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8.16.17

Country legend headlines 2017 Festival

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville, Alabama to Orange Beach, Alabama to Miles City, Montana to El Paso, Texas to DuQuoin, Illinois to Philippi, West Virginia.

That's country legend Aaron Tippin's schedule for the 12 days following his performance at the 37th annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival this Saturday.

While the 59-year-old performer doesn't love the travel, he still believes it's worth it to do what he enjoys most—perform for his fans.

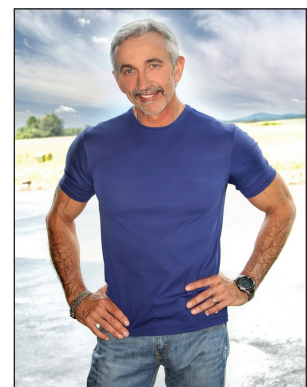
"I sure enjoy it when I get where I'm going," Tippin said, "but I'm not too much on the riding around. But

after twenty-seven years, folks still come out and see me. That's what this is about. I'm always happy to step out there and see all the folks at each show. My shows are more like a family reunion than a show."

Tippin will headline the Saturday, August 19 talent lineup at this year's Watermelon Festival. His concert is set to begin at 8:30 p.m.

Tippin broke out on the national country music scene after he signed with RCA Nashville in 1990. While he was already an accomplished songwriter, having penned songs for Kenny Chesney, Garth Brooks, David Ball, Charlie Pride and the Kingsmen, Tippin's vocal career took off with his first single, *You've Got to Stand*

See 'FESTIVAL,' Page 9



Aaron Tippin

RCS board to consider attendance policy

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

If a proposed attendance incentive program is approved by the Russellville City Board of Education later this month, Russellville City Schools will join Franklin County Schools in implementing a policy that offers financial incentives to teachers who maintain near-perfect attendance.

The board will meet on Thursday, August 24 to consider an attendance incentive program that would pay Russellville City Schools employees \$500 if they miss zero or one sick-leave or personal-leave days for the entire school year and \$250 if they miss two

or three days. The incentives would be paid in July of 2018.

The board will meet on Thursday, August 24 to consider an attendance incentive program that would pay Russellville City Schools employees \$500 if they miss zero or one sick-leave or personal-leave days for the entire school year and \$250 if they miss two or three days.

Franklin County Schools started its attendance incentive last spring with a \$100 incen-

tive for employees who don't miss any work during a nine-week period. This year, employees can earn up to \$400 through the entire school year if they don't miss any days.

The attendance incentives will be available to all Russellville City Schools employees except 12-month employees and those employees who have vacation days. That excludes all administrators in the central office, all principals and most assistant principals (except elementary assistants).

At their recent in-service day, school employees saw 25 of their peers receive \$50 gift cards from a local business as a thank you for missing either zero or one days last school

See 'ATTENDANCE,' Page 3

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Margaret Everett, Russellville, age 67

Died Wednesday, August 9, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Jonesboro Cemetery.

Martha Lucille Britnell McKinney, Russellville, age 77

Died Wednesday, August 9, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Chester Coleman Nix, Olive Branch, MS (formerly of Russellville), age 86

Died Tuesday, August 8, 2017. Funeral held at First United Methodist Church, Russellville. Entombment in Franklin Memory Gardens. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.

Nicholas "Nic" Adam Poss, Phil Campbell, age 38

Died Saturday, August 12, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Duncan Creek Cemetery.

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Daniel eager to start new chapter at Tharptown

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Fortunately for Kelby Daniel, blue is one of his favorite colors. And that's reflected in his wardrobe.

After 12 years of black and gold as part of Russellville City Schools, Daniel was hired last Tuesday as principal at Tharptown Elementary School. He replaces Ann Scott, who accepted the principal position at Belgreen High School last month. And he'll have no shortage of Tharptown blue in his closet.

"Blue happens to be one of my favorite colors," Daniel said. "I don't have the T's on there yet, but I'll get them on there. I love blue—it's a good color."

