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## Russellville to host January 19th Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration March

*John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press*

Russellville will be the host site for this year's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration March set for Monday, January 19th.

The annual event rotates among Lauderdale, Colbert and Franklin Counties each year as an important time for reflection, community service and celebration of King's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.

The January 19th program is being organized by the Franklin County Branch of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Memorial Scholarship

Committee.

This year's theme is 'From Dreams to Reality, the Work Continues: The Courage to Care, The Power of Change.'

The march will begin at 11 a.m., at the A.W. Todd Centre in downtown Russellville and will proceed to the steps of the Franklin County Courthouse before returning to the Todd Centre, where a special program will highlight the life and accomplishments of Dr. King. A meal will be served following the short program.

Speakers at the January 19th event include the Reverend Dr. John H. Curry, Senior Pastor, Mt. Olive

**See 'MARCH,' Page 4**

## RHS Career Tech students tour CertainTeed manufacturing plant as part of company's workforce development initiative

*John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press*

You couldn't hide the big smile on the face of Dr. AnnaKay Holland Tuesday morning at the Open House for Russellville City Schools' Career and Technical Education Building.

And why would she want to? Holland, the Director of Career Technical Education for Russellville City Schools, her faculty and students welcomed visitors with tours of the new and improved CTE Center Tuesday.

With the recent completion of a \$6.2 million expansion and renovation building project, the Career and Technical Education Department will allow more students than ever to



**Recent Career Tech additions include a bay that serves as an operating fire station for Fire Science education.**

build their resumes and develop job-ready skills, whether their plans after high school include additional education or immediate entry into the work

**See 'CAREER TECH' Page 4**

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*Rickey Dale Barker, 65, passed peacefully in his home, surrounded by his immediate family, on the evening of January 2, 2026. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.*

*Willard Hal Jones, age 78, of Spruce Pine, Alabama passed away on December 30, 2025, at Hellen Keller Hospital in Sheffield, surrounded by family. Services were held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville.*

*Nancy Lee Stepp Lynch, 83, passed away Tuesday, December 30, 2025 at Terrace Manor Nursing and Rehab, Russellville. Deaton Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.*

*Audrey Jane Edwards, age 82, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, December 27, 2025, at Russellville Hospital. Visitation was held on January 2nd. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.*

*Kevin William Murray, 48 years old of Russellville, passed away on December 30, 2025. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted with the arrangements.*

*Judy Carol Smith Pounders, age 66, of Russellville, passed away on Thursday, December 25, 2025, at Arabella Wellness Center. A private service was held for the family. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.*



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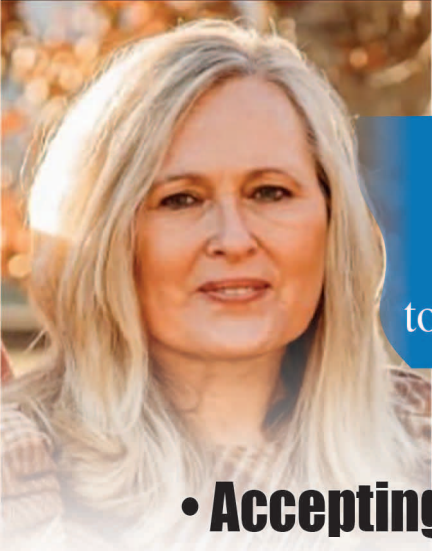
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#### **Letters to the editor**

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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 10:5-25

Jesus sent the apostles on what is called the "Limited Commission." They were to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles or Samaritans (remember 9:36). They were to carry on Jesus' work of teaching and healing. They were not to try to make money with their work. They had freely received the power, so they were to give freely. Jesus told them to travel light and be ready to go. They were to be provided food as they journeyed. These were special instructions for the moment. Later journey's would require preparation and financial support (see I Cor. 9:1-18).

They needed to find people "worthy" to stay with. A worthy house received peace. An unworthy house wouldn't. Worthiness was not determined by the house's comfort, but by its response to the apostle's preaching. If a house or town did not listen, the apostle was to leave and shake the dust off their feet— a sign of rejection. At judgment it would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for a town that rejected the apostles.

