride stand in the way of seeing the truth. Jesus is revealed to us in the Scriptures. Consider that those who oppose Jesus or some aspect of His will may have some prejudice or desire to keep Him from being the Lord or His will from being true. Don't let folks whose sin or bitterness shape their thinking convince you to doubt Jesus.

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.

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**LISTEN
NOW**



'REFORM,' from Page 1

Puckett, a retired dispatcher whose career as a public safety professional spans three decades, has penned nearly 30 ebooks, each available for download on Amazon.

His latest work goes beyond simply bemoaning the fractious state of American politics. Puckett offers some real-life solutions, with 10 common-sense reforms that call for citizens to remember government exists solely because we allow it to, not because government allows us to speak.

Puckett's books reflect his conviction that one person's actions can make a lifetime of difference, but only if we are willing to act. "I wrote this after 25 years behind the microphone as a 911 dispatcher—listening to voices on their worst day. The pattern never changed: when people call for help, they don't ask what party you belong to. They just want someone to show up and fix it. That's what this country needs now—someone to show up and fix it. Not for a party, but for the people," Puckett said.

While politicians argue with increasing partisan divide, Americans have seen prices soar while communities crumble. "Enough is enough. This country wasn't built by career politicians; it was built by citizens who showed up when something needed fixing. Farmers, factory workers, dispatchers, medics, truck drivers—people who didn't wait for permission to do what was right.

"That's who we are. That's who we still can be," Puckett said.

Chapters in his new ebook address term limits, media bias, political transparency and the power of citizens to recall elections. It's a blueprint for change to restore to government to its intended role of serving the citizens.

While recently retired from a career of public service, Puckett remains an active member of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, where he serves in a leadership and volunteer emergency management support role.

The 48-page "It's Time for a Political Spanking" is available for purchase on Amazon for \$2.99, and it's free to download for Kindle Unlimited subscribers.

Puckett's other ebooks span a range of topics that draw upon his professional experience, including "Because of a Little Girl's Tears: A Life of Service, Compassion and Purpose," his most popular ebook, to "Bless Your Heart and Pass the Sweet Tea," a lighthearted collection of true Southern stories.

You can follow Puckett on Amazon to get new release updates and reader recommendations.

'FCCDC,' from Page 1

office for purchase of laser jet printers for patrol vehicles.

—\$1,500 Hodges Volunteer Fire Department for purchase of two new chainsaws.

—\$1,735 to City of Russellville Fire Department for purchase of new fire helmets.

—\$570 to Franklin Free Press for publication of annual report.

—\$940.98 to Tennessee Valley Media for publication of annual report.

—\$6,000 transfer to the Future Economic Development Fund.

The next meeting of the FCCDC will be Friday, January 30, 2026, at 8:30 a.m., at the Red Bay City Hall. Grant requests for the January 30, 2026, meeting must be received by a commission member before 12 p.m., Friday, January 23, 2026.



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Cole-Coffey honored as Alabama's County Extension Director of the Year

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County Extension Director Katernia Cole-Coffey was recently named the 2025 County Extension Director of the Year.

She received the award at last month's annual meeting of Alabama Extension County Directors.

This award is given to a director who demonstrates exceptional educational impact through programming and partnerships, professional development and active involvement in professional organizations.

As the Franklin County Extension director, she has positioned Extension as a vital and responsive resource for a county that is marked by poverty and growing diversity.

Serving the community for more than 20 years, Cole-Coffey fosters a positive and inclusive culture by engaging all community members, regardless of their background.

In addition to the important role she serves as Franklin County Extension Director, Cole-Coffey served as chairman of the Franklin County Broadband Task Force, which played an important role in bringing awareness to the need for reliable, affordable high-speed broadband internet in Franklin County.

In 2022, Cole-Coffey received the Outstanding Benefactor Award from the Alabama Community Education Association, which recognized her outstanding contribution to promote community education in Franklin County.

"Katernia has been a champion for education in Franklin County," said House District 18 Rep. Jamie Kiel. "Her work with students during and after the school day has made a lasting impact on their lives."

"From 4-H to after-school programs and summer programs, she and her team do a wonderful job assisting our classroom teachers," Kiel added.



Cole-Coffey, third from left, with other County Extension Directors who received awards at the 2025 Alabama Extension County Directors annual meeting. (Courtesy photo)

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Y'ou are invited to the Ladies Christmas Dinner 'Choices,' free for ladies of all ages. This event is Friday, Dec. 5 at 6 p.m. Includes meal and door prizes. Speaker is Michelle Landers. Event is at the Cowboy Church of Franklin County, 25100 Hwy. 24, Russellville. For more information, call Jean at 256-275-0750.



Bethsaida Missionary Baptist Church will hold a Live Nativity on Friday-Saturday, December 5-6, from 6-8 p.m. The church is located on Highway 48.



LifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on Wednesday, December 10, 2025 - 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at deborah.lindsey@russellvillehospital.org. Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, a Lifesouth T-shirt and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES!


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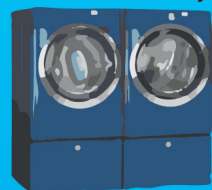


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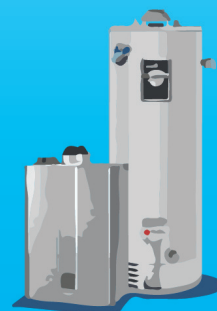
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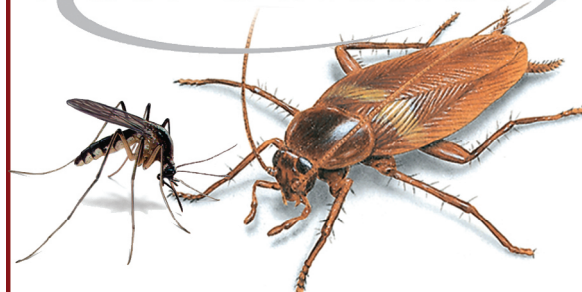
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BELGREEN Bulldogs

The Belgreen High School varsity boys' basketball team, coming off a season in which it won the Class 2A Area 14 championship, will be led by a large group of senior players with plenty of experience. These include the likes of Braycen Johnson, a guard who was selected to play in the AHSAA All-Star Basketball Game last season, was a First Team *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County player, and was an Alabama Sports Writers Association All-State Honorable Mention. Johnson averaged 21.2 points per game last campaign, and he will no doubt be

Boys Roster

0	Jonathan Mendoza	SR	F
1	Parker Morgan	SR	G
2	Miguel Cruz-Perez	SR	G
3	Rush Berryman	SO	G
4	Chris Bentley	JR	G
5	Gabe Estrada	SR	G
10	Jaxon Wood	SO	F
11	Jake Dill	JR	G
13	Braycen Johnson	SR	G
15	Easton Mitchell	SR	F
23	Mason Henley	JR	F
24	Aaron Rubido	SR	F

Head Coach: Will Bonner

needed as a major contributor again in 2025-26 if the Bulldogs are to win a third consecutive area title.

In addition to Johnson, the Bulldogs will have players like junior Jake Dill, who was an All-County Honorable Mention last season, and six other seniors: Jonathan Mendoza, Parker Morgan, Miguel Cruz-Perez, Gabe Estrada, Easton Mitchell, and Aaron Rubido. Younger players like sophomore Rush Berryman also saw significant playing time in 2024-25 and will be expected to make similar im-

portant contributions again this campaign.

2025 Schedule

11/14	at Red Bay	VG, VB
11/18	at Hubbertville	VG, VB
11/21	vs. Colbert County	VG, VB
11/22-25	Rogers Tournament	
11/26	vs. West Morgan	VG
12/2	vs. Russellville	VG, VB
12/5	at Haleyville	VG, VB
12/9	at Russellville	VG, VB
12/12	at Covenant Chr.	VG, VB
12/15	at New Site (MS)	VG, VB
12/16	vs. Tharptown	VG, VB
12/22	at Hackleburg	VG, VB
12/27	at Wilson	VG
12/29	at West Morgan	VG
1/2	vs. Phil Campbell	VG, VB
1/6	vs. Covenant Chr.	VG, VB
1/9	at Tharptown	VG, VB
1/13-17	County Tourney	VG, VB
1/19	at West Morgan	VG, VB
1/20	vs. Rogers	VG, VB
1/22	vs. Haleyville	VG, VB
1/26	vs. Hubbertville	VG, VB
1/27	at Phil Campbell	VG, VB
1/30	vs. Deshler	VG, VB
1/31	Red Bay Shootout	VB
2/2	vs. Hackleburg	VG, VB
2/3	at Colbert County	VG, VB

The 2025 Belgreen High School varsity girls' basketball team, in its 11th season under head coach Chad Green, is coming off yet another successful campaign in 2024-25.

Last year, the Lady Bulldogs won a fifth-straight area championship and finished with a 24-9 record, advancing to the regional tournament at Hanceville.

While Belgreen will be without top-scorer from a year ago, Dacota Green, who graduated, the Lady Bulldogs are not without experienced players who will need to pull together if Belgreen is going to win a sixth straight area crown.

Since taking over as head coach of the program over a decade ago, head coach Chad Green has continued to build success with the Lady Bulldogs' program, and one can expect that to continue with most of last year's starters returning.

These players include seniors Bryn Scott, Alayna Tate, Isabella Tate, and Carson Hovater, as well as junior Lilliana Willingham, who was a key defensive player for the team last year, and Mackinley Hogan, who also saw a lot of playing time.

