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Playing for the HOME TEAM

Forty years after returning to Russellville, Lanny Norris still strives to serve his community

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

It was a phone call from B.J. Kelley that changed the course of Lanny Norris's professional life.

The year was 1977. Norris's football coaching career saw him coaching the secondary at East Carolina University under head coach Pat Dye. Norris and his wife Donna had their first child in the fall of 1976. Donna was teaching elementary school.

"I remember my childhood here and how good it was," said Norris, a 1968 graduate of Russellville High. "I wanted our kids to grow up here like I did. It ended up being a great move, raising our family here. I wouldn't take anything for it."

Norris came home one day after spring practice, and Donna told him B.J. Kelley had called. Kelley, the State Farm manager in Russellville, knew Norris and had kept up with his football career, both as a player and coach. Larry Osborn, a former State Farm agent in Russellville, had been promoted to a manager position in Florence, and State Farm's new policy was to replace agents who were promoted, retired

See 'HOME,' Page 9



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Pictured above are State Farm agent Lanny Norris and his staff, including (from left) Andrea Canida, Tammy Thomas, Brittany Gault Richards and Rallie Crow.

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Patricia Ann Bachuss, Russellville, age 69
 Died August 3, 2017. A celebration of her life will be held Saturday, August 26, 2017 at the home of Jason and Dianna Renfro, 2747 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville, Alabama. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville is assisting the family.

Maudie Lee Baggett, Alexandria, MN (formerly of Phil Campbell), age 84
 Died Tuesday, August 1, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Evelyn Sue Barber, Russellville (Belgreen Community), age 92
 Died Friday, August 4, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home Chapel. Interment in Belgreen Cemetery.

Faye M. McCulloch, Russellville, age 80
 Died Saturday, August 5, 2017. Funeral will be held at Pinkard Funeral Home on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at 1 p.m. Interment will be in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

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Special primary election features crowded ballot

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The special primary election for Alabama's senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions earlier this year is set for next Tuesday, August 15. Polls will be open all day from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. across Alabama.

Sessions was appointed attorney general of the United States earlier this year by President Donald Trump, although Trump has been critical of Sessions in recent days. A light voter turnout is expected for Tuesday's primary. In an effort to inform voters, the *Franklin Free Press* offers the following candidate profiles on the eight Democratic and 10 Republican candidates in the order they appear on the ballot:

Democratic Candidates:

•Will Boyd: Boyd, a Lauderdale County resident, pastors St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church of Florence. He is a pro-gun, anti-abortion Democrat. Boyd has unsuccessfully run against Mo Brooks for United States Congress, as well as running for the U.S. Senate seat in Illinois vacated by Barack Obama when he became President. He is chairman of the Lauderdale County Democratic Executive Committee.

•Vann Caldwell: Caldwell is a Talladega native who attended the University of Alabama. He worked as a law enforcement officer at the University of Alabama for six years before starting his own security company. He serves as a constable in Talladega County. His three main goals are economic growth with balance to protect the environment, education and military/homeland security. Caldwell's website is www.vanncaldwell.com.

•Jason E. Fisher: The 45-year-old Fisher lives in Orange Beach. He is vice-president and senior consultant at Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a direct marketing firm specializing in nonprofit development. He pledges to fight for high-quality healthcare at affordable prices for all Alabamians and to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable to offer prescription drugs at reasonable prices "to ensure the public good is never sacrificed in exchanged for larger corporate profits." Fisher is the single father of a special-needs daughter. His wife passed away in 2012. Fisher's website is <https://fisherforsenate.com>.

•Michael Hansen: The 35-year-old Hansen describes himself as a "progressive Democrat." He was born and raised in Memphis. He is executive director of a nonprofit health advocacy program in Birmingham. He advocates a universal health care program that takes the responsibility of health care off the backs of employers. As a gay man, Hansen says he's seen many members of the LGBT community, along with other segments of our society, suffer from mental health issues. He pledges to work to fix America's mental health epidemic. Hansen is pro-choice on abortion and pledges to oppose any legislation that interferes with a woman's right to choose. His website is www.hansenforalabama.com.

•Doug Jones: A Fairfield native, Jones is a graduate of Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham. He served as staff counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee for Sen. Howell Heflin after law school. Jones served from 1997-2001 as United States Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama. He pledges to make education a priority and to make a quality education available for all Alabamians, regardless of socioeconomic level. Jones supports an increase in the minimum wage. He supports women's rights to contraception and their right to choose on the abortion issue. On the issue of health care, Jones believes that no American should be denied health care due to a pre-existing condition. Jones' website is www.dougjonesforsenate.com.

•Robert Kennedy, Jr: Kennedy grew up in Prichard and attended the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. He spent nine years in active duty in the Navy, including deployments in Japan and Singapore. After his tour, he attended Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, where he earned his Masters of Business Administration. As a veteran, Kennedy pledges to bring honor and integrity to the U.S. Senate. He supports the Affordable Care Act, although he hopes to work to correct some flaws in the ACA, including escalating insurance costs for Alabamians. He advocates a success criteria for government funding of programs, meaning such programs are subject to review and those that meet their goals and objectives will continue to receive funding. Kennedy's website is www.teamkennedy2017.org.

•Brian McGee: McGee, a veteran and an educator from Lee County, will appear on Democratic primary ballots, although he dropped out of the race last month. McGee endorsed Jones at the time he withdrew from the race.

•Charles Nana: The oldest of 14 children, Nana earned his undergraduate mechanical engineering degree from Howard University and his masters in biomedical engineering from Catholic University. He promises a "fresh new wind" of leadership in Alabama. His platform includes ensuring all Alabamians can work for a liveable wage, working for care and opportunity for the poor and veterans and judicial reform, including restricting judges from overriding jury sentence recommendations in death penalty cases. Nana's website is www.nanaforsenate.com.

Republican Candidates:

•James Paul Beretta: Beretta grew up in Lincoln, Rhode Island. He attended med-

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ical school at NOVA South Eastern Medical School and has been a doctor the last 30 years in Pelham. Beretta says his first order of business as senator would be to work to repeal the Affordable Care Act and open up interstate buying of insurance to develop competition. He also wants to see Medicaid restructured. Beretta wants to work for a restructured tax system that eases the burden on small business. He also vows to remove Core education and raise the standard of living for active military with pay raises. Beretta's website is www.jamesberetta2017.com.

•Joseph F. Breault: Breault is by far the least visible candidate in the race. He has no website, has done no advertising and has not granted any media interviews. Breault serves as a chaplain at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery. He previously served as chaplain at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Salt Lake City, according to www.al.com.

•Randy Brinson: Brinson is a gastroenterologist in Montgomery. A lifelong Republican, Brinson served as head of the Christian Coalition of Alabama until this year. In 2006, Brinson formed a political consulting company, Optimum Impact. In 2008, he served as campaign adviser and consultant to Gov. Mike Huckabee's presidential campaign. In 2010, working with Alabama Agriculture commissioner John

The Honey Do List: Dog days - It's Sirius

The dog days of summer are upon us. The Alabama heat makes us want to lie in the shade like an old hound dog and save our outdoor activities for early morning or late evening. Or, better yet, this fall.

But the dog days are not an Alabama thing and really have nothing to do with "Ol Blue" or "Rover." The ancient Romans actually recognized this time as the "dog days" based on the heavenly activity of Sirius, the dog star. This event was associated with heat, drought, sudden thunderstorms and very uncomfortable conditions.

Sound familiar?

But there are some things on the honey-do list that we should pay attention to, even in this heat.

•CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTER

Your air conditioner, whether it's a window unit or central unit, is working overtime trying to cool your home. Make sure air flow is unrestricted by replacing or cleaning the filter every 30 days.