But, the apostles needed to anticipate rejection— and worse. Jesus previews what they'd experience in the short and long term.

They were sheep in the middle of wolves. So, they needed to be snake-like wisdom and dove-like innocence. They'd be dragged before courts and officials and beaten. But, Jesus promised that the Spirit would give them the words to speak.

This would even bring divisions within families. The apostles would be hated. But, endurance to the end promised salvation.

They needed to engage as many cities as possible before Jesus' coming. (I take it that He is referencing Dan. 7:13-14 regarding the establishment of His kingdom (see v. 7 and 16:28). Rejection was a signal to move on.

Disciples and servants get what their teacher and master got. They called Jesus "Beelzebul" (a name for Satan). They'd do the same and worse to those who follow Him.

#### **Lessons to Learn:**

Reception of the apostles reflected reception of Jesus. Rejection of the apostles reflected rejection of Jesus. To reject their words puts us in a dreadful position in view of judgment. It would be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah because they had the miracles and teachings right there in front of them and they still rejected it!

The apostles knew suffering was coming. The apostles followed Jesus and taught His word even though there was no promise of earthly gain and warnings of suffering. That speaks to their commitment to the authenticity of their message. It was no "get rich" scheme. Seeing the way the apostles will suffer in their labor should make us consider their words carefully.

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

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## 'MARCH,' from Page 1

Missionary Baptist Church, Tuskegee, Al., and Mariah Wiggs, host of WHNT Channel 19's Day to Day Show.

All events are free and open to everyone.

King's legacy is the continued fight for racial equality, justice and human rights through nonviolent means. Dr. King's efforts led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

His vision is as important and meaningful in 2025 as it was 60 years ago, as his message continues to inspire civil rights activists across the globe.

What distinguished King from other civil rights advocates was his masterful use of non-violent resistance, including peaceful protests and civil disobedience, all rooted in love and empathy, that challenged segregation and discrimination against all groups.

His legacy lives on in ongoing societal struggles against racism, voter suppression and economic disparities still faced by many Americans today.

At its January 5th meeting, the Russellville City Council approved a resolution recognizing the January 19th Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., holiday and supporting the efforts of the Franklin County Branch of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee.

Russellville District Four Councilman Lonnie Freeman presented a framed copy of the resolution to committee members at the January 5th meeting.

For more information on the January 19th Commemoration March, contact Franklin County Branch President William Nelson at 256-412-3566 or Melvin Young, Vice-President, at 256-366-7265.



**Members of the Franklin County Branch of the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Scholarship Committee with a framed resolution presented to them by the Russellville City Council at its January 5th meeting. From left: Joe Graham, President William Nelson, Vice President Melvin Young and Daryl Gholston.**

## 'CAREER TECH,' from Page 1

force.

And Russellville High School students are taking notice, with a record 688 students this year taking or having completed at least two Career Tech courses. The program has seen record growth, with a growing itinerary of programs that will offer immediate certification for job market entry after high school.

Students who complete at least two career tech classes are more likely to be employed post-graduation, have higher income and are most likely to go on to college and earn a degree or certification.

And that's reason for Holland to smile.

"Our philosophy is the 'three E's,' employable, enrolled or enlist," Holland said. "We want to provide our students with training that will allow them to secure employment after high school, and dual enrollment courses to supplement their education if they choose to attend college and training to help prepare those wanting to enlist in the military.

"From elementary school up, we are exposing our students to the benefits of CTE. There's no longer a stigma that you have to go to college after high school. We have successful partnerships with our local economic development boards and local employers and manufacturers so that students will have that option available to them after graduation," she added.

One of those programs leading to immediate post-graduation employment is welding, with a newly-expanded state-of-the-art welding facility, a multi-million investment with 16 welding booths for students. That's double the capacity from past years and the facility was described as one of the best in Alabama by state administrators during a recent visit to RHS' Career Tech Center.

With the addition of seven new classrooms, this was the first significant upgrade/expansion for the Career Tech Building, constructed in 1970.


