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Morrow aims to protect public education

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

From his childhood days tagging along with his father Grover to inspect Future Farmers of America (FFA) projects across Franklin County to his 28 years as a business and economics instructor at Northwest Junior College, Johnny Mack Morrow's life is built on a foundation of public education.

Morrow's passion for public education and his concern about its future are the driving force in his bid to unseat Dr. Larry Stutts for Alabama Senate District 6.

So strong is Morrow's fear about the future of pub-

lic education in light of the Alabama Accountability Act that he's vacating an eighth run for his Alabama House District 18 seat.

"Protecting public education will be the cornerstone of my campaign," Morrow said. "The fact that a child in rural Franklin County can get on a publicly funded bus and go to school and have publicly funded teachers teach him who are qualified, give him publicly funded books—that means any child can become anything he or she wants.

"Public education is open to everyone. It's the public seeing to it that a child has what he or she needs to succeed. When you stop that, then you don't have

See 'MORROW,' Page 9



Johnny Mack Morrow

Bedford: No plans to run for senate in 2018

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Ending months of speculation, former senator Roger Bedford, Jr. announced last week that he would not pursue another term as state senator for Alabama Senate District 6.

In an exclusive interview with the *Franklin Free Press*, Bedford said he considered running for the position he held for 28 years before deciding to stay on the sideline.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow has already announced his candidacy to seek the Democratic nomination for Senate District 6, setting up a potential showdown with incumbent Republican Dr. Larry Stutts next year.

Bedford said Morrow met with him about his interest in running against Stutts.

"I've been fortunate to have worked with a lot of good House members over the years, including Johnny Mack, Charlie Britnell, Marcel Black and Mike Millican," Bedford said. "I appreciate Johnny Mack talking to me during his decision-making process, as well as several other candidates who may want to seek office. I've always found Johnny Mack to be a man of his word and a hard worker."



Roger Bedford

Bedford represented District 6 from 1982 to 1990. He returned to Montgomery to serve another 20 years, from 1994-2014, before narrowly losing to Stutts by 60 votes in a race that saw more than 35,000 votes cast.

"I'm honored that so many people stopped in the grocery store, on the street and called me to say they want me back," Bedford said. "I'm honored by that. I'm proud of our record in job creation in northwest Alabama and the state as a whole. I'm very grateful for all the support family and friends have given me over the years. But I am not seeking the office of state senate again."

While Bedford specifically ruled out a run

See 'BEDFORD,' Page 9

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Cavanaugh ready to 'right-size' state government

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As she addressed the employees of Montgomery Distributing, Inc. in Spruce Pine, Twinkle Cavanaugh talked about Alabama government needing a "good downsizing."

And Cavanaugh, president of the Alabama Public Service Commission, knows something about downsizing.

When she was first elected to the PSC six years ago, Cavanaugh immediately began working to reduce the size of her staff as well as the number of state vehicles used by the PSC.

Of the 119 PSC employees, 59 were driving state vehicles, a number that Cavanaugh found unacceptable, explaining that the commission purchased eight to ten cars annually to add to its fleet.

"I decided to lead by example and not take a state car," Cavanaugh said. "Today, the only PSC employees who drive state vehicles are the ones who need them on a daily basis for railway inspections, gas pipeline inspections, etc. And we've reduced that number from 59 to 24."

Cavanaugh spent last Thursday in Franklin County touring the plant and making a campaign stop in Russellville that afternoon. Although her term as PSC president runs through 2020, Cavanaugh has announced that she will seek the Republican nomination for governor next year.

Cavanaugh served as a senior advisor in Gov. Bob Riley's cabinet and worked for former congressman Sonny Callahan. She has worked at the Republican National Committee in Washington, D.C. and served as executive director of the Alabama Republican Party, later becoming its first female chairman.

A graduate of Auburn University, Cavanaugh and her husband have three children. They are members of First Baptist Church in Montgomery and are involved in several local community organizations.

"All recent polling shows I'm the front-runner, so obviously we've got the

word out that conservative government works," Cavanaugh said. "When the citizens of Alabama are educated about what you're doing to right-size state government, people become interested in what you're doing."

"Government needs to quit asking for more money and start getting things done with the money we have."

In addition to reducing the fleet of state vehicles used by her office, Cavanaugh has reduced the size of the PSC work force from 119 to 71 employees.

"We've done that with no firings. We've significantly reduced the number of state vehicles, and it's a matter of leading by example," Cavanaugh said. "We've cut our office space as well and returned \$13 million to the general fund this year. That's money better spent toward infrastructure in the state rather than more money for the Public Service Commission."

If you're not sure what the function of the PSC is, you're not alone. Cavanaugh often finds herself explaining the role of the commission when she speaks across the state.

"I look at it as an opportunity," she said. "For too many years, the Public Service Commission was shrouded in secrecy, and people stayed with the commission for decades. I don't look at the commission as a place to land and retire."

"I want to serve the commission and demonstrate conservative principles to make the agency stronger. For six years, I've shared that vision across the state."

According to its mission statement, the PSC operates "to ensure a regulatory balance between regulated companies and consumers in order to provide consumers with safe, adequate and reliable services at rates that are equitable and economical."

Cavanaugh was the guest last Thursday of Scott and Trisha Montgomery, owners of Montgomery Distributing, Inc. (MDI). MDI is the eastern distributor for Scosche Industries, a leader in consumer technology and car audio products and accessories. Scott Montgomery said it's important to have state leaders visit northwest Alabama to spotlight the



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Alabama Public Service Commission president Twinkle Cavanaugh, far right, speaks with Melissa and Jamie Kiel, Katernia Cole-Coffey and Trisha Montgomery of Montgomery Distributing, Inc. during her visit to the plant last week.

potential for this area of the state.

"There are so many possibilities for northwest Alabama, and I believe we can do better," Montgomery said. "We're excited about the prospect of having the assistance from state leaders to do that and help us provide jobs."

MDI has 40 employees, and Montgomery hopes to see that number grow to 100 in the next three years. One reason for the company's success is its northwest Alabama location and the area's close proximity to other states.

"We have the best zone charts in the country and reach more states than any distribution center in the United States," Montgomery said. "We reach 37 states via ground shipment delivered within 48 hours or less. No other location in the country can lay claim to that."

Walmart is a major retailer of Scosche products, and of the 42 Walmart distribution centers, MDI ships to 35 of them. The company is in negotiations with two other primary Walmart providers to handle their distribution, Montgomery said.

Their plant, located in the Phil Campbell Industrial Park in Spruce Pine,

opened in December of 2014. The company handles more than 70 percent of the distribution for Scosche and recently added an assembly line of Scosche products as well.

"What you have here is wonderful," Cavanaugh said of Montgomery Distributing. "You can't put into perspective all the problems going on in Montgomery right now, but you can solve those problems through jobs."

"I appreciate the chance to come visit a business where jobs are being produced, and I love hearing people's stories."

Before she toured the plant, Cavanaugh personally met each employee at Montgomery Distributing, including those on the line, the office staff and management. Trisha Montgomery and Cavanaugh met in Montgomery and became friends. That's what led Montgomery to invite the PSC president to come visit her company, she said.

"Twinkle is a great person," Montgomery said, "and any time we can get leaders of our state to come see what we're doing in northwest Alabama, that's a good thing."

City council approves ballpark safe-room project

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council met last week to discuss 11 items on the approved agenda. One item on the agenda, which regarded a contract with an engineering firm, was omitted in the work session.

Mayor David Grissom was not present, so District 3 councilman Gary Cummings led the meeting.

The first major item approved by the city council was an agreement with the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) for project management of the newly approved community safe room at the John Blackwell Sports Complex next to Sloss Lake.

The council's approval of the agreement with NACOLG marks the end of a long two-and-a-half-year journey to get the project off the ground. The John

Blackwell Sports Complex was built with the approval of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Because of that, Russellville officials and NACOLG had to work with federal agencies to get the construction of the safe room approved.

"Typically, it doesn't take this long to get approval to do something like this," said Tiffany Boyd, the NACOLG contact for the project. "Because the ballpark was done by the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, we had to work with ADECA and the National Park Service to get clearance."

For all the work it took to finally get the project moving forward, Russellville Fire Department chief Joe Mansell said it's worth it.

"I think the safe room will be a great asset for the people of that community and for all the people that use the ball fields," Mansell said. "This was a long process,

and building those safe rooms isn't cheap, but if it saves just one life you can't put a price on that."

District 5 councilman Jamie Harris was grateful for the persistence of the individuals who helped get the safe-room project on track.

"I just want to thank Joe and his guys at the fire department, NACOLG and everyone involved for sticking with it for as long as they did and making sure it got done," Harris said.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant used to build the safe room, which has already been extended multiple times, will have to be extended once more before the safe room is completed.