Scott and Makenna Fisher are the Lady Bulldogs' two returning players that made the *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County Second Team in 2024-25—Scott, who plays point guard and directs the offense in addition to showing defensive hustle; and Fisher, who will likely be one of those needed to pick up the slack on the offensive side. Randi Terry, one of the younger players on this squad, is also a good shooter, and Willingham, with her length, can get the ball to the basket effectively, as well.

Kiera Smith is a player to watch. While she saw limited time at the varsity level last year, when she did get into games later in the campaign, she impressed with good performances.

Girls Roster

2	Lily Green
3	Bryn Scott
5	Alexa Gault
10	Randi Terry
11	Isabella Tate
13	Kiera Smith
14	Lilliana Willingham
15	Makenna Fisher
21	Mackinley Hogan
22	Alayna Tate
23	Jemma Moore
42	Carson Hovater

Head Coach: Chad Green

PHIL CAMPBELL Bobcats

Boys Roster

Logan Cooper | SR
 Hagen Raper | SR
 Madden Welch | SR
 Chandler Benford | JR
 Isaac Duboise | JR
 Austin Elliott | JR
 Bailey Nix | JR
 Hayston Scott | JR
 Jeremiah Smith | JR
 Brady Williams | JR

Head Coach: Shannon Benford

The 2025-26 Phil Campbell varsity boys' basketball team heads into a second season under head coach Shannon Benford with plenty of returning talent to help the Bobcats make a run in a tough four-team Class 3A Area 15 that includes defending state runner-up Mars Hill.

With the graduation of *Franklin Free Press* Second Team All-Franklin County guard Hayden Wingo last year, junior Austin Elliott is the undisputed preeminent returning starter for Phil Campbell this campaign. Elliott, a *Franklin Free Press* First Team All-Franklin County selection last season, was one of the most prolific scorers in the local area last year, averaging 15.3 points per game. Elliott was also a menace to a lot of teams defensively, finishing with 82 steals and 18 blocks.

Also returning for the Bobcats are three seniors—Logan Cooper, Hagen Raper, and Madden Welch—who will be vital to Phil Campbell's success this season.

Welch, who was a *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County Honorable Mention last season, was the Bobcats' best defensive player a year ago and also led Phil Campbell from beyond the arch in terms of shooting percentage in 2024-25.

Rounding out the squad are a half dozen or so juniors, many of whom saw plenty of time on the hardwood last season, including Isaac Duboise, Chandler Benford, Hayston Scott, Jeremiah Smith, and Brady Williams.

2025-26 Schedule

Nov. 10	vs. Tharptown (VG,VB)
Nov. 13	vs. Winston Co. (VB,VB)
Nov. 14	at Cherokee (VG,VB)
Nov. 18	vs. Russellville (VG,VB)
Nov. 20	vs. Haleyville (VG,VB)
Nov. 21	vs. Belmont (VG,VB)
Nov. 24-25	Clements Tourn. (VG,VB)
Dec. 1	vs. Shoals Chr. (VG,VB)
Dec. 2	vs. Cherokee (VG,VB)
Dec. 4	at Hackleburg (VG,VB)
Dec. 5	at Lexington (VG,VB)
Dec. 9	vs. Colbert Heights (VG,VB)
Dec. 12	vs. Sheffield (VG,VB)
Dec. 16	at Mars Hill (VG,VB)
Dec. 18	at Red Bay (VG,VB)
Dec. 19	Winston Co. Tourn. (VG)
Jan. 2	at Belgreen (VG,VB)
Jan. 6	at Colbert Heights (VG,VB)
Jan. 9	at Sheffield (VG,VB)
Jan. 12	vs. Hackleburg (VG,VB)
Jan. 13-17	Franklin Co. Tourn.
Jan. 20	vs. Mars Hill (VG,VB)
Jan. 22	at Shoals Chr. (VG,VB)
Jan. 23	vs. Lexington (VG,VB)
Jan. 26	at Winston Co. (VG,VB)
Jan. 27	vs. Belgreen (VG,VB)
Jan. 30	at Haleyville (VG,VB)
Feb. 2	at Tharptown (VG,VB)
Feb. 3	at Russellville (VG,VB)

Girls Roster

Layla Baker
 Leela Baker
 Madison Baker
 Kylee Fugate
 Addie Gilbert
 Gracie Harris
 Bailey Jewell
 Georgia Motes
 Kylee Santiago
 Emily Walker

Head Coach: Craig Thomas

Last season, the Phil Campbell High School varsity girls' basketball team, led by returning *Franklin Free Press* Franklin County Coach of the Year Craig Thomas, recorded a 23-11 record, finished runner-up in Class 3A Area 15 behind eventual state champion Mars Hill, and advanced to the opening round of the AHSAA Northwest Regional Tournament before eventually falling to Holly Pond at Hanceville.