Students can enroll in CTE courses in Army JROTC, Automotive Technology, Building and Construction, Business Management and Administration, Business Information Technology (Computer Science), Cybersecurity, Engineering, Family and Consumer Science/Education Training, Finance, Fire Science, HVAC, Healthcare Science, Plant Science, Welding and Career Coach courses at RHS, as well as a Business Management & Administration course at Russellville Middle School.

The renovations included the addition of a bay that houses an operating fire station for Fire Science training and education. EMT and Paramedic training is another new addition for Career Tech at Russellville.

Along with Career Coach Alissa Moore, Holland has prioritized introducing Russellville City Schools students to Career Tech education and helping them learn they no longer have to make a choice between AP courses or Career Tech. Students may enroll in both, helping bolster their education and job marketability after graduation.

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# Franklin County Farmers Federation, Herring honored at state federation's annual meeting

Submitted

The Franklin County Farmers Federation (FCFF) and former FCFF President David Herring were honored during the Alabama Farmers Federation's 104th annual meeting, held Dec. 8 in Montgomery.

The Franklin County Farmers Federation was presented with an Award of Excellence. This honor recognizes counties for top-tier programs, community work and agricultural advocacy during 2025.

FCFF President Derek Jackson received the award on behalf of the chapter at the annual meeting.

Franklin County's David Herring also received a Senior Leader Award for outstanding leadership and 35 years of service to the Franklin County Farmers Federation (FCFF).

This honor recognizes those who have served as county president, State Women's Leadership Committee chair or as a state board member and are over 70 years old.

Herring stepped into the role of FCFF president following the late Charles Ezzell. During that transition, Herring provided steady, dependable leadership that guided the organization through a period of renewal and growth.

He played a key role in bringing new faces, fostering relationships and strengthening the foundation of the FCFF. Herring's leadership style is marked by humility and consistency.

"David may be quiet, but he is always there," said FCFF President Derek Jackson about Herring.

That simple statement reflects the deep respect Herring has earned — a leader whose presence, reliability and commitment speak louder than words.

Herring and wife Yvonne have been married over 52 years. Together, they have built a loving family with two children and two grandchildren.

Congratulations to the Franklin County Farmers Federation and David Herring for these outstanding honors.



(Top Photo) FCFF President Derek Jackson receives his chapter's Award of Excellence for 2025 at the Alabama Farmers Federation's annual meeting. (Bottom Photo) Former FCFF President David Herring receives his Senior Leader Award for 35 Years of Service from Alabama Farmers Federation Executive Director Paul Pinyan.



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# Time frame underway for individuals, businesses to support Russellville Hospital with dollar-for-dollar state tax credit

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

As of January 1, 2026, the window is now open for businesses and individuals wanting to support Russellville Hospital and/or any eligible Alabama rural hospital through a credit on their Alabama state taxes.

Recognizing the vital role rural hospitals play in the health of our communities, the Alabama Legislature created the Rural Hospital Investment Program, a new initiative that gives individuals, families, and businesses the opportunity to directly support rural hospitals like Russellville Hospital.

In return, donors receive a dollar-for-dollar credit on their Alabama state taxes.

"This program gives our community a meaningful way to care for us, just as we've been here to care for you," said Chris Ware, Russellville Hospital CEO. "By investing in your local hospital, you're not only keeping care close to home, you're helping secure a healthier, stronger future for our community."

Rural hospitals are unique. They consist of neighbors caring for neighbors, deeply rooted in the places they serve.

Beyond providing care 24/7, hospitals like Russellville Hospital create local jobs, support area businesses, and sponsor community traditions that bring people together. Contributions made through this program will help ensure that Russellville Hospital remains strong and ready to serve—today and for generations to come.

Here's how the program works:

- The Rural Hospital Investment Program began January 1, 2026.
- Contributions must be reserved and verified through the Alabama Department of Revenue's (ADOR) My Alabama Taxes system. (The procedures for reserving and claiming the credit will be posted on the ADOR website in December 2025.)
- Donors receive a state tax credit equal to the amount of their contribution, up to the following annual limits:
- Individuals: up to \$15,000
- Married couples filing jointly: up to \$30,000
- LLCs, S corporations, and partnerships: up to \$450,000
- Corporations: up to \$500,000

Once a credit reservation is made, donors have 30 days to complete their contribution. The hospital then verifies the donation through the ADOR system to finalize the tax credit.