"We'll have to extend the grant one more time to get the project done," Boyd said. "That'll add another year to the project. It shouldn't take that long to get the safe room built, but that's the time that will be added."

Honey Do: Are you a Patriot?

In light of recent happenings that are getting a lot of attention, I wanted to share this article from last July.

There is a lot of difference between an American and a Patriot. One can simply be born in this country or go through the proper channels and take the oath of citizenship to be an American, but a true Patriot has a heart for his country and his fellow citizens.

According to Wikipedia, "Patriots were those colonists of the Thirteen Colonies who violently rebelled against British control during the American Revolution and in July, 1776, declared the United States of America an independent nation. Their rebellion was based on the political philosophy of republicanism, as expressed by spokesmen such as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Thomas Paine. As a group, Patriots represented a wide array of social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. They included lawyers like John Adams and Alexander Hamilton; planters like Thomas Jefferson and George Mason; merchants like Alexander McDougall; and ordinary farmers like Daniel Shays and Joseph Plumb Martin."

This definition refers to the original Patriots of the American Revolution, who fought for independence and against oppression and whose efforts we celebrate next Tuesday, July 4.

Are you a Patriot? To me, today's Patriot is someone who takes pride in their country and community and stands for what's right (for everyone) and speaks out against what's wrong. They don't take advantage of the system for their own good but rather work to support their community and country.

A Patriot is someone who works hard to support their family and looks for ways to make their community a better place to live. Even those unable to work a "job" can find ways to contribute to the cause. Support your local churches, charities, businesses and governing bodies. Put your shoulder to the wheel with your fellow neighbors. Cast your vote at election time for people who exhibit patriotism, civic pride and good morals and values.

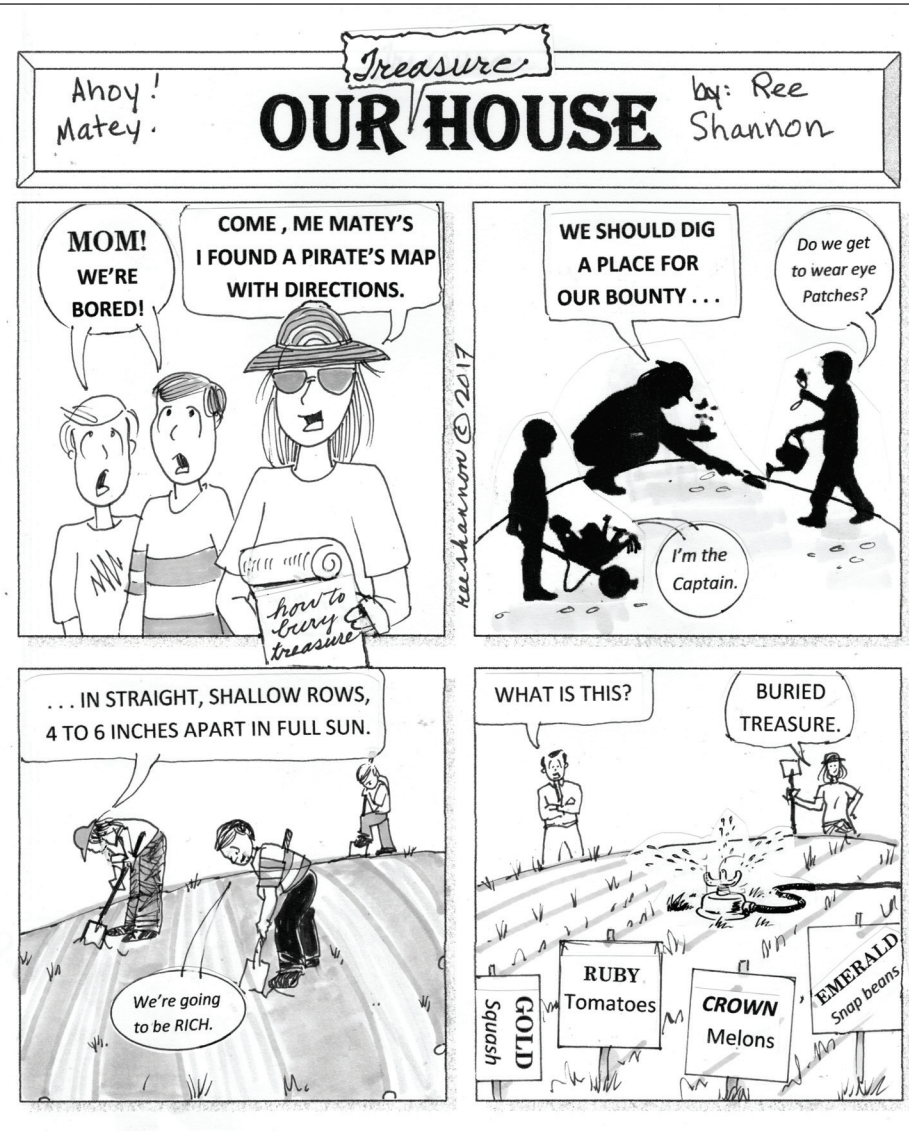
It's never been said better than when President Kennedy addressed the nation: "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

It takes a Patriot, it takes a village, it takes a community to build and maintain a great country.

On the honey do list...celebrate Patriotism, teach it to your kids, look for ways to be a Patriot.



Doug Green



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Publisher

John Pilati

Executive Editor

Mike Self

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

Sales Representatives

Linda Bumpers, John Pilati, Kadin Pounders, Mike Rice

Content Contributors

Mike Self, John Pilati, Alissa Young, Brady Petree, Mike Rice, Kadin Pounders, Ree Shannon, Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton, Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

Graphic Design

Jason Hill

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DAVE SAYS
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by Dave Ramsey

Keep the bike

Dear Dave,
My husband and I aren't seeing eye-to-eye on a motorcycle. The bike was my dad's, and I got it four years ago when he passed away. I'd like to keep it because I grew up riding it with him, and I still ride it today. My husband thinks we should sell it to pay off debt. We make about \$60,000 a year, and we have about \$36,000 to go before we're debt-free except for our home. The bike is worth about \$2,300. What do you think?

Amanda

Dear Amanda,
There's no way I'd sell that bike. If it were just a miscellaneous motorcycle, I'd sell the thing in about 20 seconds. But this bike is unique and special because it was your dad's. There's only one of those in the world.

It's like a lady in the same scenario saying she has a \$2,300 diamond on her hand that's her wedding ring. Would I tell her to sell it? No way! This bike is very much

woven into the fabric of your life and your fondest memories. As a rule, you don't sell things like that.

Now, there may be extreme cases sometimes where a person might have to consider selling something of that magnitude. If you were in a truly awful situation making \$10,000 a year and the ring is worth \$200,000 while you're \$100,000 in debt, you'd have to think about it. But there's no way I'd sell that bike in your case!

Dave

The family nightmare

Dear Dave,
My fiancé told me the other day he's going to buy a failing restaurant with his mom, sister and a family friend. None of them have any food service or business experience, and he has never said anything about wanting to own a restaurant. When I questioned him about it, he said it was his mother's idea. I don't want to be part of this, and it wouldn't be his first big surprise decision, so I told him I would walk away from the marriage if he pursues this. I feel bad about it, because he didn't really do anything wrong. Do you think I'm making a wise decision?

Carla

Dear Carla,
Yes, he did do something wrong. He put his controlling mommy

ahead of his bride-to-be, and it sounds like it's not the first time he's made big decisions without consulting you. Any man who doesn't consider the feelings of his wife or fiancée in an important decision-making process is not marriage material. Your decision was heartbreaking, but wise.

Going into a partnership with family like this is unwise. There's a lot of messed up stuff in his family dynamic. And it's not like you won't support your man and his dreams and decisions, but those dreams need to contain wisdom and consideration for you. Otherwise, any dream will fast become a nightmare.

I know it hurts, Carla, but this was not the right guy for you. Money problems are one of the biggest causes of divorce in America today. Trouble with in-laws is another, and you almost signed up for both. I'm sorry you had to make such a tough call.

If you want to salvage this, you could explain to him that he needs to make better decisions to win your hand again. In this case, making better decisions means involving you in the process and giving your thoughts, feelings and opinions the respect they deserve.

Dave

*You can follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at [@DaveRamsey](https://twitter.com/DaveRamsey).

Annual Jam on Sloss Lake could see record turnout

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With the announcement Monday that the Fourth of July Spirit of Freedom Celebration in Florence has been cancelled, a record crowd is expected in Russellville for the ninth annual Jam on Sloss Lake.

Organizers of the Florence event attributed its cancellation to "lack of sponsorship support and economic conditions."

Next Tuesday's event in Russellville begins with the Cotton Flats Cruisers Car Show from 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. The morning music lineup includes Buford Parker at 8:30 a.m., Jacob Green at 9:40 a.m., Southbound at 10:50 a.m. and the

Kerry Gilbert Band at noon.