•OPEN AND CLEAR FOUNDATION VENTS

Foundation vents allow outside air to circulate under your house to prevent

moisture, mold and mildew in the crawl space. Keep grass and shrubs trimmed to keep them from blocking air flow. Close them this winter to prevent frozen pipes.

Another reason to keep the grass, weeds and shrubs trimmed is to deter animal visitors such as armadillos, rats and snakes that can dig around foundations, chew wiring and insulation, or just scare you to death.

•WATER EVERYTHING

All living things need some water. That includes dogs, cats, plants, shrubs and people. Keep yourself and the kids hydrated when working or playing outside.

•ENJOY THE SUMMER.

We are given these days to either enjoy or suffer through. By taking the right precautions, these days can be productive and fun.

Soon the temps will fall and the days will shorten, and it will be too cold to be out.

Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



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Letters to the editor

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Five healthy foods for seniors

By Regina Lawler
Managing Director,
Country Cottage

With the warm weather and many family members on summer break, we eat so many great, delicious foods in the summertime at get-togethers and block parties. Remember that while it's okay to indulge yourself every once in a while, you can still find some healthy food choices while you're out enjoying the nice weather with family and friends.

Here are some healthy foods to look for this summer.

1. Dark Berries

Blackberries, blueberries, strawberries and raspberries are all high in Vitamin C, a vitamin that can help prevent cognitive decline. One study looked at women who added strawberries and blueberries to their diets and found that women who consumed two or more servings of dark berries per week showed a reduction in memory decline. Another study found that blackberry extract can help to improve balance, coordination and memory function.

2. Eggs

From deviled eggs to egg salad, you can find this high-protein food in many summer dishes. Instead of mayonnaise in your recipes, try using Greek yogurt to make your eggs healthier.

Along with protein, eggs contain vitamins A, D, E, B6 and B12. Make sure you eat the egg whites as well as the yolks. Egg yolks contain choline, lutein and zeaxanthin, all nutrients that are good for your eyes.

With eggs, you don't have to do anything fancy. Just hard-boil one or two, and you're good to go with a healthy snack.

3. Iced Tea

Few things are more refreshing than a big glass of

iced tea after you've been out in the summer heat. The compounds inside of teas have been found to reduce your risk for stroke, heart attack and cardiovascular disease. Teas can also boost your immune system and help you fight off certain cancers.

Remember, when you drink tea, avoid adding lots of sugar to it. Add fresh fruits and herbs like melons, mint or tropical fruits, and if you need a little sweetener, try adding a few drops of honey.

Few things are more refreshing than a big glass of iced tea after you've been out in the summer heat. The compounds inside of teas have been found to reduce your risk for stroke, heart attack and cardiovascular disease. Teas can also boost your immune system and help fight off certain cancers.

4. Salsa

Eating salsa can help you get some of your needed daily vegetables. Tomatoes are a particularly special food. They contain lycopene, a naturally occurring antioxidant that gives many red and pink foods their color. Eating foods high in lycopene can help you prevent heart disease and certain cancers, and it's great for eye health. It has been found to reduce one's risk of cataracts.

5. Watermelon

Like tomatoes, watermelons also contain the antioxidant lycopene, and, as their name suggests, they also contain a lot of water and can help to keep you hydrated during those long, hot summer days.

Watermelon also contains vitamins A, C, B6 and potassium, a nutrient that is great for anyone suffering from a potassium deficiency. Potassium deficiency is commonly seen in seniors due to certain heart and blood pressure medications.



First, get a real job

Dear Dave,
I currently have student loans in deferment from earning a degree in hospitality management. My career goal is to own a mobile food vending company, so I'm putting most of the money I make from eBay and ride-hailing services—around \$1,000 a month—aside in savings for that. Should I forego my business idea for the time being and knock out the student loan debt instead?

Nicholas

Dear Nicholas,
You should put this business idea on

hold for now, unless you can start it for less than \$1,000. The first thing you need to do is go out and get a real job. I know you have this dream of being self-employed, but right now you're not doing so well as an entrepreneur.

With a hospitality degree, you can make \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year within the industry, clean up your mess, and build out the eBay thing on the side. Just think about how quickly you could save up money for a jump into the food truck or mobile food business then!

Pay your way through it, Nicholas. Don't sit around scraping by on the kind of money you're making now and call that winning. You have a real economic engine at your fingertips, because you have the knowledge from the degree you earned. And it's a valuable degree. If you go in there and bust it, you can escalate yourself upward through that industry in a hurry.

While you're doing that, you can clean up all your student loans and save up money for your food truck. Boom! You're self-employed, and you learned a lot of stuff you can use in your new business. Go make some real money,

then follow your dream, man!

Dave

A bad move

Dear Dave,

I have a whole life insurance policy with zero cash value due to loans I took out per the advice of my agent. I finally realized this wasn't a smart move, as I now owe premiums plus interest every year. Am I still on the hook for the policy loans if I forfeit the policy to buy term insurance?

Tanner

Dear Tanner,

No, you are not. Get your term insurance in place first, then when you cancel the policy your cash value will offset your loans.

They won't loan you more than your cash value. It's seldom that they will loan you 100 percent of cash value, so you might actually have a cash value that is above your loan amount. If they have loaned you the full amount of your

cash value, it'll be an exact break-even, and just canceling the policy means you cancel the interest and cancel the premiums.

It was bad advice to buy the policy, and even dumber advice to clean the whole thing out and sit there paying interest to borrow your own money and pay a premium to keep the loan open.

I recommend 10 to 12 times your income on a 15- or 20-year level term policy. During that 15 or 20 years, of course, you should be getting out of debt and building wealth so that you have a big pile of money and no need for life insurance.

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 13 million listeners each week on 585 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

Sending students back to school...with a bang

Sheryl Hamilton
For the FFP

Sending students back to school with a bang was the focus of the New Jerusalem M.B. Church as it continues to be a shining light in the community.

The goal of the church this past Saturday was to send area students back to school on a positive note and with many of the back-to-school supplies they would need for the 2017-18 school year.

The annual Back-to-School Drive/YOUTH EXPLOSION provided students with paper, pencils, binders and the usual needed supplies and tools required to be successful for the upcoming year.

The Youth Explosion provided fun and fellowship for all students of all ages. Door prizes were given away, and the students got even more excited to know there was a cash prize. Wow! I was thinking a cash prize could buy some new gym shoes or go shopping for a few new school clothes.

Children from throughout the community attended this year's event. Some were ready to go back to school to see their friends, and others needed just a few more vacation days.

This service to the community came under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Bates, pastor of New Jerusalem. Other local churches that contributed were

Second Baptist, Gaines Street, New Freedom and Antioch.

This year, a spelling bee was added to the activities. Students were asked to spell Bible-related words, including some of the books of the Bible and Bible characters.

Minister Wesley Thompson, the newly elected pastor of Bethel Colbert Church, was the motivational speaker. He talked to the students about taking "a selfie." Most students have a cell phone, and they could identify with his message. He challenged them to think about positive things.

"It is what you look like on the inside that really counts," Thompson told the students. "If we could take a selfie on the inside, you would find faithfulness, dedication, commitment and other characteristics that can help you be successful in school. Some other tools on the inside of you are power, love and a sound mind. You have the POWER to keep on going when things get hard. LOVE will not hurt others but can lift them up, and a SOUND MIND can help you be at ease when others think you will explode.

"Realize your potential," Thompson said, "and believe in yourself. Lean on God to succeed in school."

Rev. Bates said it was uplifting to see the churches

in the community come together for this cause and was very thankful to all the local pastors and parishioners who supported the events. He extended a special thanks to Pastor Johnny Smith, Pastor Larry Bonner, Pastor Mario McCullough and Pastor Christy Gill for their participation. Also, the staff of New Jerusalem received commendations for their hard work and sacrifice to make the day a success.