"Every dollar contributed through this program stays here, supporting local healthcare for you and your family," said Ware. "This is an incredible opportunity for our community to come together and ensure access to care right here at home."

A full list of eligible hospitals will be available each year beginning December 1.

For more information on how to participate, visit the Alabama Department of Revenue's :

<https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/rural-hospital-investment-tax-credit/>.



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# Aderholt qualifies for reelection to represent Alabama's Fourth Congressional District

Submitted

Congressman Robert Aderholt officially qualified to seek reelection to represent Alabama's Fourth Congressional District, continuing his long-standing commitment to putting the needs of North Alabama first.

Throughout his service in Congress, Aderholt has made constituent service a top priority, maintaining a strong district presence and helping thousands of residents with veterans' benefits, Social Security, Medicare, and issues involving federal agencies.

His work has consistently focused on delivering practical results for farmers, small businesses, seniors, and working families across the Fourth District. He has also made it a priority to stand up for the most vulnerable among us with pro-life and pro-family initiatives with his work as Chairman of the House Values Action Team.

As a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee, Aderholt has advocated for policies that strengthen the economy, our borders, promote American energy independence, support agriculture, maintain a strong military, and uphold conservative values important to the people of North Alabama.

President Donald J. Trump has endorsed Congressman Aderholt for reelection, calling him "a tremendous champion for Alabama's 4th Congressional District" and praising his leadership on America First priorities.

In his endorsement, President Trump highlighted Aderholt's work to create jobs, cut taxes and regulations, support American manufacturing, champion farmers and ranchers, strengthen the military and veterans, secure the border, and defend the Second Amendment. President Trump concluded by giving Aderholt his "complete and total endorsement," stating, "He will never let you down." "I am grateful for President Trump's endorsement and for the continued trust of the people of the Fourth District," Aderholt said. "Serving the people of this district has always been my top priority, and I look forward to continuing that work on behalf of Alabama's Fourth Congressional District."

Congressman Aderholt remains committed to representing Alabama's Fourth Congressional District with integrity, accessibility, and results-driven leadership. Alabama's GOP primary is on May 19, 2026.

The general election will take place on November 3, 2026.



**Congressman Robert Aderholt files his reelection papers Monday in Hoover.**

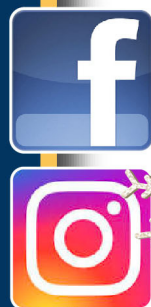


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## Golden Tigers go 1-2 at Deshler's Bracy Invitational Tournament

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

After grabbing a win to open the 2025 Bracy Invitational, hosted by Deshler High School, the Russellville High School varsity boys' basketball team dropped its final two contests of the tournament to finish fourth.

The Invitational started on Friday, December 26. The Golden Tigers, facing off against the Central Wildcats, earned a huge victory that night, beating CHS 70-33.

RHS dominated the game from tip-off, taking an 18-3 lead in the first quarter and increasing it to 20 points by the halftime break.

Led by 20 points from sophomore Sir Williams, who earned the Singing River Dentistry Player of the Game for his performance, the Golden Tigers continued to outpace the Wildcats—18-12 in the third and 17-6 in the fourth—to secure the 37-point win.

RHS head coach Patrick Odom was pleased with his team's rout of Central.

"The first night in, that was probably the best game we've played all year in the win over Central," he said.

The following evening, Saturday, Russellville took on the Pearl-Cohn High School Firebirds out of Nashville, Tennessee in the tournament semifinal round and fell 53-40.

See, 'BRACY,' Page 14

## Belgreen's Fisher, Phil Campbell's Elliott reach career scoring milestones

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

The Belgreen High School and Phil Campbell High School girls' and boys' varsity basketball teams faced off at Belgreen's gymnasium on Friday night, the schools earning a win apiece and players from both reaching career milestones.

To start the night, the Belgreen girls took down the Lady Bobcats by a final score of 50-40.

The Lady Bulldogs outscored PCHS 9-2 to open the first period and maintained that seven-point advantage going into halftime up 23-16.