Car show awards and prizes will be given away from 1:15-2 p.m.

The evening music lineup features Still Here from 4-4:50 p.m., Purpose from 5-5:50 p.m., Rewind from 6:05-7 p.m., Joseph Baldwin from 7:15-8:10 p.m. and country legend Joe Diffie from 8:30-9:30 p.m..

Fireworks will follow the concert. The event has free admission and will feature inflatables for kids, food vendors and much more.

The Jam on Sloss Lake is sponsored by the City of Russellville, the Russellville Electric Board, the Russellville Water & Sewer Board and the Russellville Gas Board.

Officials stress boating safety

Kadin Pounders
Franklin Free Press

Northwest Alabama is home to a great number of lakes and rivers, and right here in Franklin County, residents and visitors have access to the Bear Creek Lakes system.

These bodies are used throughout the year, but the traffic on the water increases exponentially during the summer and especially on holiday weekends. In fact, according to the American Boating Association, the Fourth of July is the busiest boating day of the year.

Unfortunately, Independence Day is also too often the deadliest day on the water. Memorial Day and Independence Day account for around one-third of all boating-related accidents and deaths each year, according to the ABA.

With that in mind, organizations like the ABA, the National Safe Boating Council and law enforcement encourage individuals to always take the necessary safety precautions while having fun on the water.

One of the most commonly advised precautions is to wear a life jacket.

"Every time I speak with someone affected by a boating accident, I'm more motivated to share about the importance of responsible boating—and that includes always wearing a life jacket," said Rachel Johnson, CAE, executive direc-

tor of the National Safe Boating Council.

According to the United States Coast Guard, 83 percent of drowning victims in 2016 were not wearing life jackets.

"Wearing a life jacket can be the difference between life and death," said Alabama Marine Police officer Pat Welton. "It can't save your life if you don't have it on."

And apart from life jackets being a big safety measure in general, in many situations Alabama law requires them.

"Anyone under the age of eight is required to wear one at all times," Welton said.

Individuals riding on personal recreational vehicles like jet skis and Sea-Doos or those being towed on tubes or water skis are also required to wear life jackets, Welton added.

Those over the age of eight who are riding in boats are not required to wear a life jacket, but each vessel must stow at least one life jacket per passenger on board, in accordance with Alabama law.

Another big "don't" while out on the water is alcohol. According to the National Safe Boating Council, one-third of all recreational boating fatalities involve a BUI.

Lakes and rivers are treated just like the roadway; if individuals are operating a vessel under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they may face a fine, jail time and a suspension of their boating license.

Farmers Market hosts free events

Staff reports

The Franklin County Farmers Market in Russellville will host two free community events to introduce consumers to what the market has to offer.

The first event will be a grand opening this Friday, June 30 from 9-11 a.m. Visitors will be able to sample grilled fresh vegetables and fruit and enjoy vegetable-infused water.

Annette Casteel, agent assistant for Franklin/Winston County Extension System, will be on site with free cutting

boards and reusable totes.

On Friday, July 7, the public is invited to enjoy Tomato Sandwich Day, with free tomato sandwiches available from 10 a.m.-noon. Additionally, other giveaways include free totes and colanders.

The Russellville Farmers Market is located at 202 Green Avenue, across from Dollar General and next to the A.W. Todd Center.

The Russellville market will remain open until October. Hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 6 a.m.-noon.

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 You're invited to the Russellville Farmers Market Grand Opening this Friday, June 30 from 9-11 a.m. at the Farmers Market, located at 202 Green Avenue in Russellville. Sample grilled fresh vegetables and fruit! Experience vegetable-infused water! Come see us!


 Cedar Ridge Campground in Russellville (off Hwy. 24 on Pritchard Road) will host an Open House this Saturday, July 1 from noon-4 p.m. Come see the campground and enjoy refreshments and a bite to eat. For more information, call 267-240-6958.


 The 20th annual Reedtown Roundup Reunion will be held July 1-3. There will be a meet-and-greet event this Saturday, July 1 from 4-6 p.m. with a talent show from 7-9 p.m. (\$2 entry fee). On Monday, July 3, there will be a banquet at the A.W. Todd Centre from 5-9 p.m. (\$25 admission). A raffle will be held for a 40-inch Masterbuilt electric smoker grill. A \$1 donation buys your raffle ticket. All proceeds benefit Reedtown Back to Basics. Raffle winner will be announced July 3. For more information, call Joe Graham (256-668-2228), Irene Mead (256-324-0515) or Beverly Hardy (256-332-5601).


 Gateway Church of God on Hwy. 43 North will host a "Fun Fest Explosion" this Sunday, July 2, with morning service at 10:45 a.m. and activities to follow all afternoon. Activities include an inflatable water slide, a bouncy house for the little ones, horse shoes, volleyball and chalk writing. Hamburgers and hotdogs will be served, and the gospel group Purpose will be singing and taking requests. Everything is free! Bring your friends and family!


 Village Square Apartments in Russellville host George's Country Boys each Monday night from 6-8 p.m. for some Gospel and Country singing. Come join in the fun!


 For anyone with the courage to be honest about life's hurts, habits and hang-ups, FUMC of Russellville will host *Celebrate Recovery!* on Tuesday nights with supper at 6 p.m., worship at 6:30 and groups at 7:30. Free childcare provided. Church is located at 311 North Jackson Avenue. Come and join us!


 Members of the Shoals Area Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will be available to pray for you in the meeting room at The Rock Christian Bookstore at 310 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield on Thursday, July 6 from 4-5:30 p.m. We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. All prayer requests are confidential.


 You're invited to Tomato Sandwich Day at the Russellville Farmers Market, 202 Green Avenue. The free event will be Friday, July 7 from 10 a.m.-noon. Enjoy free tomato sandwiches, free totes and free colanders.

 The Welch Reunion will be held Saturday, July 8 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Hee Haw Building at 5504 Hwy. 79, Phil Campbell, 35581. Cold-cut sandwiches for lunch. Each family should bring their bread, meat, drinks, chips and dessert (if wanted). A donation will be collected to help William with overhead. For more information, call Nancy Welch James at 256-627-7635. Please pass the word to others and come on out! We look forward to seeing everyone this year!

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, July 8 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. Group discounts available! Call 256-335-4356. Profits go toward the renovation of the historic Roxy Theatre.

 American Legion Post 64 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Chamber of Commerce office on Jackson Avenue. Meal served around 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m. Next meeting will be Thursday, July 13.

 The third annual Red Bay High School Alumni Baseball Game will be held Saturday, July 15 at 7 p.m. Sign-up fee is \$25 per player. Game shirts will be given with number on back for only pre-registered players. If you would like a number, you MUST pre-register by July 4. To pre-register, call RBHS baseball coach Richard Maggerise at 205-495-1170. Players signing up on July 15 will receive game shirts with no number and will be added to teams as evenly as possible. All players are to be at the field on July 15 no later than 6 p.m. so that rosters may be finalized. RBHS baseball will provide catcher's equipment, uniform top, bats, balls and batting helmets. Game will be seven or nine innings, depending on the number of pitchers available.

 Red Bay's first "back to the future" Men's Wood Bat Baseball Tournament will be held July 21-22 (Sunday, July 23 would be used based on number of teams) at the Red Bay High School baseball field. All men ages 18 and over are eligible to play. Rosters must be submitted before the first game and can not be altered once the tournament starts. Double-elimination tournament begins on Friday night. Tournament bracket will be provided, and each team is guaranteed at least two games. AHSAA registered officials will be utilized in all games. All game baseballs will be supplied. No wood bat will be supplied to any team, but the use of catcher's equipment can be requested prior to games starting. Standard baseball rules will be applied. Entry fee is \$25 per player or \$225 per playing team. If you desire to play but can not come up with a team, please call RBHS baseball coach Richard Maggerise at 205-495-1170. To register, call Coach Maggerise. Entry deadline is Friday, July 14. Send entry form and \$225 entry fee to Red Bay Baseball Diamond Club, 109 Truman Street, Red Bay, AL 35582. If you need help with uniforms, please call.



A look at area businesses and what they do. If you have an idea for a subject of "What do THEY do?," call us at 256-332-0255.

North AL Works: 'The eyes and ears' of local businesses

*Kadin Ponders
Franklin Free Press*

Jobs are important. They are crucial to a thriving economy and growing community.

That is an obvious statement, but as important as jobs are to individuals and communities, many jobseekers, employees, employers and business leaders are not aware of the resources available to them. This is where North Alabama Works steps in.

North Alabama Works, a non-profit organization, is a workforce council covering 13 counties and comprised of business, industry, education, government, Chamber of Commerce and economic development organizations. Some of North Alabama Works's partners include the Alabama Department of Commerce, the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), the Alabama Department of Labor and the Alabama Career Center System.

According to the organization's website, over 75 percent of voting membership represents business and industry.