The Lady Bobcats lost two key players from that team a season ago—*Franklin*

Free Press All-County First Team point guard Macy Hardy and Honorable Mention Siddalee Rogers—but do return another great scorer in senior Leela Baker, who reached the 1,000 career points milestone early in the 2025-26 campaign. Last year, Baker was another Lady Bobcat member of the *Franklin Free Press*' All-Franklin County team, selected to the First Team after she recorded a team-high 16.2 points per game. Coach Thomas and the Lady Bobcats will need similar levels of production from her this season if they want a repeat run from last year.

But Phil Campbell will also need contributions from what is a very young team with a lot of underclassmen. With so much youth on this 2025-26 squad, so much will depend on how the younger, less experienced players mesh and gel and get comfortable playing at the varsity level—and if they can do it at a high level.

RED BAY Tigers

Boys Roster

- 1 | Dalton Lowery
- 5 | Conner Nichols
- 12 | Jeremiah Thorne
- 13 | Jayce Jackson
- 14 | Jaxson Swann
- 15 | Khalil Luster
- 23 | Jackson Miller
- 24 | Bryant Harris
- 35 | Landyn Lewey
- 44 | Jaxon Vinson

Head Coach: John Torisky

The 2025-26 Red Bay Tigers boys' basketball team is poised to have another good year under second-year head coach John Torisky, who was voted as the *Franklin Free Press* Franklin County Coach of the Year last year after leading his team to the program's seventh consecutive area title and to the regional in Hanceville where the Tigers were just beaten by Tanner 53-51.

Of course, the biggest returning name for Red Bay is sophomore Khalil Luster, who, as just a freshman, was named to the Alabama Sports Writers Association Class 2A All-State Second Team. Luster, also a *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County First Team selection, averaged a double-double last campaign with 17 points per game and 12 rebounds per game. The Tigers would love to get that level of production or more from the growing underclassman.

But Luster isn't the only returner that Red Bay can bank on. The Tigers also have

another big threat on the boards in senior Jaxon Vinson, who can rebound and use his physicality in the paint. Grabbing rebounds and driving to the basket, Torisky admits, are his team's strengths and priorities; however, the Tigers do have shooters who can hit from anywhere on the court: Dalton Lowery, Connor Nichols, and Bryant Harris are three that can sink dagger threes when the Tigers need them most.

Red Bay will want to continue its long run of success this season, and they have the players to do just that.

2025 Schedule

Nov. 15	vs. Northridge
Nov. 18	vs. New Site
Nov. 21	at Brooks
Nov. 24	at Russellville
Nov. 26	at Appalachian
Nov. 29	at Corinth
Dec. 1	vs. Belgreen
Dec. 2	at Lamar County
Dec. 5	at Belmont
Dec. 9	at Hamilton
Dec. 12	vs. Sulligent
Dec. 16	at Winfield
Dec. 18	vs. Phil Campbell
Dec. 22	vs. Belmont
Dec. 23	vs. Belgreen
Dec. 29	vs. Coffee County Central
Jan. 5	vs. Lamar County
Jan. 6	vs. Lamar County
Jan. 9	at Haleyville
Jan. 10	at Decatur
Jan. 12	at Hamilton
Jan. 19	vs. Colbert County
Jan. 23	at Sulligent
Jan. 27	vs. Jumpertown
Jan. 29	at Newsite

Girls Roster

- 10 | Macie Humphries
- 12 | Julianna Easton
- 14 | Gracie Edgmon
- 23 | DaRilee Colburn
- 24 | Blake Oliver
- 34 | Kamryn Kuykendall
- 35 | Katlyn Lindley

Head Coach: John Torisky

Last season was a tough one for the Lady Tigers of Red Bay, who are still looking to rebuild to their former greatness under head coach John Torisky, who took over both Red Bay basketball programs at the beginning of last season.

The 2025-26 campaign will likely be another one of growth for the Lady Tigers who appear to be a little short handed on depth this season.

The Lady Tigers do have a number of player returning from last year's squad, like Franklin Free Press All-Franklin County Honorable Mention Blake Oliver. But without much depth, it will be up to players like Oliver, Kamryn Kuykendall (a tall player who can get to the basket and get over the top of other would-be rebounders), and Katlyn Lindley (a player who can shoot from all areas of the court) to do much of the work without much rest.

If the Red Bay girls' program is to return to earlier form of not even 10 years ago, when the Lady Tigers were winning area and reaching the Elite 8 and Final Four of the Class 2A state tournament, it will be up to this class of players to work hard and create a culture that can get them there.

The growing pains will likely be pretty painful—the Lady Tigers are off to a winless start to their 2025-26 campaign in four games—but there is clearly some talent in this program; it just needs to be molded. That might just take awhile.