Phil Campbell, not out of the game by any means, cut into the deficit in the third quarter, outpacing BHS 19-14 to make it a two-point game heading into the final eight minutes of regulation.

In the fourth, though, the hosts put the contest to bed, holding the Lady Bobcats to five points and finishing the game with a 10-point lead.

Belgreen's Makenna Fisher led the Lady Bulldogs with 14 points in the game. Those 14 points not only helped push the Lady Bulldogs to victory but also pushed the senior over the 1,000 points mark for her career.

"I'm so proud of her," Belgreen head coach Chad Green said. "I'm proud of her not only from an athletic standpoint but as the good Christian young lady that she is, and proud from seeing her improve from that timid and shy seventh grader to being a fearless competitor as a senior."

See, 'MILESTONE,' Page 12

## Tharptown girls wrap 2025 with Berry Christmas Tournament title

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

The Tharptown High School varsity girls' basketball team capped its Christmas with a jolly good trophy by winning the Berry High School Christmas Tournament championship on Monday, December 29.

The Tharptown Lady Wildcats, in pretty convincing fashion, proved to be the best of the glaring: THS first beat the Class 3A Oakman Lady Wildcats 50-33 to advance to take on the hosting Berry Lady Wildcats; against Berry Tharptown claimed the tourney title with a 63-48 victory.

In its first game of the day against Oakman, Tharptown opened up a 15-8 lead to start the first period and maintained that seven-point advantage at halftime, going into the locker room up 28-21.

Tharptown began the second half slower than the first, allowing OHS to cut the deficit by a point. But THS finished strong in the fourth. Holding Oakman to just four points, Tharptown dropped 12 points in the final eight minutes to secure a 17-point victory.

Cadence Kennedy and Carly Cason each scored in double figures, Kennedy leading with 15 points and Cason adding 12.

In the tournament title game, Tharptown used huge first and third periods to beat Berry by 15.



Courtesy photo

See, 'THARPTOWN,' Page 13

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# ‘MILESTONES,’ from Page 11

Belgreen’s Lilliana Willingham also hit double digits for BHS, scoring 10 points. Phil Campbell’s Leela Baker led her team with a game-high 16 points.

In the follow-up boys’ game, Phil Campbell earned a 54-37 road win over the Bulldogs.

The Bobcats took a lead in the first and never looked like surrendering it, outscoring the hosts in each of the first three quarters.

PCHS went up 15-11 to start the game and then doubled up on the Bulldogs in the second to take a 33-20 lead into the locker room at halftime.

By the end of the third quarter, the Bobcats had a 19-point advantage and were able to cruise to a final 17-point win.

Phil Campbell’s Austin Elliott commanded the game, scoring 16 more points than the contest’s next leading scorer. The junior finished the game with 25 points as he also crossed the 1,000 career points threshold.

“I’m just super proud of him,” Phil Campbell head coach Shannon Benford said. “He has grown up a lot and works hard.”

Phil Campbell’s second-leading scorer was Logan Cooper, who dropped seven points for the Bobcats. Belgreen’s Rush Berryman led the Bulldogs with nine points in the defeat.



Belgreen senior Makenna Fisher.  
(Courtesy photo)



Phil Campbell junior Austin Elliott.  
(Courtesy photo)

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## 'THARPTOWN' from Page 11

Tharptown, aided by three-pointers from senior Alyssa Fischer and freshman Raeleigh Harrell, jumped up 19-12 after the first quarter, but a surge from Berry in the second sliced into the visitors' advantage. THS went into the break leading by just one point, 26-25.

Resuming play in the third quarter Tharptown was once again able to find its mojo, improving on its first period performance by dropping a massive 27 points. THS hit six three-pointers in those eight minutes, three of which came from Harrell who would go on to lead the Lady Wildcats with 23 points. Fifteen of the freshman's 23 points came from beyond the arch.

Leading by 16 going into the fourth, Tharptown kept the hosts at bay and cruised to a 15-point, 63-48 win, claiming the tournament crown.

"We have continued to improve throughout the season, and I'm very proud to be their coach," Tharptown head coach Abby Ward said.