Earlier last week, New Jerusalem had a three-day revival with Rev. Robert E. Pearl, Jr. as the evangelist. He delivered dynamic sermons each night, one of which was about the rich man and the poor man named Lazarus. After reading the Scripture from Luke 16:19-25, the emphasis was put on knowing how to treat your neighbor. We are not to tear each other down but to build each other up.

The revival set the tone for building up our youth in the community and being there to support them during this 2017-2018 school year. The doors are open at New Jerusalem Church for Sunday School and 11 a.m. worship. Wednesday night Bible Class begin at 6:30 p.m. You are welcome to share with us.

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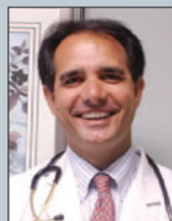
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 **B**ecause the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is working on the upcoming Watermelon Festival, the August 10 meeting of the American Legion Post 64 will be at City Lake Park. We will be having a cookout. We will begin at 6:30 p.m. Families are invited!


 **T**ravis Wammack & the Snakeman Band will play at Mountain Valley Hee Haw this Saturday, August 12. Show time is 7-10 p.m. Please bring your lawn chair. Hamburgers, hot dogs and cold drinks will be served. No alcoholic beverages or drugs allowed. Admission is free! From Russellville, follow 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on the left. Sponsored by Welch Roofing & Home Repair. For more information, call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.


 **T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests EM Lang and Bobby Way at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville this Saturday, August 12 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.


 **J**onesboro Baptist Church will have Homecoming this Sunday, August 13 with a singing at 1:30 p.m. featuring the group Southern Image. The church is located at 5061 Waterloo Road in Russellville. Everyone is invited!


 **J**onesboro Baptist Church is seeking a songleader. Interested persons should contact Bro. Kent Walker at 256-331-0995.

 **R**evival will be held at Mt. Joy Free Will Baptist Church in Phil Campbell August 13-15 with Sunday service at 5 p.m. and Monday/Tuesday services at 7 p.m. Evangelist will be Bro. Robert Partridge. Special singing each night. Pastor Bro. Coy Morgan and congregation invite you to attend!

 **R**evival will be held at First Baptist Church, 521 College Avenue, Russellville, on August 14-17 at 7 p.m. each night. Evangelist and church choir each night will be: Monday - Rev. Otis C. Neloms, First Baptist, Courtland; Tuesday - Rev. Jerry Reeves, Galilee Baptist, Leighton; Wednesday - Rev. Edward Franklin, Town Creek #1 Baptist, Landersville, AL; Thursday - Rev. Karlos Felton, Zion #1 Baptist, Barton, AL. Pastor B.J. Bonner extends an invitation for your attendance.

 **T**he Franklin County Extension Service will host a free "Peas and Cornbread" lunch on Friday, August 18 at the Russellville Farmers Market, 202 Green Avenue, next to the A.W. Todd Centre, from 10 a.m.-12 noon. Annette Casteel, Nutrition Education Program agent assistant for Franklin and Colbert counties will be on site dishing up some good ol' peas and cornbread! Free T-shirts for adults and kids!

 **T**he Franklin County Cattleman's Association will hold its annual Watermelon Festival Steak Sandwich Sale on Friday and Saturday, August 18-19, beginning at 9:30 a.m. each day. They will be located on W. Franklin Street across from the First Baptist Church parking lot. Ribeye steak sandwich, chips and drink for \$8. For large orders of 15 or more, call ahead to 256-810-9304 or 256-412-3468. Proceeds benefit the College Scholarship Fund for Franklin County high schools.

 **F**or 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 child-care provided. The church is located at 311 North Jackson Avenue in downtown Russellville. Come and join us!

Franklin County Schools grade out high in safety

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

According to a study by www.niche.com, Franklin County Schools rank as Alabama's seventh-safest public school system.

The website analyzes public data information and millions of reviews to produce comprehensive rankings and profiles for every school, college and neighborhood in the United States.

Hoover City Schools were ranked as Alabama's safest school system. All six systems ranked ahead of Franklin County were city school systems, meaning Franklin County ranked as the state's safest county school district.

According to www.al.com, factors used in calculating

the rankings included parent and student surveys, expenses per student, school absenteeism, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, law enforcement referrals and student-related arrests.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay), who sponsored legislation in 2013 to create a volunteer school security force in Franklin County Schools, praised the efforts of local law enforcement and school officials in keeping a safe on-campus environment.

"The critics, especially ex-governor Bentley, said that the legislation would make Franklin County Schools unsafe. You and your staff have certainly proven him wrong," Morrow said. "Congratulations to you and all the Franklin County Schools personnel for bringing safety to our children, along with the hard work of Sheriff Shannon Oliver and the entire department in

protecting our schools in rural Franklin County."

Niche gave Franklin County Schools an grade of A-minus for health and safety. Other grades included B-minus for the overall system, B-minus for academics, C-plus for teachers, B for clubs and activities, C-plus for diversity and C-plus for college readiness.

Last month the Franklin County Sheriff's Department applied for a Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant in the amount of \$125,000. The grant would be paid over three years and would be earmarked for a school resource officer (or officers) to be shared by Vina, Tharptown, Belgreen and East Franklin Schools. The grant provides for 75/25 funding, meaning the sheriff's department, along with the assistance of Franklin County Schools, would be responsible for 25 percent of the total grant amount.

New venture aims to increase parental involvement at WES

Submitted to the FFP

RUSSELLVILLE – In an effort to increase parental involvement at their school, administrators at West Elementary have developed a new group that will serve to bridge the gap between the classroom and home.

WES principal Deanna Hollimon said the school's Parent Teacher Partnership held its first activity, a homemade ice cream party for faculty and staff to celebrate last year's successes and let the teachers know how much they are appreciated, last Friday.

"We received feedback from some of our stakeholders that a group like this could be useful at our school, and we agreed," Hollimon said. "This event was a great way to introduce the group to our faculty and staff."

Hollimon said the PTP will consist of four officers—two parents and two teachers—who will work

with other parents to plan events and activities throughout the year that will get parents more involved at the school and with their child's learning.

Laura Horton, who has a child in kindergarten at WES and will serve as the PTP president, said she's excited about what this group can accomplish in the upcoming school year.

"The PTP will be an organization to encourage interaction between family and school, serve as a source of support, and work with teachers, staff and the community to improve our children's educational experience," Horton said. "We hope to provide more family-centered activities. We have several ideas on different things we want to do each month."

WES kindergarten teacher Channing Wright will serve as the secretary for the PTP. She said the group has the potential to have a huge impact on student

learning.

"Parents are a vital part of their child's education," Wright said. "I believe that by having parents involved in various ways, it increases student motivation while also providing a chance for parents and their children to work together. Being a part of your child's education is a special opportunity. They are only little once."

Wright said that from a teacher's standpoint, the group will serve as a great tool for effective communication.

"I think this group will allow parents to find their niche and where they can plug in," Wright said. "Our parents have many different talents, skills and strengths, and this group will be able to give parents a chance to put all of that to good use in a way that helps the students, the teachers and the school in fun and educational ways."

'HOME,' from page 1

or deceased with two new agents. Gus Garrard was the first hired to replace Osborn; Norris was the second.

He opened the doors of his North Washington Avenue office on August 1, 1977. Forty years later, Norris remains as busy as ever, and he still has the passion to come to work every day, even at age 66.