Each county is represented on the 30-member board of directors by two business or industrial leaders, and there are four at-large members. Franklin County is represented by G&G Steel's Bret Gist, and the search for a second representative is in progress. The board of directors meets on a quarterly basis.

"We have two representatives from each county so that business owners and leaders have someone local they can talk to," said North Alabama Works assistant director Stephanie McCulloch.

The goal of North Alabama Works, according to McCulloch, is to do everything it can to support the workforce and the businesses and industries in the area.

"We eat, sleep and breathe workforce development," McCulloch said. "We want to be the eyes and ears of business and industry in north Alabama. If we know of resources that can help, we want people and businesses to know where and how they can use them."

"We eat, sleep and breathe workforce development," said Stephanie McCulloch, assistant director for North Alabama Works. "We want to be the eyes and ears of business and industry in north Alabama. If we know of resources that can help, we want people and businesses to know where and how they can use them."

One service the organization provides is connecting workers and organizations to programs in order to establish a more educated and trained workforce.

"Part of what we're doing is talking with businesses so they can let us know what they need," McCulloch said. "They can relay to us issues they may have, like high turnover, or maybe there's some sort of training that employees need. The more we know, the better we can help them receive the resources or information they need."

North Alabama Works is multifaceted, not just focusing on the existing workforce but also collaborating with schools and educators to prepare students to enter the local workforce in the future.

"We're here to develop a pipeline between the workers and the businesses and industries in the area," McCulloch said. "We're here for the current, future and senior workforce. Much of our workforce is nearing retirement, and businesses will need workers to fill in the gaps. Career tech centers and community colleges, especially, are instrumental to the future of our local workforce."

North Alabama Works is also there to assist individuals on the job market.

"If you need help finding a job or need help getting training for a job, we're

See 'WORKS,' Page 9

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Brinson seeks Republican nomination for U.S. Senate

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Politically, Randy Brinson has done it all in Alabama. The 59-year-old physician has volunteered for campaigns, served as campaign adviser to Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee and as health care adviser to Gov. Fob James, started a massively successful non-profit organization to drive voter registration in young adults and founded his own political consulting company, Optimum Impact.

The one void on Brinson's resume was actually being a candidate. With his April announcement that he would be seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate, that changed.

"We've seen so much corruption, and people are disappointed by candidates who say one thing and do something else," Brinson told the *Franklin Free Press* last week. "We see people talking about creating jobs who've never created a job or handled payroll. We hear candidates say to repeal Obamacare who have no experience or understanding of health care.

"I feel I have the experience to do that. My children are grown, my business is doing okay, and at the end of the day I believe I can articulate myself to where voters will want to hire me. Voters are like the board of directors for the state of Alabama, and they're electing a CEO who needs the knowledge and experience to turn around the company. We need a businessman who can address the issues rather than a politician who just talks about the issues."

Brinson is a gastroenterologist who has practiced in Montgomery since 1987. He and his wife Pamela have three grown sons and two granddaughters. Brinson is a licensed lay minister, a former trustee of the University of Mobile, a past board member on the state board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and, until recently, the president of the Christian Coalition of Alabama.

Brinson has traveled internationally on numerous trade missions for Alabama in cooperation with Alabama's agricultural commissioner, John McMillan. He spent 10 days earlier this year in Zambia working to secure lands to establish a network for Alabama farmers to work with their Zambian counterparts, helping open Zambia and Africa to Alabama goods.

He also formed Redeem the Vote in 2003. Redeem the Vote is a non-profit organization geared toward driving voter registration among young adults. Nearly 80,000 people were registered through the organization during the 2004 campaign, more than all other faith-based voter drives combined.

After Brinson started WAY-FM, a Christian music radio station in Montgomery, in 1999, the small station quickly grew to where it received the second-most donations of the entire 44-station network of Christian music across the country.

"We hosted four different groups at a Christian concert and had such a tremendous turnout that we had to turn kids away," Brinson said. "My wife and I thought, 'What a great place to get kids registered to vote,' so we formed Redeem the Vote as a way



COURTESY PHOTO

Montgomery physician Randy Brinson (in back) with his family.

to get people registered to vote. We've partnered with more than 50 Christian artists and many Christian radio networks to do public service announcements encouraging people to vote."

Brinson has stepped down, at least through the Senate campaign, from his positions with the Christian Coalition and Redeem the Vote.

On the heels of recent political corruption in Alabama, including Gov. Robert Bentley, speaker of the house Mike Hubbard and the removal of Supreme Court chief justice Roy Moore from office, every candidate in the race trumpets his or her integrity. So why should voters believe Brinson when he touts the same message?

"I'm someone who actually gets things done," Brinson said. "Mike Hubbard tried to use his office for personal gain. I'm not going to Washington for personal gain. My income would go in the opposite direction. When you have candidates running who see that as a way to get more power, money or influence, and their campaigns are propped up by special interests, they're ripe for corruption.

"I'm someone with business experience who doesn't need that special interest money, and I want to change the complexion of how we work for the people of Alabama in the senate."

Brinson has been described as a 'Christian activist' and he's concerned how government and today's culture are "pushing people of faith to remain silent about their

See 'BRINSON,' page 9

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'BRINSON,' from page 8

faith," according to his website, www.votebrinson.com.

"Nobody wants to create a theocracy with only one state religion and belief," Brinson said. "That said, our faith forms who we are. For example, if we promote legislation protecting life and restricting abortion, that's because life is valuable, and I think that's good policy."

"Most people believe life is precious. I believe in a culture of life where every

person has value, worth and a God-given set of abilities and gifts, and that we should promote their value so they can be everything they're supposed to be on earth. It's very hard to dismiss as not good policy if it promotes a culture that espouses those values."

Brinson said he's seen first-hand the "destructive effects of Obamacare" on patients, doctors and hospitals. He will go to Washington with the goal of

repealing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and he'll work to allow market-based insurance plans to be sold across state lines.

"In addition to allowing the purchase of insurance across state lines," he said, "we need to continue the high-risk pools that have been set up and encourage those people to transition out from those pools by staying on medications and working to stay healthy."

Brinson also advocates creating regional care organizations within each state and the short-term remedy of using university and teaching programs (including medical students, nurse practitioners and nursing students) to provide care under the supervision of training physicians.

Primaries are set for August 15, with a runoff date of September 26. The general election is December 12.

'WORKS,' from page 7

"If people don't know about North Alabama Works and don't know what we're here to do, then obviously we can't be of much service. We want everyone to know that we're here to help, provide resources and information, and do everything in our power to make the work-

force in Franklin County and every other county in our region as strong as possible."

To learn more about North Alabama Works, go online to northalabamaworks.com or call Stephanie McCulloch in Muscle Shoals at 256-436-0411.

here to help with that, too," McCulloch said.

But as much as North Alabama Works can do for individual workers and businesses as a whole, McCulloch said the real work is getting the word out.

"People don't know what they don't know," she said.

'MORROW,' from page 1

leaders coming out of public schools, because they simply don't exist anymore. These people in Montgomery who are pushing charter and private schools, that's their intent--to destroy public education."

And Morrow places Stutts firmly in that group.

"Now we have the Accountability Act, which Senator Stutts voted for," Morrow said. "This past session they came up with the need to prop the Accountability Act up, and I think it ought to be repealed. When that bill came out of the Senate, and Stutts voted for it, we killed it in the House."

The proposed amendment would have allowed more tax credits for contributions to private schools.

Morrow believes his voice will better be heard in the Senate rather than in the House, where there are 105 members and, as he describes, a situation that is "out of control."

"We have no leadership, no direction," Morrow said, "and I don't care to be a part of that body. We don't work toward solving problems. Problems in this state mount up and get worse every year. At least being one

of 35 senators will allow me a larger voice, and I know I'll be heard because I'll make sure of that.

"We have a senator right now voting against public education in Alabama, and this senator happens to represent me. I'm not willing to sit by and idly watch him try to dismantle public education."

Morrow said more than \$4 million has been taken from public schools in Senate District 6 since the 2013 passage of the Alabama Accountability Act.

"It's only the beginning of what they want," Morrow said. "Four million dollars is a lot of money to be taken from the county school system Senator Stutts represents. That money, instead of helping a child in Waterloo or Leighton or in Florence City Schools or down in Hamilton, is being sent to fund private schools in Montgomery."

"It's the rich people in Montgomery. We're sending our money to Montgomery to fund the education of children who already attend private schools. Four million dollars might not seem like a make-or-break amount, but it's only a start. And it has to be stopped."

Morrow's history with public education has deep roots. His father taught at Vina, Phil Campbell and Red Bay, and Morrow attended all three schools, graduating high school from Red Bay. After receiving his economics degree from Mississippi State University and earning his MBA from Samford University, he returned to Franklin County and began teaching at Northwest Junior College until retiring in 1998. His mother Hazel was also a public school teacher in Franklin County.