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Chairperson



Carol Murphree
Board Member



**Kacey Hester
Johnston**
Board Member



Ralton Baker
Board Member



Pat Cochran
Board Member

2025-26 Important Dates

Aug. 8: First Day of Class
Sep. 1: Labor Day
Oct. 11-14: Fall Break/Columbus Day
Nov. 11: Veterans Day
Nov. 24-28: Thanksgiving Holidays
Dec. 20-Jan. 7: Christmas Break

Jan. 19: MLK Day
Feb. 16: President's Day
Mar. 30-April 3: Spring Break
April 24: Students Half Day (Dismiss 11:30)
May 22: Graduation
May 22: Last Day of School



AUSTIN ELLIOTT

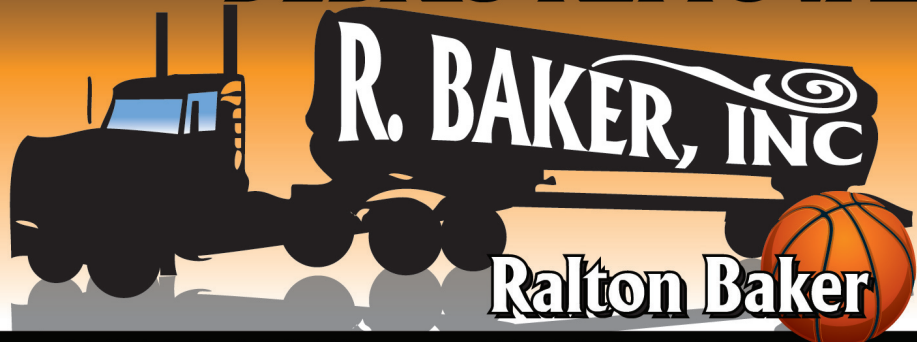


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RUSSELLVILLE Golden Tigers

Boys Roster

Daniel Aycock
Tripp Cleveland
Braxton Duncan
Drake Ergle
Malaki Groce
Gavin McDaniel
Parker Odom
Noah Smith
Shawn Taylor
Sir Williams
Cade Willis

Head Coach: Patrick Odom

The 2025-26 season will be an interesting one for the Russellville Golden Tigers' boys' basketball program. Russellville, in its 11th season under head coach Patrick Odom, will have to deal with the departure of one of the all-time great basketball players to come through the school, guard EJ King, who graduated last year. King, a two-time First Team All-State player and a nominee for Mr. Basketball averaged over 30 points per game as a season: that production will be hard to replace in any scenario.

Point guard Jah Williams also graduated last year.

Sir Williams will likely be the top scoring threat for RHS this season. The Golden Tigers will certainly have to look to its group of experienced seniors to try to recapture some of that production and get back to the top of the area mountain, as well. Parker Odom is one senior who has been reliable the last couple years, as has Malaki Groce, a physical presence on the court. Daniel Aycock and Gavin McDaniel are two other players that have shown an ability to shoot the ball well when they are on.

The biggest question mark for Russellville this season is can the players the Golden Tigers do have on the roster make the kind of impact that will see them return to dominate form in Class 5A Area 15.

2025 Schedule

11/6	vs. Decatur	VG
11/8	at Belmont Tourney	VG
11/15	at Priceville Classic	VG
11/17	vs. Decatur Heritage	VG
11/18	at Phil Campbell	VG, VB
11/24	vs. Red Bay	VG, VB
11/25	vs. Guntersville	VG, VB
12/2	at Belgreen	VG, VB
12/4	at Deshler	VG, VB
12/5	vs. Jasper	VG, VB
12/8	at Hamilton	VG, VB
12/9	vs. Belgreen	VG, VB
12/13	at West Point Inv'tl	VB
12/13	at Decatur Heritage	VG
12/16	at Haleyville	VG, VB
12/19	vs. Lawrence County	VG, VB
12/26-29	Bracey Invitational	VB
12/29	West Morgan Tourney	VG
1/5	vs. Brooks	VG, VB
1/6	at Jasper	VG, VB
1/9	vs. West Point	VG, VB
1/13	vs. Fairview	VG, VB
1/16	at West Point	VG, VB
1/19	vs. Deshler	VG, VB
1/20	vs. Florence	VG, VB
1/22	at Lawrence County	VG, VB
1/29	vs. Haleyville	VG, VB
2/2	vs. Hamilton	VG, VB
2/3	vs. Phil Campbell	VG, VB

Last season was an interesting growing period for the Lady Golden Tigers of Russellville. There wasn't a single senior on that team and still the Lady Golden Tigers were able to put together some pretty impressive performances and visibly improved as the season went along, giving even some of the bigger and more experienced teams they faced a good showing.

This season, Russellville does have one senior—that's center Laila Hill, a multisport student-athlete that has and will play a major role on this basketball team this campaign. Hill was a Second Team *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County selection last year.

But the major driver of this team, especially offensively, is junior point guard Ella Copeland, who was a First Team All-County pick last year, despite missing the first eight games of the year. Copeland is a next-level talent who averaged 18.2 points per game last year and is expected to match or exceed that again this season.