"When B.J. called, I was interested for two reasons," Norris said. "Donna was teaching elementary school and I was coaching college ball, and neither job paid anything. I loved what I was doing, but we'd just had our first child in the fall and I felt like I never saw my family because I was gone all the time. And we had to figure out how to eat the last two weeks of each month. "I met with B.J., and we talked. After that, I decided to come back. The first two years as a State Farm agent under a training contract, you pretty much starved, so I tell people I made the transition easily because I went from starving in North Carolina to starving in Alabama. But it was worth what we went through, because it ended up being a great forty years."

When Norris headed to the University of Alabama in the fall of 1968 to play football for the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant, he never dreamed his future would be as an insurance agent in his hometown. Football was in his blood, and if his career wouldn't continue as a player after college, it would go on in the coaching ranks.

"One day," Norris said, "I'll wake up and say, 'I'm not really enjoying going down there any more.' But right now I still get a kick out of it."

"I never dreamed I'd come back to Russellville," Norris said. "I always thought I'd be coaching. I loved it and was pretty good at it. We had good teams at East Carolina, and I felt the secondary was coached well. But after Jennifer was born on August 20, 1976, I got to hold her five minutes and then had to get to the first team meeting that afternoon. I felt like I didn't get to see her again until December, because I was getting up early and coming in late. That's when I first began thinking I might do something else.

"I remember my childhood here and how good it was. I wanted our kids to grow up here like I did. It ended up being a great move, raising our family here. I wouldn't take anything for it."

Norris also credits his wife Donna for supporting his career move from North Carolina to northwest Alabama.

"Donna has stuck with me through forty-three years, through better or worse," Norris said. "We had some difficult times, but she's been a loyal, faithful and supportive wife."

It would be an understatement to describe the insurance industry in 1977 as different from today. After he traveled to Montgomery to take his state exams for auto, fire, life and health insurance [he passed], Norris hit the ground running. Kelley had purchased the North Washington building from the Jones family, which had used it as dental clinic for years. Norris rented from Kelley the first three years before buying the building in 1980.

"The way training worked then," Norris said, "I took the test, passed the test, came back and B.J. gave me three rate books and the keys to the office and said, 'Go get it.' So that was the training.

"It was either sink or swim and learning on the run. There weren't any computers. Everything was on paper and sold strictly out of a rate book."

Norris became the third State Farm agent in Russellville, following Sam Cantrell and Garrard. Today, Norris's fellow State Farm agents in town are Lee Nickels and Diana Fisher.

"I was at a conference a few years after I became an agent," Norris said. "I was talking with an agent from Wyoming. He was from a city of 30,000, and he was the only agent there. He asked how many people lived

in my hometown, and I said we had 10,000 with three agents. His eyes got big, and he asked again, 'Three agents?' He asked how I could stand that, and I said because I was the third one.

"I appreciate the trail blazed by Sam and Gus. Each of us had our own life and set of friends. Sam was an agent more than forty-five years, and Gus retired after forty-one years. The fact that we made it this long and co-existed and still made a living says we did pretty well together. But it does create some confusion when there are three agents in a town this size."

Norris and his family are members of First Baptist Church in Russellville. He has been active in numerous community and civic events.

"Lanny is one of the best-known individuals in Russellville as a result of his school days and playing football for the Bear, but more particularly because he's been part of the community in every respect," said Norris's friend Cecil Batchelor. "Whenever something good is going on in our community, you can bet your boots Lanny Norris is part of it. He's well-known and loved by many people."

While Norris has no plans to retire any time soon, he and Donna do travel frequently to Birmingham and Atlanta to visit their grandchildren. When he's gone, Norris entrusts his office to his staff of four employees: Andrea Canida (19 years with State Farm); Rallie Crow (15 years); Tammy Thomas (three years) and Brittany Gault Richards (one year).

"I don't worry about taking off," Norris said, "because I know they run the office like I would."

He also recalled the contributions of some previous team members along the 40-year path.

"Judy West was with me thirty years, Mary Crow for ten years and Amanda Brazil for seven years," he said. "They, as well as my current team members, were great contributors to our success."

Much of today's insurance business is done online, with faceless companies and the absence of a local agent. For 40 years, Norris has worked to develop relationships with his customers, and that's not going to change.

"What I built my business on is being available all the time and trying to build personal relationships, and I feel that's what makes State Farm the number one company in the country," Norris said. "Because of the Internet, there's a segment of people shopping online for insurance who aren't interested in a relationship. They just want the cheapest price. A lot of new agents go after that business and spend a lot of time on Internet leads. We don't really do that here. The biggest thing I think folks need is someone who can be there and they can talk to and can help them get through a situation when they have a claim. You're paying for someone to be your advocate.

"Through the grace of God, anything that works requires hard work, but the Bible says man plants and sows, but God gives the increase. He's been gracious over the years to give us increase, not because we deserved it but because of His love and mercy. I felt like I made a difference in the lives of my players when I was coaching, and now hopefully over the last forty years I've helped make a difference in the lives of people who had problems and situations where they needed help. And I hope anyone insured with me feels like I've gone the extra mile in every situation."

So when will he retire? Norris has no time frame.

"I've often said I'll do this until the point where I get up in the morning and don't want to come down here," Norris said. "So far I'm not at that point. I'm 66. Will I retire at 70? I don't know. I know agents who do this into their mid-80s. There's no mandatory retirement age with State Farm.

"One day," Norris said, "I'll wake up and say, 'I'm not really enjoying going down there any more.' But right now I still get a kick out of it."

Report: Diabetes on the rise in Alabama

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A recent report from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama shows the diabetes epidemic growing in Alabama, especially in individuals ages 18-34.

According to BCBS, in 2016 more than 171,000 of its insureds in Alabama have a diagnosis of diabetes, representing a 24.4 percent increase from 2014. Almost 11,000 of those insureds are ages 18-34, which represents an alarming 29 percent increase.

The 18-34 age group not only shows the most rapid increase in diabetes diagnoses, but is also seeing the greatest growth in obesity rates in the United States. Obesity is known to be a key contributor to the onset of diabetes.

According to Russellville physician Dr. Jeffrey Chenyi, diabetes is one of three serious health issues he sees on the rise among his patients. Talking to the *Free Press* last year, Chenyi attributed many of these problems to the area's sedentary lifestyle.

"There is an increased issue of obesity here, along with hypertension and high cholesterol, and that leads to other serious health issues," Chenyi said.

A native of Cameroon, Chenyi said the active lifestyle in his home country led to much fewer diagnoses of diabetes.

"In Cameroon we had some obesity, but the lifestyle with more physical activity was much more active than it is here," Chenyi said. "In Cameroon, there's a low incidence of diabetes and hypertension. Diet is one reason. Secondly, it's the difference in lifestyle. Less than half the people own cars, so they do a lot of walking. Families are physically active. Diet as a whole makes a difference.

"The human body is designed like a Pacman game. We're built to work for food. People in Cameroon, even when they're eating, do something extra. The typical dish is not one you can eat in 30 minutes. It's not like processed food, where you can consume a thousand calories on three bites."

While developed-society lifestyles lead to more medical problems with their sedentary nature, the good news is the standard of medical care is higher in these places than other countries, Chenyi explained.

The BCBS study finds that diabetes has the highest health impact on communities in the Southeast and Central South, more than 50 percent higher than the national average. And, nationally, diabetes ranks third in terms of its health impact on quality of life and cost for the commercially insured among more than 200 health conditions. Diabetes is ahead of high cholesterol, substance abuse and coronary artery disease. The two health conditions ranked ahead of diabetes are depression/anxiety/mood disorders and hypertension, according to www.bcbs.com.

BCBS is working with its insureds diagnosed with diabetes through education, awareness and member advocacy programs that include health advocates, disease management programs, online trackers and medication planners and educational texts and videos. For more information on diabetes and its effect on the American population, visit <https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports>.