"As you see, public education is a big part of my life," Morrow said. "Mark Twain said, 'Out of the public schools comes the greatness of the nation.' Public schools remain the backbone of our nation, and I won't stand by and watch them get destroyed in Alabama."

Morrow, 74, and his wife Martha live in Red Bay on Cypress Cove Farm. He has served House District 18 since 1990. His district includes western Lauderdale County, eastern western Franklin County and much of Colbert County.

Political qualifying will begin in February of 2018, with the primary election set for June 5, 2018.

'BEDFORD,' from page 1

for state senator, he left the door open for a future campaign for another office.

"We'll see what the future holds when it comes to that," he said. "But for now, I'm looking forward to spending more time with my wife [Maudie], Roge [their son] and being active in our church."

Bedford earned a reputation in Montgomery as a bulldog fighting for his district, and when it came to special appropriations Senate District 6 was often at the front of the pack.

"Because we were able to work hard and bring additional tax dollars home," Bedford said, "we were able to have better things for our residents to enjoy. There were 35 of us down there in Montgomery, and the one who worked the hardest and fought the hardest for the people got the special appropriation to help their volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, schools and athletic programs."

When asked about his many accomplishments as senator, Bedford said one of his biggest professional satisfactions came with the passage of the Senior RX program.

"It was my privilege to help start the first statewide free prescription program, Senior RX, that we started up here in northwest Alabama," he said. "We've been able to give over \$400 million in free prescription drugs to seniors who otherwise would not have qualified."

"Years ago, I had young couples tell me they had to support their grandparents and parents, and they

weren't getting prescription drug coverage. People had to decide between paying their power bill or getting the medicine they needed. We used some good old Alabama common sense and fixed that."

Bedford is concerned about the political climate both nationally and in Alabama.

"It's sad that partisan politics that had gridlocked Washington have drifted down to our state capital," Bedford said, "where people are judging ideas not on their merit but on which political party is promoting them. My philosophy was, if it was good for the state and my area, we ought to do it, and if not, we should fight it."

"It's sad that partisan politics that had gridlocked Washington have drifted down to our state capital," Bedford said. "My philosophy was, if it was good for the state and my area, we ought to do it, and if not, we should fight it."

Since 2014, Bedford has returned to the full-time practice of law in Russellville. Additionally, he's co-owner of Valley Lumber in Hackleburg, a company that ships lumber nationwide. He's also remaining active in several non-profit and community causes, including the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville.

Bedford recalled how he first became involved with

the idea for the facility.

"I was sitting on my couch reading the Sunday paper after church when Gov. Bob Riley called and asked me what I knew about biogenetics," Bedford said. "I told him I didn't think I could spell the word, but he said he had a great project and wanted to get me involved. He told me about a group of men, including Jim Hudson and Lonnie McMillian, who were very successful professionally and wanted to leave a legacy project to Huntsville. They started out with 200 employees, and that's now grown to 800."

"I was proud to help lead the funding for research. Private investors put in \$100 million, and the state \$30 million and then later \$20 million."

The institute's mission is to translate the promise of genomics into real-world benefits for people and their communities.

"It's been nothing but a success and has exceeded all expectation," Bedford said. "I was honored to help lead the effort."

While politics will forever run through Bedford's veins, he's at peace (at least for now) having moved on from the political arena.

"I'm enjoying practicing law," he said, "and I enjoy going home and playing with my two Labrador retrievers. I'm fortunate to have a wife who's a great cook, wonderful gardener and my best friend. It's nice to enjoy some of the prettiest sunsets in the world right here in Russellville."

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Lost in Russellville area within last four weeks: Howard College ring, Class of 1961. Has initials LMK. Reasonable reward offered. Call 256-398-8136. (2)

Lost Cat. Lost between Littleville and Hwy 72 on Highway 43. Brindle in color with white feet and belly. Please call 205-269-4620. (4)

A sweet Shih Tzu was found somewhere between Phil Campbell and Russellville. Call Russellville Animal Clinic at 256-332-2254 to claim. Must prove ownership and provide details about dog. (5)

GIVEAWAYS

Puppy free to good home. Part Shih Tzu and part Schnauzer. 10 weeks old. Tan in color. Call 205-412-4166.

Free to a good home: Four baby kittens in Russellville, real cute. Call 1-828-269-8598. (2)

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Eight-month-old female cat. Young, playful, spayed last month. Gets along with other cats, laid back, impeccable litter box skills. Affectionate but not too needy. Loves dry/wet food and Temptations. Born on the streets and plucked down out of a tree, needs a safe indoor-only island where she will never feel that kind of danger again. Please consider this one-of-a-kind very special kitty. Call 619-548-8212. (3)

FREE to good home: Nine-year-old female dog, Jack Russell mix. Spayed. This poor girl lost the only two things she ever had (her owner and her home) when her owner passed away. Desperately needs a generous home with a fenced yard. She's no puppy, but she's not done yet either. Healthy and still playful. An enclosed porch for hot and cold days would be lovely. Please consider adopting Dottie. She is currently living in cramped quarters, and her life is in jeopardy. Text or call 619-548-8212. (3)

YARD SALES/ ESTATE SALES

Inside yard sale on June 30-July 1. Hwy. 724 East, Russellville, or Old Hwy. 24. Willmarth Home. Lots of vintage glassware, bottles & jars, iron beds, antique furniture, old magazines & books, vintage women's hats, gloves, dollies, scarfs, table cloths & aprons, vintage quilts & bedspreads, enamelware & lots more!

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Posture Beauty mattress for sale. Full Set. \$100. Pick up Russellville. Call 256-762-9551. (1)

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Discontinued Corelle "wild flower" pattern dishes. 2 sets, a few pieces missing. \$45. Call 256-577-5843. (1)

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Pinky & Blue Boy wall prints, really pretty. \$20/set. Call 205-993-5961. (1)

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PC officials look at ways to prevent future train delays

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

After a stalled train blocked the major crossing in Phil Campbell for four days last week, town officials are looking at ways to prevent such lengthy delays in the future.

A Norfolk-Southern train blocked several crossings in Phil Campbell from Thursday, June 15 through Monday, June 19, due to what Norfolk-Southern officials described as a "dead motor."

Phil Campbell's major railroad crossing comes as you enter town on Highway 13 and provides access to County Road 81 and on to Highway 243, a popular truck access route to town.

With the intersection blocked for four days, traffic was forced to reroute to the Weeks Road crossing south of town. That intersection, according to mayor Steve Bell, is downhill and makes for difficult navigation for trucks.

Phil Campbell does not have a city ordinance relating to obstruction of streets by trains, although many Alabama cities do. In Jefferson County, a local law passed through the Alabama legislature states that railroad companies are subject to a \$1,000 civil penalty if they violate the following code section:

"Section 45-37A-56.70: It shall be unlawful for any railroad train to obstruct any public street, road or highway crossing at-grade within a Class 1 municipality in the county for more than five minutes."

Similar ordinances in Trussville and Anniston provide a maximum of five minutes for train blockage. Bell said he's not sure that such ordinances are enforceable, though.

"I'm not sure local ordinances aren't superseded by national railroad rules," Bell said. "I can't state that for certain, but that's what I've been told. We will look at it. It's got a lot of attention, between media and the railroad itself."

"As far as an ordinance, it will take a lot of investigation to see if we can pass something that can stick. It's likely something we'll put the city attorney on to see if we could do it."

Bell was contacted Wednesday by Norfolk-Southern's government liaison, who provided him contact info to reach her directly if a similar situation arises.

"I don't think it will happen that way again in Phil Campbell," Bell said. "If it does, we've got the correct people to call to break that crossing."

Although Norfolk-Southern representatives said crews were on the way to the stalled train Friday and Saturday, it remained there through the weekend before the company finally cleared the crossing last Monday afternoon.

"The lady I spoke with said all she could tell me was that every time they said they had a crew on the way, something would happen that would take priority over our train," Bell said. "But if they would have known it was a major

intersection, they would have brought another train to break at the crossing."

According to a report from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, there are approximately 228,000 public and private highway-rail grade crossings across the United States. The growing number of blocked crossings results from, at least in part, more trains being consolidated on fewer main lines, according to an FRA fact sheet:

"The increased frequency of blocked grade crossings...may adversely affect the quality of life, especially if a high number of freight and passenger trains use the line during peak highway travel times. Also, a grade crossing blocked by a stopped or slow-moving train may impede the movement of emergency response vehicles, negatively impact the flow of commerce, and be an inducement for motorists to violate traffic safety laws or pedestrians to trespass."

The FRA encourages railroads to be good corporate citizens and to maintain good relations with communities.

"FRA recommends that railroads work cooperatively with state and local officials to eliminate or minimize the impact of blocked crossings wherever possible. For example, a railroad might make operational changes, such as the time of day it services its customers or where it stops its trains to make crew changes."