Overall, if you're a fan of this Russellville Lady Golden Tigers squad, there's a lot to feel good about. In addition to Copeland and Hill, there are other returning starters like Angeleah Smith, a junior guard that can shoot the lights out from range, especially when she's on. There's also players like sophomore Sadie Odom, who played a significant amount last season, sophomore Bella Malone, junior Kaylee Suggs, and junior Alexia Groce. And just by looking at this year's roster, there's a ton of young, up-and-coming talent to keep an eye on this season, too.

Girls Roster

0 | Ticelee Gholston | 5'5" | JR
1 | Ella Copeland | 5'9" | JR
2 | Angeleah Smith | 5'8" | SO
3 | Kaylee Suggs | 5'6" | JR
4 | Collins Odom | 5'9" | FR
5 | Blevyn Sappington | 5'8" | SO
10 | Sadie Odom | 5'5" | SO
11 | Laila Hill | 6'0" | SR
12 | Elizabeth Davis | 5'5" | 8th
14 | Alexia Groce | 5'6" | JR
15 | Samantha Wilson |
22 | Bella Malone | 5'10" | SO
23 | Hayleigh Chaney | 5'8" | FR
33 | Lauryn Johnson | 5'10" | FR
35 | Mackenzie Wright | 5'5" | FR
40 | Charley Johnson | 5'7" | SO

Head Coach: Jermaine Groce



*Best of luck to our Russellville
Golden Tigers Basketball Team.*

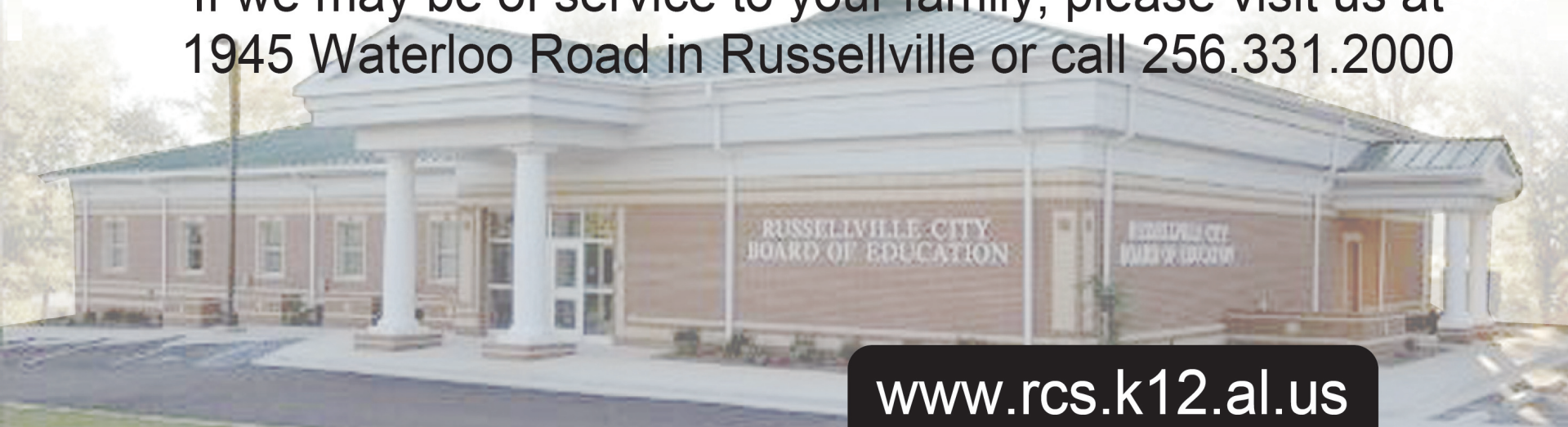
Have a great season!

*2025-2026 School Calendar
Dates to Remember:*

July 30-Aug.5: Teacher Days
Aug. 6: First Day for Students
Sept. 1: Labor Day
Oct. 6-7: Fall Break
Oct. 17: Homecoming,
Early Dismissal
Nov. 11: Veterans Day

Nov. 24-28: Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 19: Early Dismissal
Dec 22-Jan. 6: Christmas Break
Jan. 19: MLK Day
Feb. 16: President's Day
Mar. 30-Apr. 3: Spring Break
May 22: Graduation

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THARPTOWN Wildcats

Boys Roster

Bryson Borden | G | JR
 Caesar Rueda | C | SR
 Daniel Jimenez | G | SR
 Kaiden Hallmark
 Christian Willoughby | F | JR
 Jackson Knighten | G | JR
 Joshua Bahenna | G | JR
 Cody McCluskey | F | SO
 Zach Riley | G | SO
 Evin Lawson | G | FR

Head Coach: Chuck Simmons

The Tharptown High School varsity boys' basketball team is set to go in the 2025-26 campaign with a mix of experience and youth on the squad.

Led by head coach Chuck Simmons, the Wildcats are hoping this is the year that they can perform to the level of teams from the school's Class 1A days and that first year moving up to the Class 2A level when Tharptown won the Area 16 championship.