Daniel's first day on the job was also the first day students returned for the new school year—Wednesday, August 9.

"I got the keys to the school Tuesday night and went up there and walked through the school. Things happened pretty fast with the hiring Tuesday night," Daniel said. "One of the things I wasn't able to do is talk with the faculty at West because of the short turnaround time. I want them to know how much I appreciate them and the great working relationship we had."

Daniel worked for Russellville City Schools for 12 years. Prior to that, he worked in Tennessee, where he taught special education, science, health and physical education. At West, he taught physical education for seven years before he was hired as assistant principal. Daniel and his wife Terri have three children, ages 28, 23 and 18, and a new grandchild.

Franklin County Schools superintendent Greg Hamilton said he was impressed with Daniel for a variety of reasons, including his administrative experience.

"Kelby will do an outstanding job for us," Hamilton said. "His many years of administrative experience in elementary schools was important. We feel he will be a perfect fit for us."

Although he wasn't looking to leave his position at West, Daniel said the opportunity at TES was another example of God opening doors in his career.



Kelby Daniel

"I look forward to making new relationships and growing at Tharptown," Daniel said. "It's going to be a good experience, and I can't wait for it to get started."

"The view I take as an educator is one of servant leadership," Daniel said. "I try to help everybody maximize their strengths and also grow in their weaknesses. The opportunity came to me when God opened this door, and that's what happened five years ago at Russellville."

"It just worked out this way. I prayed for a challenge to fill a need, and that's what I want to do—be able to

help this system and this school. That's why we get into education—to help others grow and be better than they were."

Daniel said he's been blessed to have worked with three wonderful principals during his tenure at West, and each helped shape him into the educator he is today.

"I worked with some great people in Russellville City Schools," he said. "We had a wonderful principal in Ramona Robinson when I came. She had a great knowledge about everything. Then came Chris James. He was a wonderful book of knowledge and always offered great encouragement. He helped me a great deal by allowing me to work equally with him. Anything that came into the school, he introduced me into and allowed me to get involved in all aspects."

"Then the last few years with Mrs. [Deanna] Hollimon were also great. She accomplishes the best she can do every day and is a great person to work for."

Once word spread last Tuesday night that Daniel would be taking the Tharptown job, he said his phone started buzzing with text messages.

"I've made so many relationships that meant so much to me," he said. "It was really a humbling experience. After word got out I had been hired for the Tharptown position, I was bombarded with texts and calls congratulating me. That meant a lot to me, to hear those kind words."

"And I look forward to making new relationships and growing at Tharptown. It's going to be a good experience, and I can't wait for it to get started."

'ATTENDANCE,' from page 1

year. RCS superintendent Heath Grimes said he wanted to do something to recognize those employees because of the positive impact they had on the system.

"It's a very difficult concept for the board and me to grasp of why you pay an incentive for someone to do the job they were hired to do," Grimes said. "However, with research, we know the connection between teachers' attendance and student attendance, and grades and overall student success. When you look at it that way, then it becomes worth it to us to offer the incentive."

"Add on top of that the amount we'll save in substitute costs, and it becomes more worth it to us."

Grimes said he would prefer to recognize employees retroactively who had perfect or near-perfect attendance without knowing they would receive a financial incentive. But Alabama law doesn't allow it to work that way.

"We can't pay anyone from school system funds for things they do in retrospect," he said. "We have to let them know ahead of time. I understand the purpose of

that law. But I think about those 25 teachers who did it last year without any expectation of reward, and those are the ones I'd like to reward—the ones who did it not for an incentive or accolades but because of their character."

"Teachers can be the best examples to their students," Grimes said. "It's difficult to teach kids to be work-ready, disciplined employees if we don't provide that example."

Grimes believes that with improved attendance from teachers, there will be a direct, positive effect on students and how the system prepares them for the work force.