According to a source familiar with Norfolk-Southern, the lengthy crossing blockage in Phil Campbell resulted from the train crew 'timing out' of their maximum 12-hour shift, although the Norfolk-Southern rep who spoke with the *Free Press* last Monday attributed the delay to mechanical problems only.

The FRA sets forth several solutions to the problem of blocked crossings, including:

- Holding a train outside the congested area until it can move through the grade crossing without stopping.
- Improving management of rail yard traffic to accommodate train movements more efficiently.
- Working with customers to schedule pick-up and delivery times that limit impact on highway traffic.
- Reducing the length of trains.
- Breaking a long train (i.e. de-coupling two rail cars) to allow the resumption of highway traffic when it is anticipated that a grade crossing will be blocked for an extended period.

Earlier this year, Norfolk-Southern announced it would do away with its hump yard operations at its DeButts yard in Chattanooga, TN. That decision meant the loss of 74 of the 495 jobs at the facility and more traffic for the company's Sheffield and Birmingham yards.

Regardless of cause, Bell said lengthy blockage of crossings is unacceptable.

"We'll approach things different next time," Bell said. "We'll call the higher-ups instead of depending on dispatch information."



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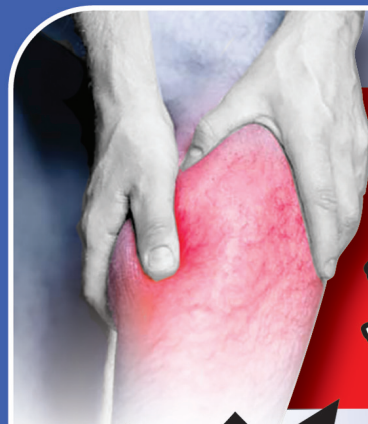
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SEC is ready to run in 2017

Mike Self
 Franklin Free Press

Long before spread offenses and passer-friendly systems became the norm in college football, the SEC built a championship pedigree on the legs of some of the best ball carriers ever to lace up a pair of cleats.

Don't look now, but the conference that produced the likes of Herschel Walker, Bo Jackson, Emmitt Smith, Shaun Alexander and Darren McFadden (among others) could be on the cusp of another Golden Age of running backs.

Granted, a thousand-yard season on the ground ain't what it used to be, due to the ever-expanding nature of modern schedules [more games equal more yards]. Still, it's worth noting that ten different running backs in the SEC eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark in 2016, the most in any single season over the past decade. Even more significant is the fact that *nine* of those ten backs are returning to the league in 2017 [only Kentucky's Boom Williams has moved on]. Over the past ten years, no other season has seen more than four 1,000-yard rushers returning to the SEC.

This year's list includes established workhorses like Vanderbilt's Ralph Webb (1,283 yards in 2016) and Georgia's Nick Chubb (1,130 yards), each of whom has a chance with another season up to their usual standard to move into second place on the league's all-time rushing list behind Walker; rising stars like Derrius Guice (1,387 yards) of LSU and Rawleigh Williams III (1,360 yards) of Arkansas, the league's top two rushers (among running backs) last season; guys who share the backfield—and touches—with other capable runners but still manage to put up big numbers, like Alabama's Damien Harris (1,037 yards) and Auburn's Kamryn Pettway (1,224 yards); and a trio of youngsters who burst onto the scene as true freshmen last year in Kentucky's Benny Snell, Jr. (1,091 yards), Missouri's Damarea Crockett (1,062 yards) and Texas A&M's Trayveon Williams (1,057 yards).

That list doesn't even include the likes of Alabama's Bo Scarbrough (812 yards), who was the star of the College Football Playoff before breaking his leg in the second half of the championship game against Clemson; Auburn's Kerryon Johnson (895 yards), who ran for 11 touchdowns despite playing second fiddle to Pettway most of the year; Florida's Jordan Scarlett (889 yards), who handled 179 carries as a sophomore; Georgia's Sony Michel (840 yards), who topped the 1,000-yard mark in 2015 after Chubb went down with a mid-season injury; or guys like Rico

See 'RUN,' page 14

Second time around



NET GAINS - Head coach Trey Stanford said the Lady Golden Tigers made major strides during their debut season.

Tested and motivated by a trying first season, Russellville's girls are ready to move forward in year number two

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

At this time last year, the Russellville High School girls' soccer team did not exist. It was just an idea.

And even after head coach Trey Stanford held the first tryouts in January of this year, he knew afterwards that the new program would require patience.

"Last year, before the season started, there were very few, if any, girls that had ever played soccer before," Stanford said. "Some of them had never even kicked a ball before."

So, not surprisingly, there were growing pains. A lot of them. And for much of Russellville's debut season, the Lady Golden Tigers struggled, often losing by five or more goals to far more experienced competition.

But, over the course of the year, Russellville improved. At the end of the 2017 season, the Lady Golden Tigers would only have two wins to their credit, but the strides taken from February to April were apparent and left Stanford feeling optimistic going into the offseason.

"I mean, I think the improvement from the beginning of the year to the end of the year for the girls was incredible," Stanford said. "At the end of the season, those last few games, I thought we played better than our opponents, overall. We may not have won those games, but we did a lot better controlling the ball and creating chances to score."

"Considering where we started, we got a lot further than where I thought we'd be at that point."

Now, the Lady Golden Tigers are in the middle of their first offseason conditioning and training program, something as new to the girls as soccer itself was just seven months ago.

"Working out in the summer, that's a completely new idea for a lot of these girls," Stanford said. "It'll take some time to get used to, but I believe the girls know that's what it takes to be a successful program."

"I can't really explain how proud I am of the girls," Stanford said. "Right now, as we speak, the girls are out there on the field, on their own, practicing their passing and shooting. I didn't tell them they had to do that. They have a desire to get better—they want it—and that's something you can't coach into somebody."

Give the Lady Golden Tigers some credit, Stanford said. A lot of people would complain or just give up when faced with training in the heat of Alabama's summer. For Russellville's girls, the reaction has been quite the opposite.

"I can't really explain how proud I am of the girls," he said one morning last week. "Right now, as we speak, the girls are out there on the field, on their own, practicing their passing and shooting. I didn't tell them they had to do that. They have a desire to get better—they want it—and that's something you can't coach into somebody."

See 'SECOND,' page 16

'RUN' from page 13

Dowdle (764 yards on 133 carries for South Carolina), Aeris Williams (720 yards on 137 carries for Mississippi State) and John Kelly (630 yards on 98 carries for Tennessee), who emerged as featured backs late last season and will return to that role in 2017.

Injuries are particularly prevalent at the running back position, but we could reasonably see as many as twelve to fifteen backs rush for 1,000 yards this season in the SEC. With that in mind, we endeavored to rank the top five best backfields (excluding quarterbacks) in the conference heading into 2017.

No. 1 – Alabama

Alabama returns the top four running backs from the No. 2 rushing offense in the league last season. Harris, now a junior, notched the fewest carries (146) of any of the SEC backs who went over 1,000 yards last year, averaging a team-best 7.1 yards a pop. Scarbrough, a physical specimen out of the Derrick Henry mold, erupted in the College Football Playoff with 273 yards and four touchdowns on 35 carries in essentially a game-and-a-half.

Sophomores and former top recruits Josh Jacobs (567 yards on 85 carries, 6.7 ypc) and B.J. Emmons (173 yards on 35 carries) also return, and you can add to that mix the No. 2 running back in the Class of 2017, Najee Harris, a consensus five-star freshman out of California. With this embarrassment of running back riches, it's easy to see why the development of quarterback Jalen Hurts (who, oh by the way, rushed for 954 yards and 13 touchdowns himself last season) as a downfield passer only registers as a minor concern.

No. 2 – LSU

The Tigers don't have Alabama's multitude of weapons (who does?), but they may have the single best running back in the league (and perhaps the country) in the electrifying Guice. The 5'11, 212-pound junior might not be as big or as fast as Leonard Fournette, but the shifty Guice led the SEC in rushing last season with 1,387 yards on 183 carries.

In the five games Fournette missed, Guice ran for 155, 163, 162, 285 and 138 yards. The 285 yards came on 37 carries against Texas A&M, and he also rushed for 252 yards on 21 attempts in a rout of Arkansas. Guice's average of 7.6 yards per carry led the SEC, and he was second with 15 rushing touchdowns. He led the league in 20-yard runs (19), 30-yard runs (11) and 40-yard runs (eight), demonstrating top-notch big-play ability.

With Fournette in the NFL, Guice is the centerpiece of a run-first offense and a preseason Heisman candidate.