A season ago, the Wildcats did have one player play at an All-County-caliber—that was Dalton Maldonado, who averaged 14 points per game. But Maldonado graduated, so it will be up to a couple of seniors, a handful of juniors, and a few more underclassmen to try to replace that productivity and keep the Wildcats competitive in an

area that includes defending area champ Belgreen and Covenant Christian.

Caesar Rueda and Daniel Jimenez are the two senior leaders in this group, but the Wildcats also have athletes like sophomore Zach Riley, junior Joshua Bahenna, and freshman Evin Lawson whom they will have to rely on to score baskets at a good clip if the Wildcats are to surpass their win tally from a year ago.

2025 Schedule

Nov. 10	Phil Campbell
Nov. 13	Colbert Heights
Nov. 14	Vina
Nov. 15	Vina Tourn.
Nov. 17	Belgreen
Nov. 18	Lynn
Nov. 21	Shoals Christian
Nov. 24	Colbert Heights Tourn.
Nov. 25	Colbert Heights Tourn.
Dec. 2	Tremont
Dec. 5	Covenant Christian
Dec. 8	Lynn
Dec. 9	Shoals Christian
Dec. 12	Tremont
Dec. 16	Belgreen
Dec. 19-20	Winston Co. Tournament
Jan. 6	Hackleburg
Jan. 9	Belgreen
Jan. 12-17	Franklin County Tourn.
Jan. 23	Covenant Christian
Jan. 26	Hackleburg
Jan. 30	Vina
Feb. 2	Phil Campbell
Feb. 3	Winston Co.

Girls Roster

Carly Cason
 Alyssa Fischer
 Jayden Partain
 Chelsea Olfaro
 Breana Amaro
 Maddaline Amaro
 Allie Gann
 Abby Wilson
 Raeleigh Harrell
 Kaitlyn Vasquez

Head Coach: Abby Ward

The Tharptown High School varsity girls' basketball team enters its first season under first-year head coach Abby Ward after the departure of former coach Jason Cooper, who was able to win just a handful of games with the Lady Wildcats last season.

Ward, an Alabama Sports Writers Association Second Team All-State player herself for Vina back in 2017, has had previous assistant coaching experience but will face a new challenge in 2025-26 leading the Lady Wildcats.

To help her out, Tharptown has the likes of 2024-25 *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County Honorable Mention sophomore Carly

Cason and senior Alyssa Fischer returning for the Lady Wildcats. Cason will provide the length that Tharptown needs down around the basket and last season provided decent scoring numbers from game-to-game. Fischer, another multi-sport athlete for the Lady Wildcats, will provide the experience that this team will need, especially as the year goes along.

All-in-all, this Tharptown squad is a like a number of teams in Franklin County, which will be looking to grow and mature and gain experience with a young team while at the same time trying to be competitive in a pretty good area—in this case for the Lady Wildcats, an area that includes Covenant Christian and rival and defending area champion Belgreen.

VINA Red Devils

Boys Roster

Jackson Brown | 6'3" | SO
 Colton Davis | 5'3" | JR
 Henley Dean | 5'10" | FR
 Trace Flippo | 6'4" | JR
 Cameron Hester | 5'3" | JR
 Aidan Johnson | 5'11" | SO
 Kayson Johnson | 5'11" | JR
 Matthew Patterson | 6'0" | SR
 Brody Raper | 6'2" | SR
 Branson Vick | 5'4" | SO
 Parker Watts | 6'1" | JR

Head Coach: Randy Barnes

The Vina High School varsity boys' basketball team is another team in Franklin County that will be relying upon new faces or otherwise more in-experienced players during the 2025-26 season.

Led by head coach Randy Barnes, the Red Devils will have to replace the production of key players who graduated like Christian McCarley, a First Team *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County selection who scored over 1,000 points and recorded over 1,000 rebound in his career with the Red Devils.

Currently, the go-to scorers for Vina will likely be the 6-foot-2 senior Brody Raper, who was a *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County Honorable Mention a season ago. Sophomore Branson Vick will also be relied upon to score for Vina.

There is a some experience and some length on this Vina team, but it may be a bit of a rebuild and growing year for the Red Devils with a good mix of young and older players on the squad.

Vina is off to a slow start to the 2025-26 season, losing five of its first six games of the year. The Red Devils will need to improve throughout the season if they are to compete in a tough five-team Class 1A Area 13 that includes the like of Hackleburg, Marion County, Brilliant, and Phillips.