Chenyi Family Medicine is located at 15225 Highway 43, Suite I in Russellville. The clinic is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. To schedule an appointment, call 256-331-2700. Chenyi is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and he specializes in comprehensive care for the entire family.



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Yard Sale this Friday & Saturday, August 11-12. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. 1670 Osborn Hill Road. Turn right at Yogi's in Littleville, look for signs. Little bit of everything!

Moving Sale this Friday August 11 from 7-3 and Saturday, August 12 from 7-until at 1717 Wilson Blvd. Furniture, household items, toys, clothes, baby items, tools, etc.

Garage Sale this Friday & Saturday, August 11-12, until noon. Two miles east of Littleville on Osborn Hill Road. Turn at Yogi's, come two miles to crossroads. Sale on right. Maytag washer, clothes, purses, shoes, dishes, pictures, jeans, comforter, misc. items. Call 256-332-3593.

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Jonesboro Baptist Church is seeking a songleader. Interested persons should contact Bro. Kent Walker at 256-331-0995. (2)

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1950 Russellville High School Yearbook *Tiger Track* for sale. Please call 256-476-3028.

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 Yard Sale Rates: **FREE**, **Deadline Monday at Noon**; Real Estate-Homes, acreage, lots for sale or rent. \$25 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 40 words per ad; Vehicles, Boats, RVs, Motorcycles for sale. \$15 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Pets For Sale only \$10 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Free of Charge: Lost & Found, Giveaways, and Items Under \$100 (Private Parties Only), 15-word limit; Commercial Classified Rates: \$25 for Businesses, 15 words or less for six weeks. Ads exceeding word limit add \$10 per additional 15 words. The number in parentheses represents the number of times the ad has appeared. Call us at 256-332-0255 to place, cancel or renew your ad. Payment is required in advance of publication for ads.

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Lottery scam raises red flags for local resident

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Never has there been a truer adage than, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." Fortunately for him, one local resident remembered those words after receiving a letter notifying him he had won second prize in the 'USA Departmental Stores Sweepstake (sic) Lottery' held on July 12, 2017. That prize of \$500,000 would be his after he paid processing fees as a requirement to release the balance of his winnings. The letter included a counterfeit check payable to the resident in the amount of \$4,600. The resident, who did not want his identity released for this article, was directed to pay a "tax amount of \$3,480" in order to collect his winnings and not to act on the notice or cash the check until he contacted claims agent Charles Brown or Anita Edwards at a phone number in Toronto, Canada. The Franklin Free Press contacted the number and spoke with an individual who identified himself as Charles Brown. Brown directed the reporter to deposit the check he received and not show the letter to his bank. Upon depositing the check, the reporter was told to call back and make arrangements to pay the process-

ing fee and taxes on his winnings. The reporter was told he was entered into the sweepstakes by shopping at Walmart, Walgreens or Rite-Aid last year. The letterhead on the winning notice came from Providence Capital Financial Services. An Internet search of this company found numerous complaints of scam lottery notices across the country. According to www.ripoffreport.com, victims were notified by Providence that they had won the lottery and directed to deposit the check then contact the company to pay an administrative fee. That process entails giving the scam artists personal information about the victim, including bank account information and Social Security number. Lottery scams work because the scammer dangles the attractive carrot of a large cash prize and all the victim has to do is pay a fee, often said to cover insurance costs, government taxes, bank fees or courier charges. According to www.scamwatch.gov, the scammers make money by continually collecting these fees and stalling the payment of the victim's winnings. Additionally, the scammers direct the victim to keep his or her winnings private and confidential in order to 'maintain security.' The truth is scammers don't want victims checking out the company and seeking further

information from independent sources. As with any telephone or written solicitation, never give out any personal identification or details about bank accounts, as this information can be used for identity theft. Although the local resident's check looked genuine, it's counterfeit and eventually will bounce. By that time, if the scammer is successful, they'll have your personal information and be well into major identity theft that can include opening accounts in your name, buying things on credit cards in your name, taking out loans in your name and/or committing crimes in your name. According to the website www.consumerfraudreporting.org, legitimate lotteries and sweepstakes never ask for money at any time. Taxes are never paid through anyone else or by anyone else. Taxes in legitimate lotteries are paid by the winner directly to the government. There are no other fees on genuine lottery winnings and any documents they send you are counterfeit or forged. Lottery money isn't stored at a 'security house,' is not shipped in cash and is never sent by courier. If in doubt, remember, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Local students receive Masonic Scholarships

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Representatives from the Masonic Grand Lodge of Alabama were in Phil Campbell last Thursday to award Grand Lodge Masonic Scholarships to two local students.

Jennifer Reed, a 2017 graduate of Phil Campbell High School, and Caleb Huckaba, a 2017 Colbert Heights High School graduate, each received a \$1,000 scholarship and certificate.

The scholarships are awarded through the Grand Lodge of Alabama Character Outreach Program. The program recognizes 75 students each year with \$1,000 scholarships. The scholarships are funded through an endowment with the Grand Lodge at the state level.

To be eligible to apply, students must have a living or deceased family member who is or was a Mason in Alabama. Reed's grandfather, Charles Smith, is a member of Phil Campbell Lodge 880. Huckaba's great-grandfather, Ernest Hand, and his uncle, Chris Hand, belong to Littleville Lodge 881.

Students write a paper on their life and professional goals as part of the application process. Each of Alabama's five Masonic groups receives 15 scholarships to award. Reed and Huckaba were two of the Group 2 recipients in north Alabama. This year, 131 applications were received statewide.

Reed is the daughter of Gary Reed and Wendy Wood and the granddaughter of Charles and Glenda Smith and Susan Johnson. She will attend Northwest-Shoals Community College this fall and will pursue a Business and Marketing degree. Reed hopes to have a career

as a pharmaceutical sales representative.

"I've been attending Masonic meetings since I could walk," Reed said. "I never thought about the character outreach side of the Masons and what it does. I appreciate the scholarship and what you do for our community."

Huckaba is the son of Bobby and Angela Huckaba and the grandson of J.C. and Brenda Hand and Wilmer Huckaba. He was this year's valedictorian at Colbert Heights. Huckaba will attend the University of North Alabama this fall, where he will major in secondary education with plans to become a science teacher.

"I appreciate everything the Masons do," Huckaba said. "There's so much good done by you in this community and state, and this is a really important part by investing in young people in the pursuit of their education."

Much as the Masons do, Huckaba wants to do something to make a difference in his community, and he believes entering the field of education is the pathway to do so.

"I want to be able to do something in life where I can help change other people's lives and help make a difference," Huckaba said. "I believe teaching to be a good path to impact people with the gifts God has given me."

Grand Lodge representative Tom Keeton, who presented the scholarships to the students, said Huckaba and Reed distinguished themselves from their peers with their outstanding applications.

"This young man and woman clearly outlined their plans and goals in life, and I believe both of them will be successful," Keeton said. "We hope this scholarship is a small part of allowing them to work to make a difference in their communities."



Colbert Heights grad Caleb Huckaba (top) and Phil Campbell grad Jennifer Reed (bottom) are presented their scholarships by Grand Lodge rep Tom Keeton.

'ELECTION,' from page 3

McMillan, Brinson formed a new marketing company, Panamerican Marketing Group, LLC, to promote Alabama products overseas. Brinson pledges to work to eliminate what he calls "job-killing regulations" that must be eliminated to stimulate Alabama's economy.

•Mo Brooks Brooks serves in the United States Congress, representing Alabama's 5th Congressional District. He serves on the Armed Forces, Foreign Affairs and Science, Space and Technology Committees. He was a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, a group of fiscal and social conservative representatives.

Brooks has earned an "A" lifetime rating from the National Rifle Association. He pledges to continue to vote against spending increases and to work to return America to a "sustainable fiscal path." His website states Brooks has voted more than 50 times to repeal or defund Obamacare in whole or in part. Brooks' website is <https://mobrooksforsenate.com>.