Along with Harrell's 23 points, Kennedy and Cason once again scored in the double digits; Kennedy dropped 15 points and Cason scored 10. As a team the Lady Wildcats tallied 11 made three-pointers.

For their performances during the Christmas Tournament, Harrell, Cason, Fischer, and Kennedy were named to the All-Tournament team. Harrell and Kennedy totaled 30 points each in the two games, Cason scored 20, and Fischer had 13.

The two tournament victories improved Tharptown's record to 5-8 overall.



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## 'BRACY' from Page 11

The Golden Tigers hung around with Pearl-Cohn in the first half, down 20-17 at the intermission, but coming out of the locker room in the third quarter the Firebirds began to pull away. RHS was outscored 21-6 in the third to make it 41-23 going into the final eight minutes of regulation. A solid 17 points for RHS in the fourth wasn't enough for the Golden Tigers to make up the deficit and they lost by 13.

Williams once again led the Golden Tigers with 21 points in the defeat.

The Bracy Invitational wrapped up on Monday with Russellville taking on South Lamar in the third place game. South Lamar, who lost to eventual tournament champion Deshler in the semifinal, came from behind to knock off Russellville in a low-scoring 42-38 game.

The Golden Tigers jumped out to a 12-10 advantage in the first period and added to that before halftime to take a 10-point, 23-13 lead into the locker room.

In the second half, however, the Stallions began to chip away at the deficit. The Golden Tigers, who struggled to rebound and hit shots in the final 16 minutes, saw their advantage closed to three points at the end of the third period before it completely evaporated early in the fourth.

With about seven minutes remaining, the Stallions took their first lead since the opening minutes of the first period. South Lamar, who led by as much as seven points at one point in the fourth, never surrendered the advantage once it grabbed it late.

"We kind of ran out of gas tonight," Odom told the *Franklin Free Press* after the game. "We're playing really hard, but I think we scored 13 or 15 points in the second half. We're still struggling to score consistently and that continues to be our Achilles' heel."

"Defensively we're doing enough. But on offense, honestly we can't get guys more open. We've got to start making more shots. If you're going to beat good teams, you've got to make shots. That's the name of the game," he added.

Williams scored a game-high 21 points for Russellville in the loss. The Golden Tigers' record stands at 3-10 overall.



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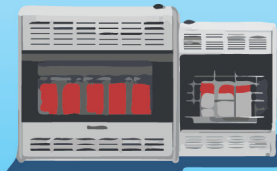
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# RBHS' Vinson headlines list of three local football players to receive ASWA All-State recognition

Kadin Pounders  
Franklin Free Press

Three high school football student-athletes from Franklin County—one from Red Bay, one from Phil Campbell, and one from Russellville—were recognized on the 2025 Alabama Sports Writers Association All-State Football Teams, it was announced on Saturday. Headlining the local selections was Red Bay senior running back Jaxon Vinson, who was tapped for the Class 2A All-State First Team Offense. Junior Hayston Scott of Phil Campbell and sophomore linebacker Braxton Duncan of Russellville were Honorable Mentions in Class 3A and Class 5A, respectively.

Red Bay's Vinson, also a *Franklin Free Press* All-Franklin County First Team running back and a Class 2A All-Region 8 First Team selection in 2025, is the Tigers' first All-State pick since offensive lineman Kyler Watson in 2023 and the first First Team selection for RBHS since another running back, Brady Hardin, in 2022.

"Jaxon is a really good player and an even better person," Red Bay head coach Tyler Jeffreys told the *FFP*. "In my opinion, he's one of, if not the best, running backs in 2A. He had a really good year, and he was really important for us this season. We counted

See, 'ALL-STATE,' Page 16

RED BAY BOYS BASKETBALL



Photo by Caleb Ramey

KHALIL LUSTER



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS  
**ATHLETE**  
of the **WEEK**  
DECEMBER 8-13, 2025


The FFP Athlete of the Week for December 8-13 is Red Bay's Khalil Luster, who averaged 30 points in two big wins for RBHS. Luster scored 29 points in an overtime road victory at Class 4A Hamilton December 9 before scoring a career-high 31 points in the Tigers' area victory over Sulligent on December 12.