2025 Schedule

Nov. 13	at Cherokee
Nov. 14	vs. Tharptown
Nov. 15	Veterans Day Tournament
Nov. 20	vs. Waterloo
Nov. 21	vs. Berry
Nov. 22	Vina Invitational Tourn.
Dec. 2	at Phillips
Dec. 4	vs. Marion County
Dec. 5	vs. Shoals Christian
Dec. 9	vs. Brilliant
Dec. 13	Cullman Christian Tourn.
Dec. 16	at Hackleburg
Dec. 29-30	Waterloo Tournament
Jan. 5	vs. Phillips
Jan. 8	vs. Hackleburg
Jan. 9	at Brilliant
Jan. 12	at Berry
Jan. 13-17	Franklin County Tourn.
Jan. 19	at Lynn
Jan. 23	vs. Cherokee
Jan. 26	at Marion County
Jan. 30	at Tharptown
Feb. 2	vs. Lynn
Feb. 3	at Shoals Christian

Girls Roster

Harleigh Ridge | SR
 Cecilia Rowbottom | 8th
 Layla Hester | JR
 Braxtyn Quinn | SR
 Miranda King | SR
 Samantha Elders | SO
 Olivia Crum | SO
 Miley Pannell | 8th
 Lindie Easterling | 8th
 Brenleigh Cole | 8th
 Bella Creekmore | FR
 Marissa Lamar | FR
 Allie Lann | SO

Head Coach: Richie Hester

The Vina Lady Red Devils will be looking to avoid the injury bug during the 2025-26 season as it has hampered the squad in past seasons. If they are able to do so, the Lady Red Devils could have quite a season.

The program lost graduates Khylee Brooks and Makenzie Elrod, but Vina is returning a number of key players, including prolific scorer Layla Hester, a junior who was selected for the *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County First Team last season despite missing the last 10 games of last season because of injury. Hester averaged 13.1 points per game in 2024-25 and, in the early days of this campaign, looks to be on her way to achieving that mark again.

VHS also has seniors Braxtyn Quinn and Harleigh Ridge returning, two players that provide a physical defensive presence on the court. The Lady Red Devils will also have another young returning athlete that can help on the boards—6-foot-1 eighth grader Cecilia Rowbottom.

Newcomers that will provide help and support with the four returners are the likes of Miranda King, a senior who can provide a nice one-two scoring punch alongside Hester, sophomore Samantha Elders, and 6-footer Olivia Crum.

Head coach of the Lady Red Devils, Richie Hester, told the *Franklin Free Press* that because of the amount of youth on this team, the outcome of the season will depend on how quickly they can adapt to the speed of the varsity game: "On a given night, we have the ability to play and beat anyone, that makes us a threat in any tournament," he said. "Our expectations are a winning season and to finish strong at the end of the season."

LEGAL NOTICE

In accordance with Chapter 1, Title 39, Code of Alabama, 1975, as amended, notice is hereby given that Mid-Western Commercial Roofers, Inc., Contractor, has completed the contract for Reroof of Russellville High School Main Classroom Wing, at

1865 Waterloo Road, Russellville, Ala., 35653, for the State of Alabama and the City of Russellville, the Russellville City Board of Education, and have requested final settlement of said Contract. All persons having any claim for labor, materials, or otherwise in connection with this project should immediately notify Ward Scott, Morris Architecture, Inc., 1606 Paul Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, Ala., 35401, (205)345-6110.

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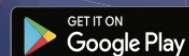
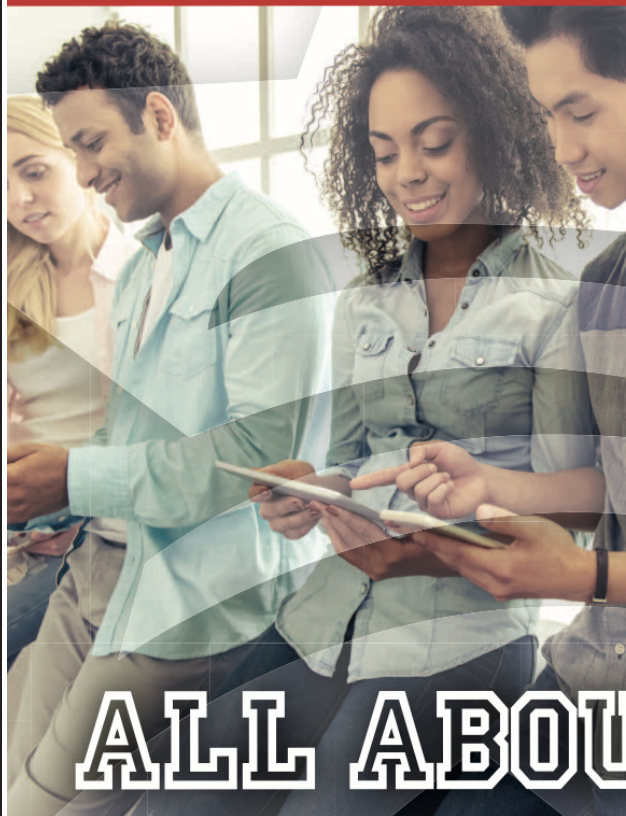
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