•Dom Gentile: Hoover businessman Dom Gentile dropped out of the crowded GOP Senate race last month and endorsed Congressman Mo Brooks. Gentile's name will still appear on primary ballots.

•Mary Maxwell: The only woman in either race, Maxwell moved earlier this year from Australia to Montgomery. Maxwell has little to no connection to Alabama, but she does meet the requirements to run for senate, which include being an American citizen, being 30 years of age or older and having lived in Alabama at least one day. Maxwell has a Ph.D in politics from the University of Adelaide. She pledges to maintain strict adherence to the U.S. Constitution if elected. She has an active anti-war stance, saying she's opposed to war

in all circumstances. She was born and raised in Boston and moved to Australia after meeting her Australian husband in 1980. She lists her profession as researcher. Her website is www.maxwellforsenate.com.

•Roy S. Moore: Moore was raised in Attalla and graduated from Etowah High School in 1965. He attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he graduated in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science in Arts and Engineering. After graduating from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1977, Moore worked in the Etowah County district attorney's office for five years. Moore has twice served as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, having been removed from office both times. Moore advocates lower taxes, smaller government and less spending. He supports a flat tax or a fair tax, a tax on goods and services purchased rather than a tax on income. Moore supports the use of military to protect the country's borders. His website is www.roymoore.org.

•Bryan Peebles: An Auburn native, Peebles grew up in six different states. Peebles, 37, serves as a consultant to small and medium-sized restaurants and hotels. He advocates tax reform and will work for term limits, pledging to serve only two terms if elected as senator. On his website, Peebles posted a Contract of Service to the People of Alabama with nine provisions, including a pledge not to take any special interest monies, to be approachable to his constituents and to donate a portion of his salary as senator to charity. He also posted his plans for healthcare reform and health insurance reform. Peebles' website is www.bryanpeebles.com.

•Trip Pittman: Pittman serves in the Alabama Senate, representing the state's 32nd District. A long-time

Baldwin County resident, Pittman founded his business, Pittman Tractor Company, in 1988. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama, where he participated in the ROTC Program and was commissioned as an Army Second Lieutenant. Pittman was reelected to a third term in the Alabama Senate in 2018, receiving more than 81 percent of the vote. He describes himself as "Alabama's most effective conservative legislator." With experience in Montgomery as Education Budget Chairman and General Fund Budget Chairman, Pittman worked to help balance Alabama's budget the past seven years, and he hopes to take that same fiscal responsibility to Washington. On his website, Pittman says the greatest guarantee the government can offer is "the right to serve the Lord in how you worship, run your business and spread His word." Pittman's website is www.tripforsenate.com.

•Luther Strange: A Birmingham native, Strange served as Alabama's attorney general before being appointed to the United States Senate by Gov. Robert Bentley earlier this year. After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Strange served as the court-appointed coordinating counsel for Southeast states. He worked for the landmark settlement that paid damages to Alabama for environmental and economic damage. Strange attended Tulane University on a basketball scholarship and later graduated from Tulane Law School. He serves on the Senate Committee for the Armed Forces, the Senate Budget Committee and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Strange describes himself as a staunch supporter of President Trump, particularly on the issues of a border wall and the travel ban. Strange's website is www.strange.senate.gov.

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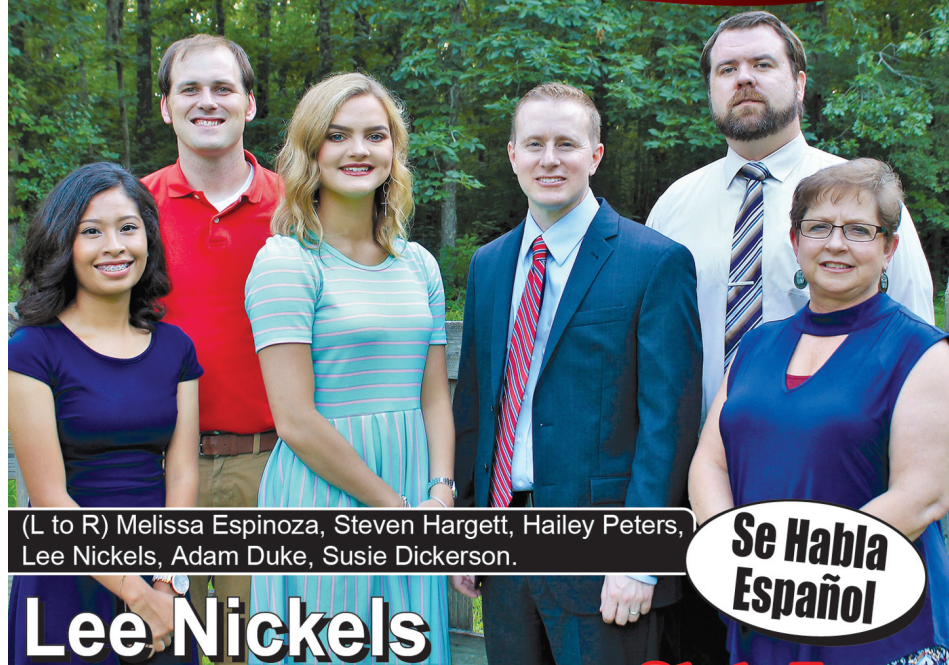
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This year's must-watch SEC games

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

The 2017 season of SEC football kicks off just three short weeks from Saturday, so now's the perfect time to sneak one last peek at the schedule, from September 2 all the way through Thanksgiving weekend.

We'll give you the one headliner game each week that you absolutely *must* watch, plus two others you simply can't afford to miss. [Better get those remote control skills back up to snuff.]

Let's dive in.

Saturday, September 2

Must Watch: Alabama vs. Florida State (in Atlanta)

It's not quite a one-versus-two showdown to open the season [Ohio State was ranked second in the Amway Coaches Poll released last week, right between the top-ranked Tide and the No. 3 Seminoles], but it's close enough. Both teams are favored to win their respective conferences and reach the four-team playoff, but one of them is going to see their margin for error all but disappear on day one.

Interestingly, conventional wisdom seems to be that Florida State would have a tougher time running the table the rest of the way after a Week 1 loss than would Alabama. That's probably got something to do with the fact that Bama has won 17 straight games in SEC play while FSU lost by 43 points last season to Louisville and must also face reigning national champion Clemson and up-and-coming Miami in ACC play, plus Florida in the non-conference finale.

Regardless of what happens the rest of the season, tuning in to watch perhaps the two most talented teams in the country christen the brand-spanking new Mercedes Benz Stadium should be the perfect way to kick off the new season.

Also Don't Miss: Florida vs. Michigan (in Arlington), LSU vs. BYU (in Houston)

Saturday, September 9

Must Watch: Auburn at Clemson

Both teams have really stingy defenses, and both will be breaking in new quarterbacks. In the case of Auburn and Baylor transfer Jarrett Stidham, that's a good thing; in the case of Clemson and whomever Dabo Swinney rolls with in place of Deshaun Watson, not so much.

Clemson, ranked No. 5 by the coaches in their preseason poll, would love to validate itself as a championship contender despite the loss of Watson and a handful of other key pieces (mostly on offense) from last year's title team. No. 13 Auburn, meanwhile, could vault itself into the Top 10 (and perhaps even higher) with what would be

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Let's go *CAMPING*

The arrival of fall camp this week can mean only one thing—football is back in Franklin County

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

The forecast of wet weather for Monday could do nothing to damper the spirits of local football coaches as they prepared to put their teams to work on the first official day of fall practice.