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# 'ALL-STATE,' from Page 15

on him and he always came through for us.

"I think it's also a testament to our offensive line and the great job they did—and I think Jaxon would be the first one to agree with me on that," Jeffreys added.

Vinson finished his senior campaign with 2,038 yards rushing which, according to MaxPreps.com, was the most rushing yards in Class 2A this past season. Vinson averaged over nine yards per carry and scored 26 rushing touchdowns for the Tigers, playing a vital role in Red Bay capturing its first region title since 2019.

"I'm really proud of him and couldn't be happier for him," Jeffreys said.

Phil Campbell junior quarterback Hayston Scott was an Honorable Mention in Class 3A, making him the first Bobcat to receive All-State recognition since defensive lineman John Herring in 2021.

Scott, an *FFP* All-Franklin County First Team selection and a First Team All-Region 5 pick, was one of the top offensive players in the state during the regular season and ended the year with 2,833 yards of total offense. A 1,000-yard rusher the last two seasons, Scott threw the ball much more his junior campaign, finishing 2025 with 1,784 yards passing and 19 touchdowns. He added 1,049 yards on the ground and 11 rushing touchdowns, as well.

"I'm very proud of him," Phil Campbell head coach Jacob Hamilton said of Scott. "He's a great ball player and an even better person. He's a team player and shows great leadership on and off the field."

Rounding out the ASWA All-State players from Franklin County is Russellville's Braxton Duncan, a sophomore linebacker who was a Class 5A Honorable Mention.

Duncan led the Golden Tigers in total tackles (147) and tackles for loss (7.5). He also added three sacks, two interruptions and a fumble recovery.

"I'm happy for Braxton. He had a really good year and deserves the recognition," Russellville head coach Dustin Goodwin said. "We had a couple of other guys that should have been recognized, as well.

"Overall, I'm proud of our team and glad to see guys get noticed for their hard work and production on the field. Most importantly, I'm interested in what kind of teammate and person they are."

Duncan joins a long list of Russellville All-State selections, the 114th chosen by the ASWA since 1983.

## Belgreen varsity basketball teams go on the road to sweep Hackleburg

*Kadin Pounders*  
*Franklin Free Press*

The Belgreen High School varsity girls' and boys' basketball teams picked up road wins over Class 1A Hackleburg in their final games before Christmas on Monday.

The Belgreen girls, ranked No. 10 in Class 2A, defeated the Lady Panthers, ranked No. 4 in Class 1A, by a final score of 60-48; the BHS boys then beat Hackleburg 54-35.

The Belgreen girls opened their contest at Hackleburg with two 14-point periods in the first half to take a 28-22 lead into the halftime break. The Lady Bulldogs were then able to create more separation coming out of the locker room by outscoring HHS 20-9 in the third quarter.

Up by a comfortable 17 points heading into the final eight minutes, Belgreen allowed the hosts to outpace them for the first time all game, but the Lady Bulldogs' lead was sufficient for them to see the game out, winning by a 12-point margin.

It was a solid outing for the Lady Bulldogs who saw 12 players get time in the game and 10 different players score. Three BHS shooters hit double digits with Makenna Fisher leading the way. Fisher, who hit eight of her 10 free throws, had a game-high 22 points for Belgreen. Marlie Terry added 12 points for the Lady Bulldogs and Randi Terry scored 11.

The result—it was the Lady Bulldogs' second straight win—sees Belgreen improve its record to 9-5 overall this season.

The Belgreen boys, using two big periods going into and coming out of halftime, also walked away victorious over the Panthers.

Trailing by one point, 9-8, after the opening period, the Bulldogs went on a 17-5 run in the second to enter the halftime intermission up 25-14.

The third quarter looked similar to the second as, thanks to 11 third-period points by Aaron Rubido, Belgreen was able to outscore Hackleburg 18-6 and increase its lead to 23 points.

Hackleburg increased its production in the fourth period but only enough to cut four points off the deficit and Belgreen was able to secure the 19-point win over the hosts.

The Bulldogs were led by a game-high 21 points from Jake Dill and got another 19 from Rubido.

With the win, the BHS boys improved to 6-7 this campaign.