No. 3 – Auburn

The bruising Pettway and the versatile Johnson are back after combining to rush for 2,119 yards and 18 TD on 391 attempts last season. Pettway (6'0, 240) led the SEC with 122 yards per game on the ground last year and reeled off totals of 169, 192, 236 and 173 yards during one mid-season stretch. Johnson

averaged an additional 74 yards per game and ran for 11 touchdowns. The explosive Kam Martin (5'10, 182) averaged 7.3 yards on 44 carries as a freshman, and Malik Miller (5'11, 235) is also in the mix.

Auburn led the SEC in rushing last year despite getting relatively little in the way of ground production from the quarterback spot. And, to think, there were serious questions about Auburn's running back position last fall after Jovon Robinson was dismissed.

No. 4 – Arkansas

Williams III returned from that serious neck injury suffered in 2015 against Auburn to finish second in the SEC in rushing attempts (245), third in rushing yards (1,360) and sixth in rushing touchdowns (12) last season. He's a junior now and has a very capable sidekick in sophomore Devwah Whaley, who added 602 yards on 110 carries as a freshman last season.

Bret Bielema has coached some outstanding one-two punches at running back during his years at Wisconsin and Arkansas; he's got another one in 2017.

No. 5 – Georgia

When Chubb and Michel broke in as true freshmen in 2014, the odds of them both still being in Athens as seniors were slim, but here we are. Chubb opened last season with a 200-yard game against UNC, but he ended up averaging only 5.0 yards per carry for the year—down from 8.1 as a sophomore in 2015 and 7.1 as a freshman in 2014. Not surprisingly, he wasn't the same back we saw before the injury versus Tennessee in 2015.

He still has a chance with another strong season, though, to pass Bo Jackson, Kevin Faulk and Darren McFadden and move into second place on the SEC's all-time rushing list behind Walker. Chubb has rushed for 3,424 yards in his career; he needs 1,171 yards rushing this year to move into second place all-time in SEC history and 1,836 yards to surpass Walker.

Michel has nearly 3,000 yards from scrimmage in his Georgia career; it will be interesting to see if offensive coordinator Jim Chaney tries to involve him more in the passing game this season. There are no standouts at receiver, and Michel caught 22 passes last year.

Georgia's depth in the backfield rivals that of Alabama, with sophomores Brian Herrien (363 yards on 63 carries) and Elijah Holyfield also in the mix and true freshman D'Andre Swift (the top-rated player in Pennsylvania) joining the fold this season.

We had to leave off Texas A&M, where the dynamic Williams (6.8 yards per carry last season, with six touchdown runs of at least 20 yards) is backed up by former Oklahoma transfer Keith Ford, and Vanderbilt, where Webb has started all 37 games in his career while rushing for a school-record 3,342 yards, but that's how loaded SEC backfields are in 2017.

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'SECOND,' from page 13

In preparation for the summer and the 2018 season, Russellville held tryouts for the new team in May. While there are some new faces, one major positive for the Lady Golden Tigers is that the team has every player from last year returning.

"We didn't have a single senior on last year's team," Stanford said. "Everybody is back this season, so I'm really looking forward to seeing how much they can improve."

On June 16, the Lady Golden Tigers played in their first exhibition of the summer. The friendly against Madison Academy ended in a 6-nil loss for Russellville, but the girls' play appeared to be building on to the improvement seen in April.

"They're definitely getting better," said assistant coach Fred Ambrosio, who joined Stanford's staff midway through last season. "We're improving our touch and our control of the ball. Over the summer, I think we'll have a lot of things to work on and hopefully be much better before next season."

Ambrosio, who works extensively with the girls' team, said strategy and communication will be a key focus this offseason.

"I think one of the biggest things is the girls lack some imagination and an understanding of where to go sometimes," he said. "They're still learning about the game, and it's tough to teach them stuff like that in an hour-and-a-half."

"But that'll be one of the things that we'll keep working on this summer, and hopefully by the time next season is here we'll be more aware of things going on in the game."

With most of the 2017 roster coming back, one thing that will not be lacking, however, is experience, and players with experience are more willing to lead. That is the case, Ambrosio said, with three seniors: Zayra Perez, Carmen Perez and Jaquelin Tristan.

"They get frustrated at practice when other girls don't do something the right way or work as hard as they should," he said. "They let them know about it, and they're very vocal about doing things the right way."

At practice and in training, players let their voices be heard, but Ambrosio said another improvement the Lady Golden Tigers will have to make is with communication on the field.

"Off the field they talk, but during a game they're not very loud, so we've got to work on our communication," he said. "If you don't communicate, others won't know if there's a man on or who the ball is going to. That's important, because if you don't talk, then it's a lot easier for the other team to take the ball away."

On the field, with so many returning players, many starting positions have been secured. The coaching staff discussed a number of players that will have an impact again this season. One was striker Zayra Perez.

"Zayra is a lot more comfortable in that spot now, I think," Ambrosio said. "She's more comfortable with the ball, and her footwork and touch has gotten much better. She could still be more aggressive sometimes, but she's getting better."

"We're going to keep getting better and better," Stanford said, "because, at the end of the day, the girls want to keep getting better. That's what it takes to build a program. Last season wasn't the kind of season these girls wanted, and they remember how it felt to lose and how it felt to win. I think that's what's driving them."

Another player, on the opposite side of the pitch, is rising sophomore goalkeeper Briana Ramirez. Ramirez started every match in goal for Russellville last season.

"Briana Ramirez, our goalkeeper, is a boss," Stanford said. "She's made a lot of incredible saves, and she kept us in some games that we probably had no business being in. For someone that never played soccer before last season, she's really good, and I'd be willing to put her up against any goalkeeper in the state. That's how good she is."

Other impact players include Juana Juarez and Gisel Perez.

"Juana is one of the most hard-working players on the team, and she does a good job of controlling the midfield for us," Stanford said. "And Gisel, she had a lot of problems with shin splints last year. This year, with the training she's doing, hopefully we can avoid that, because she's one of the fastest players on the team. I'm really excited to see what she can do."

But even with all the returning players, there are still a few new faces. Two in particular, Ambrosio said, will be making an immediate impact.

"One is Kaitlen Arzola, who is a defender and just a really great athlete," he said. "The other is Michelle Betancourt—she's a midfielder. I think both of them will be on the field a lot and will be important to us next season."

As the summer rolls on, the 2018 season gets closer and closer. As it does, Stanford said his Lady Golden Tigers will continue to improve, and he's optimistic that 2018 will be a good year for the squad.

"These girls are extremely hard workers, and they've completely bought in to the program," he said. "We're going to keep getting better and better because, at the end of the day, the girls want to keep getting better. That's what it takes to build a program."

"Last season wasn't the kind of season these girls wanted, and they remember how it felt to lose and how it felt to win. I think that's what's driving them."

Heaton: O-line progressing, QB battle going well

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

The 2017 season isn't set to kick off for another couple of months, but Mark Heaton knows how important this final week of June could be to the development of his Russellville football team.

At the very least, the Golden Tigers will be extremely busy. "It's wide open, man," Heaton said on Monday morning. "We've got everybody going in a hundred different directions."

Russellville had 18 linemen taking part Monday and Tuesday in the Southeastern Line Camp at Clay-Chalkville High School. Each year, the camp—run by Mountain Brook head coach Chris Yeager—draws more than 600 players from more than 70 schools from Texas to North Carolina. According to its website, the camp is also used as an opportunity to evaluate linemen for the Alabama/Mississippi All-Star Game.

"They've been doing it for a while," said Heaton, now in his fourth year at RHS. "Coach Yeager at Mountain Brook is one of the best offensive line coaches in the state of Alabama, one of the best in the Southeast."

The Golden Tigers are re-loading on the offensive line following the graduation of four starters in May. Senior left guard John David Palmer is the only returner, but Heaton said that two defensive starters—senior John David Aycock and junior Will Rushing—have provided much-needed reinforcements along the offensive front.

"John David Aycock is playing defensive end as well as right tackle," Heaton said. "He's been tremendous. He's really come along. And I've been impressed with how much better John David Palmer has gotten since the spring."

"John David and John David are really leading that group right now and building that chemistry you have to have. That group is starting to come together. We're trying to get five guys in sync. With the offensive line, you've gotta be really tight. With those guys, it's all about cohesion, and being in camp together and battling together will help with that. They're gonna get the mess worked out of them, so they'll be better for that, but it's also a great chance to build that chemistry."

Rushing, who missed spring practice while recovering from a meniscus injury, played a lot of snaps at nose guard last season as a sophomore, but he also has plenty of previous experience on the offensive line. Heaton said Rushing has been running first-team at left tackle this summer.

"That's where Will has always kind of played," Heaton said. "He's playing defensively for us, too. He's gonna start at left tackle and at nose. Hopefully we'll have some guys come on at tackle who can give him a break. But having him over there [on the offensive line] has been huge. Just having somebody there who knows the ropes has been big."

The addition of Aycock and Rushing has brought clarity and stability to an area that projected as a major question mark heading into 2017.