"Everyone associated with our program is excited about the start of fall camp," said Mark Heaton, now in his fourth season as head coach at Russellville. "What's most exciting is the tremendous progress this team has made since spring practice. If we can continue to grow at the same rate, this will be another exciting year."

Last season certainly qualified as exciting for the Golden Tigers, who rode a pair of thrilling last-second wins over Lee-Huntsville and Mae Jemison to a 4-0 start. They went just 4-4 the rest of the way, though, ultimately bowing out of the Class 5A playoffs with a second-round loss at Briarwood Christian.

Several key players have now moved on, including three-year starting quarterback Payton Nichols, All-State left tackle Austin Stidham, All-Star guard Slate Wallace, 1,400-yard rusher Zaye Boyd, All-State safety Colin Garrison, All-State kicker Marvin Betancourt, All-State linebacker Landon Ezzell and fellow leading tackler Sid Willis.

Despite that mass exodus of veteran talent, Heaton is optimistic that his team can contend once again for a Region 8 championship. He's been particularly pleased



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

WHAT'S NEW-Russellville's Barnwell (5) looked sharp this summer in his first taste of varsity action, while Hamilton (21) made a seamless transition from defense (where, by the way, he's still starting) to offense. Meanwhile, at Red Bay, Bragwell (below) is back to lead a younger (but still talented) group of Tigers.

with how this year's group has embraced the intangibles of accountability, work ethic and leadership.

"We'll focus on our team standards these next two weeks as we strengthen our foundation for the upcoming season," said Heaton, whose team will travel to Athens for a preseason game on August 25 before opening the regular season against rival Deshler (in Tusculumbia) for the 26th consecutive year on September 1. "Our player leadership has been strong throughout the summer, and I'm thankful for the way the Lord has developed so many of our guys into leaders going into fall camp."

The Golden Tigers, who have gone 19-2 in region play with one Region 8 title and two runner-up finishes since Heaton arrived in 2014, will need all the veteran leadership they can get this year as they break in a talented but inexperienced group of young players.

Chief among those veterans are senior left guard John David Palmer, the only returning starter on a reshuffled offensive line; senior John David Aycock and junior Will Rushing, each of whom will start on both sides of the ball in the trenches; senior linemen Jeff Lloyd and Roman Cortez, who will try and spearhead a resurgent effort from a defense that struggled at times to stop the run last season; linebackers Bruce Ambrosio, Nate Green and Connor Stults, who will be counted on to pick up the slack in the absence of Ezzell and Willis; and two-way skill players Devin Buckhalter, Robert Hamilton, Logan Jones, Kevin Partrich and Bernard Phenizee.

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‘CAMP’ from page 13

Joining those holdovers is a talented group of incoming freshmen led by Luke Barnwell, who spent the summer splitting quarterback duties with Buckhalter; Grayson Eady, who is expected to see significant snaps in both the offensive and defensive backfields; and Cole Barnett and Rowe Gallagher, who figure into the rotation at outside receiver.

A similar youth movement is underway at Red Bay, where head coach Michael Jackson expects as many as four freshmen to fill starting roles for the Tigers in 2017. That puts an even greater emphasis on daily development throughout fall camp heading into the season opener at Colbert Heights on August 25.

“For the next three weeks, our goal is to win the day,” said Jackson, who has guided Red Bay to a 28-6 record in his first three seasons. “We want to progress each and every practice. Nine positions out of twenty-two will be a first-time starter. The motto for the kids is to make a new mistake and not the same one you made the day before.”

Jackson and company are also hoping for better health than they had last season, when a slew of injuries to key players relegated Red Bay to a third-place finish in Class 2A, Region 8. The influx of an 18-man freshman class led by immediate-impact players like receiver/defensive back Jalen Vinson, linebacker/left tackle Cam McKinney, linebacker/H-back Alex Kennedy and defensive end/H-back Logan Scott should help Jackson accomplish his goal of building a deeper roster in 2017.

That young group will mesh with a solid cast of veterans led by junior quarterback/rover Kolby Bragwell, senior receiver/rover Max Bullen, junior two-way lineman Elijah Ingle, massive sen-



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Jackson, now in his 16th season as a high school head coach, is one win shy of 100 for his career. Red Bay will kick off the 2017 season on August 25 at Colbert Heights.

ior right tackle Hunter Tyler and senior tailback Aaron Lewey, among others.

It’s a mix that should have the Tigers challenging for their third Region 8 championship in four years under Jackson, who is just one win shy of 100 as a high school head coaching entering his 16th season overall.

Red Bay will have to contend with the likes of reigning region champion Lamar County, Sheffield, Sulligent and also county rival Phil Campbell, which hopes to get back on track in 2017 after a series of close losses last year left the Bobcats on the outside of the playoffs looking in for the first time since 2013.

“We’re excited to get started,” said head coach Ryan Swinney, whose fifth season at the helm will kick off on August 25 with a non-region game at

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Tharptown. "With less than three weeks to prepare for the first game, there is a lot to do in a short amount of time. With a lot of new starters, it's important that we make the most out of every practice."

Phil Campbell finished just 2-8 last season and must now replace key veterans like Colby Baker, Austin Riner, Nick Swinney, Malique Nalls and Trey Nalls.

Senior quarterback Peyton Thomas (who totaled nearly 2,000 yards of offense and 23 touchdowns last season) returns, but the cast of skill players around him—led by senior tailback Seth Brindley and receivers Hunter Hutcheson and Brandon Baker—is full of first-time starters.

"All of our skill positions were different this spring, other than quarterback," Swinney said back in the summer. "We've got some kids who didn't get as much playing time last year that are gonna have to play a lot this year."

Fortunately for the Bobcats, they do have experience up front, where junior Gage Cook and seniors Chase Hutcheson, Dustin Hamby and Caleb Hagood are all

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PHOTOS/KG

Swinney (at left, in huddle) will begin his fifth season as Phil Campbell's head coach on August 25, when the Bobcats visit county rival Tharptown. The Wildcats and head coach Kevin Lacey (below, far right) could have a new quarterback this year in K.J. Hamilton (3), a Russellville transfer.

Phil Campbell and Tharptown have met in each of the past five seasons, with the Bobcats winning four times. Last season, Phil Campbell shut out Tharptown 20-0 at Parrish Field.



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PHOTO/KG
Logan Jones (6)
and the Golden
Tigers will open
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returning starters on the offensive line. Senior Brody Nix provides a veteran pass-catching presence at tight end and should also team with Cook to form a solid duo at the linebacker position.

As previously mentioned, the Bobcats will open the season with a trip to Tharptown, where second-year head coach Kevin Lacey and the Wildcats are hoping to build off last year's strong finish. After stumbling to an 0-5 start in Lacey's debut season, the Wildcats knocked off Class 1A, Region 8 opponents Waterloo (29-21) and Vina (27-26) down the stretch, matching their win total from the previous two years combined.

With several key contributors returning in 2017 and better attendance at off-season workouts, Lacey believes his team is capable of taking another step forward in year number two.

"The transition from year one to year two should be a lot smoother going into this year's fall camp," said Lacey, a Phil Campbell alum. "Our numbers have almost tripled since last summer, and the guys' demeanor has been a lot more aggressive."

Lacey is hoping to see that aggressiveness breed confidence, which could help the Wildcats get over the hump and do a better job of finishing games in 2017.

"After months of reflecting on missed opportunities from last season," Lacey said, "our guys are excited about getting back on the field and getting back to work."

The Wildcats are still a work in progress at the line of scrimmage, but they do have a few experienced playmakers at the skill spots. Quarterback Carson Petree returns after holding down the starting job last season as a sophomore, and fellow junior K.J. Hamilton (a Russellville transfer) has the kind of athleticism that could make him a real weapon at the position running Lacey's flex-bone offense. Regardless of who winds up under center, both Petree (who can also play receiver) and Hamilton (running back) figure to have their hands on the football quite a bit this season.

The same goes for senior running back Peyton Price, senior back/receiver Trent Risley and junior receiver Luis Macias, all of whom are returning starters.

"We're excited about our skill guys," Lacey said. "They were all young last year, but they all did well last year. Now, with them being juniors and seniors, we're excited to see what they can do."

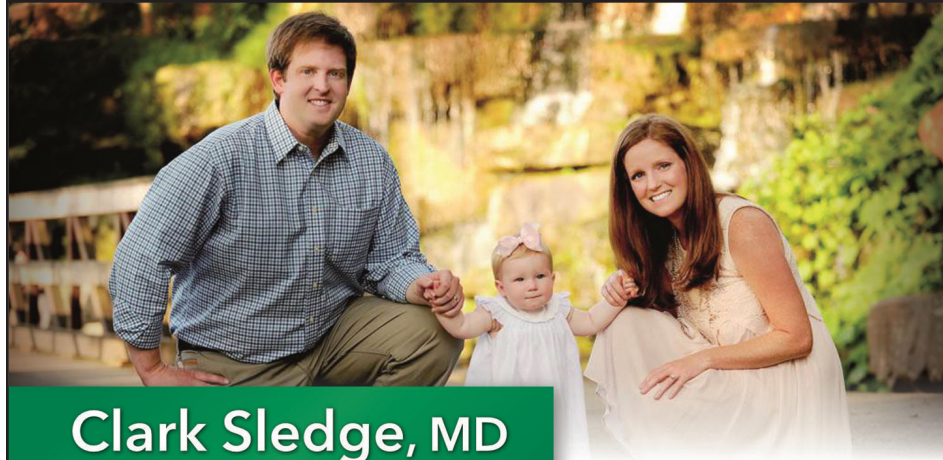
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a huge early-season road win.

A quick look at Auburn's first-half schedule (which also includes non-conference games against Georgia Southern and Mercer, plus conference games against Missouri and both Mississippi teams) suggests that a win at Clemson could have the Tigers sitting at 6-0 when they head to LSU in mid-October.

Also Don't Miss: Georgia at Notre Dame, South Carolina at Missouri

Saturday, September 16

Must Watch: Tennessee at Florida

Aside from being the first really big conference matchup of the season, it'll be worth checking out just to see how each of these East contenders are doing at quarterback. Will Notre Dame transfer Malik Zaire be the post-Tebow answer the Gators have been searching for? Who will emerge as Josh Dobbs' replacement at UT?

Florida and Tennessee were picked to finish second and third in the East by the SEC Media, so the winner of this game presumably takes the wheel as the primary challenger to preseason favorite Georgia. The Volunteers finally got over the hump and snapped an 11-year losing streak against the Gators last season, but they haven't won in The Swamp since 2003.

For what it's worth, it will be strange not seeing and hearing Verne Lundquist on the CBS call for this one.

Also Don't Miss: LSU at Mississippi State, Kentucky at South Carolina

Saturday, September 23

Must Watch: Arkansas vs. Texas A&M (in Arlington)

For whatever reason (perhaps the neutral-site venue), this game seems to stand out amidst a handful of other conference matchups (Auburn at Missouri, Alabama at Vanderbilt, etc.) that will likely feature some pretty heavy favorites. There probably won't be much at stake [neither team is expected to finish any higher than fourth in the West], unless you consider that the hot seat is bound to get a tad warmer for whichever head coach comes out on the short end.

Also Don't Miss: Mississippi State at Georgia, Florida at Kentucky

Saturday, September 30

Must Watch: Georgia at Tennessee

Who can forget last year's classic between the hedges, where there were two lead changes in the final seconds? Jauan Jennings, the man who hauled in the game-winning Hail Mary for UT, is back; Josh Dobbs, the man who threw it, is not, and that could make all the difference.

Georgia looks like the best team in the East, but a loss in Knoxville would have everyone wondering if the Bulldogs are going to find a way yet again to *not* make it to Atlanta. [They haven't been since 2012.]

Also Don't Miss: South Carolina at Texas A&M, Ole Miss at Alabama

Saturday, October 7

Must Watch: LSU at Florida

Florida pulled off a stunner last year in Baton Rouge after the game had been pushed back for several weeks and relocated due to Hurricane Matthew. Now the Gators get to see if their largely rebuilt defense can slow down Heisman contender Derrius Guice in Gainesville.

LSU, which also must make trips to Knoxville and Tuscaloosa, can ill afford a loss here if it wants to keep some heat on Alabama in the West.

Also Don't Miss: Alabama at Texas A&M, Ole Miss at Auburn

Saturday, October 14

Must Watch: Auburn at LSU

If things break right, this could be a matchup of top-five unbeaten, with the winner ascending perhaps as high as No. 1 in the country. We already referenced Auburn's early-season schedule; LSU has a soft September, too, and if the Tigers

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emerge from The Swamp unscathed, watch out. Speaking of tough places to play, it's worth noting that Auburn hasn't won in Baton Rouge since 1999. *Also Don't Miss: Texas A&M at Florida, South Carolina at Tennessee*
Saturday, October 21
Must Watch: Tennessee at Alabama
You must watch it, but you must not expect a close game. Alabama ran all over UT 49-10 last year in Knoxville, and that Tennessee team was most likely better than this one will be. Still, it's Alabama and Tennessee. [Though, lately, it's just been Alabama; Nick Saban is 10-0 versus the Vols since taking over in T-Town.]
Also Don't Miss: Auburn at Arkansas, LSU at Ole Miss

Saturday, October 28
Must Watch: Georgia vs. Florida (in Jacksonville)
A tasty October slate wraps up with a critical game in the SEC East. Florida stifled Georgia 24-10 last season, but the Bulldogs should have the better defense this time around. This could end up being the biggest game to date of Kirby Smart's tenure in Athens.
Also Don't Miss: Tennessee at Kentucky, Vanderbilt at South Carolina

Saturday, November 4
Must Watch: LSU at Alabama
Never mind the stakes, which are bound to be through the roof. It'll be fascinating just to see if the Alabama defense can make life just as miserable for Derrius Guice as it did for Leonard Fournette. Alabama essentially has a three-game schedule in

2017. This is one of the three.
Also Don't Miss: Auburn at Texas A&M, South Carolina at Georgia.
Saturday, November 11
Must Watch: Georgia at Auburn
Nitty-gritty time for Auburn, which is 0-6 against its two chief rivals (Georgia and Alabama) since that magical month of November (with the Prayer at Jordan-Hare and The Kick Six) back in 2013.

If the Tigers can somehow beat both teams this season, then we might see an Auburn/Georgia rematch a few weeks later in Atlanta.
Also Don't Miss: Arkansas at LSU, Florida at South Carolina

Saturday, November 18
Must Watch: LSU at Tennessee
This week is traditionally the calm before the storm, but there are actually a couple of attractive games—starting with the Tigers' first trip to Rocky Top since 2011.

Also Don't Miss: Kentucky at Georgia, Mississippi State at Arkansas
Saturday, November 25
Must Watch: Alabama at Auburn
The Tigers haven't beaten the Tide since Chris Davis's length-of-the-field dash in 2013 and haven't really threatened them since losing a 55-44 shootout the following year. Former Colbert Heights and Deshler coach Chip Lindsey, Auburn's new offensive coordinator, will get his chance to match wits with Saban and defensive coordinator Jeremy Pruitt.

If both teams can survive until this point with one or fewer conference losses (Alabama should, Auburn

might), then the Iron Bowl may well decide the SEC West—and perhaps much more.
Also Don't Miss: Florida State at Florida, Texas A&M at LSU

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