"I've been super-impressed and very happy with where we are," Heaton said of the offensive line. "We're getting a lot better every day. We're making great strides."

We're not just improving a little bit—we're getting a lot better a lot faster than I expected. We're a lot better off than I thought we would be."

The Golden Tigers have more experience on the defensive line, where rising seniors Jeff Lloyd and Roman Cortez join Rushing and Aycock as returning starters.

With the linemen slugging it out at Clay-Chalkville, Heaton and 25 of Russellville's skill players left bright and early Tuesday morning for a 7-on-7 camp at Birmingham Southern College—where former Golden Tiger standout Cameron DeArman is now preparing for his sophomore season.

Pool play was scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning, with the double-elimination tournament slated for the afternoon.

"I've been super-impressed and very happy with where we are," Heaton said of the offensive line. "We're getting a lot better every day. We're making great strides. We're not just improving a little bit—we're getting a lot better a lot faster than I expected. We're a lot better off than I thought we would be."

"They've had this camp for a while, but this is the first time I've been to it," Heaton said. "One of the reasons we looked into doing it was because Cam is down there at Birmingham Southern. We saw it, and we thought it would be a good experience for our guys."

The Golden Tigers return a wealth of veteran talent at the skill positions, including senior receivers/defensive backs Logan Jones and Robert Hamilton, senior slot back/linebacker Bernard Phinizee and junior tailback Zaye Boyd. But they also have several freshman poised to play key roles at receiver in their first season at the varsity level—which makes camps like the one at BSC on Tuesday all the more valuable.

"We've got a lot of guys that are in new positions, guys who are learning," Heaton said. "I don't wanna say young any more, because I don't think we're young any more. We've gone through a whole spring, and we've gotta play like a seasoned team. There are no excuses. We've gotta get the job done."

"The more experience we can get our guys, the more we can put them in a competitive environment, the better we'll be and the faster we'll grow."

See 'HEATON,' page 19

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'HEATON', from pg. 17

The Golden Tigers will get an opportunity for even more growth on Thursday of this week when they travel down to Montgomery for the USA Football/ALFCA 7-on-7 Championships. Russellville will compete in the smaller-school division (classes 1A-5A).

"The number one thing we get out of this week is putting our guys in a competitive environment," said Heaton, who has guided the Golden Tigers to a 27-9 record in three seasons, including an 8-4 mark last year. "We got a ton of reps in the spring, and we've gotten a ton of reps these first three weeks here in summer practice. They've been competing and getting reps against each other, but this is gonna put them in a game environment where they're competing against somebody else. It's always great competition when you go down to these things.

"The second thing for us is building some depth. We're taking 25 kids, and you only have six or seven guys on the field at a time, so we're gonna play a ton of kids and try to keep guys fresh—especially in pool play. There's no better way to learn than to be in a competitive environment."

"The number one thing we get out of this week is putting our guys in a competitive environment," Heaton said. "They've been competing and getting reps against each other, but this is gonna put them in a game environment where they're competing against somebody else."

Perhaps the most noteworthy competition for the Golden Tigers this summer is at quarterback, where junior Devin Buckhalter and freshman Luke Barnwell are vying to replace three-year starter Payton Nichols. Buckhalter—a dynamic receiver who led the team last season with 35 catches for 514 yards while also serving as Nichols' primary backup—started the spring game against Saks at quarterback and hooked up with Phinizee on a 34-yard touchdown pass. Barnwell took over in the third quarter and led Russellville on a long

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scoring drive—capping it off with a 26-yard touch-down toss to Buckhalter on fourth down.

Heaton has been pleased with the way the quarterback competition has unfolded this summer.

"It's going really well," he said. "All of our guys are always competing every time we step on the field, but what's unique about the two guys we have at that spot is how they're competing to try and make each other better. Both of them are learning their roles, and they're both comfortable with that. What's been awesome is, Devin is further ahead right now because of the experience factor, but Luke Barnwell is right there, and both those guys are getting better. Luke is getting better every day. Watching them out there, you wouldn't even know they're competing with each other. They're trying to help each other.

"It's been great watching Devin go from quarterback to receiver and just encourage everybody. Devin is a very unselfish guy, and he's grown up so much. He's become a great leader for us. He knows he's gotta be able to play at a bunch of spots, including defense, and he's been so willing to do that. His leadership and maturity have been impressive."

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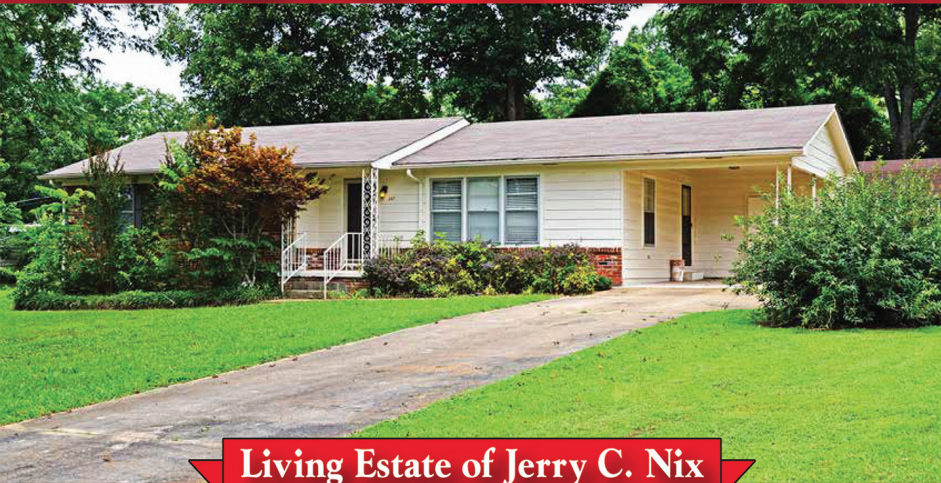
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9 A.M. - SATURDAY, JULY 8TH ABSOLUTE ESTATE AUCTION



Living Estate of Jerry C. Nix



3 Bedroom House on Nice Lot, Portable Storage Building, Furniture, Tools & Personal Property
247 Woodmont Drive - Russellville, AL 35633

This nice 3 bedroom one bath home is located just off Hwy 43 with easy access to the shoals area. The living room has been opened up to the kitchen and dining room to make for a nice open floor plan. The kitchen has oak cabinets and newer counter tops, a gas range, built in microwave and dishwasher. The back yard is fenced and has a small metal storage building. We will also be selling furniture and personal property.



- 10x16 Portable building
- Leather sofa
- Leather recliner
- Leather chair w/ottoman
- Several end tables
- Coffee table
- Flat screen T.V. stand
- Samsung flat screen 58" plasma T.V.
- 3 Bookshelves
- Misc lamps
- Misc tables
- Misc CDs
- Misc house décor items
- Misc books
- Misc Framed art prints
- Case knife "Wild Turkey" #C181
- Tree brand knife, 1 blade German SS
- Stereo equipment
- Several rugs
- 2 White wash china cabinets
- 3 Bar stools
- Butcher block top kitchen cart/island
- Whirlpool side by side refrigerator
- Kitchen wares
- Kenmore stack washer and dryer
- Oak wardrobe
- Bissell vacuum
- King sized tiger oak bed w/marble top chest w/mirror
- L shaped desk
- Glider rocker
- 3 Drawer Lateral File Cabinet
- Credenza bookshelf
- 2 drawers for file cabinets
- Wine rack
- Husky Roll-around Tool Box
- Misc Tools
- Stihl BR-420 Backpack Leaf Blower
- Stihl BG-72 handheld Blower
- Air Compressor
- John Deere Lawn Sweeper
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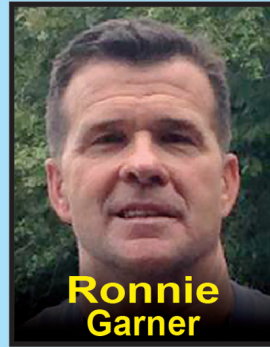
For more information contact Ben Phillips 256-710-9683 or see more @ www.shanealbright.com
DIRECTIONS: From: Russellville go north on Hwy 43 over the Railroad overpass on the north side of town, turn left onto Carney Lane and go to the second street to the right (Woodmont), follow the Shane Albright Auction Signs to property on the left. From: The Muscle Shoals, Alabama intersection of Hwy 43 & Hwy 72 go south on Hwy 43 for 13 miles, turn right onto Parks then left onto Woodmont, Watch for the Shane Albright Auction signs.
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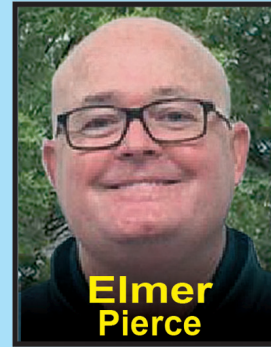
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