"People get upset with public education and question when students come out of the system, have they been taught discipline, work ethic and character," Grimes said. "We're telling the community we want to do a bet-

ter job of that. And teachers can be the best examples to their students. It's difficult to teach kids to be work-ready, disciplined employees if we don't provide that example."

Grimes realizes \$500 is not a significant amount of money, but it's a way to show appreciation to those employees for their effort. And he's confident the savings in substitute costs will more than offset the cost of the incentives.

"It's a pretty conservative program," he said. "And we're certain that it will result in savings to Russellville City Schools."

In an unrelated matter, Grimes said the vacancy created when West Elementary School assistant principal Kelby Daniel left for Tharptown Elementary will be filled by the August 24 meeting. The vacancy was posted Wednesday and must remain posted 14 days. Grimes said it was posted as an internal search, meaning Daniel's successor will be filled by an existing employee in Russellville City Schools.

County school board approves personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The final meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education before the start of the 2017-18 school year saw a number of personnel moves approved.

Kelby Daniel was hired as the new principal at Tharptown Elementary School. Daniel, who leaves an assistant principal position at West Elementary School, takes over for Ann Scott, who was hired as Belgreen High School principal last month.

Other personnel moves included:

- Resignation: Tessa Benford, third-grade teacher at Tharptown Elementary; Sherry Ashby, CNP assistant at Red Bay High School.
- Employment: Jacqueline Parsons, assistant principal

RBHS; Susan McRight, guidance counselor TES; Amy Gunderman, family and consumer science teacher at PCHS; Cyndi James, accounts payable clerk at Central Office; Walker Kennerly, half-time science teacher East Franklin; Rodney Smith, part-time temporary history teacher at EFJH; Greg Swinney, bus driver for SPAN; Doniree Blackburn, part-time temporary custodian at Central Office; Kaylee Bishop, special education teacher at Belgreen; Lyndsie Terry, speech language pathologist; Bryna Lawler, elementary teacher at Vina; Sherry Parker, half-time temporary science teacher at THS; Sarah Hattaway, English teacher at Vina High School.

- Volunteers: Eric Weeks, baseball at PCHS; Chris Nix, baseball at PCHS; Tracey Pace, softball at PCHS; and Trevor Allison, football at PCHS.

- New teacher substitutes: Timothy J. Gassaway, certified, and Kasey McKleroy.

In other action, the board:

- Authorized superintendent Greg Hamilton to fill three vacancies subject to the approval of the board member in that district. Those positions are elementary teacher at Tharptown, special education aide at Tharptown and special education aide at East Franklin.

- Heard a report from Hamilton that a pre-construction meeting will be held on August 25, 2017, as part of the final plans before construction begins on the new cafeteria at Tharptown High School.

The board will have two meetings in September to hold the annual budget hearing. Those are set for September 11 at 4 p.m. and September 12 at 5:15 p.m., with work session that day at 5 p.m.

Honey Do: The eclipse

It's happening. A total eclipse of the sun on Monday, August 21, and if you are like me you are totally confused by all the news and hype about viewing this fantastic event. Here are a few facts that bear passing on:

1. The best and most reliable website I have found is straight from NASA, <https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/safety>. They answered most all of the questions I had. (And who would know better?)



2. Don't look directly at the eclipse without protection. Make sure your solar glasses are appropriately made. Look for ISO 12312-2 compliant glasses. Regular sunglasses will not protect

your eyes.

3. Supervise children closely to be sure they do not remove the glasses when watching the eclipse. Children will be in school, so caution them ahead of time about looking at the eclipse. This will reinforce their teachers' instructions, which I'm sure will be forthcoming.

4. The website also gives several options for viewing the eclipse indirectly. These options take a little forethought and planning.

5. We should have a pretty good view of the eclipse in north Alabama, with it beginning around noon and lasting until around 3 p.m. The total eclipse is expected between 1:15 and 1:30 p.m.

This should be a fantastic experience, if you take a few precautions, and a great time to bring interest in our solar system to our children.

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



Doug Green

Please send your letters to the editor, guest columns, cartoon panels and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. Remember to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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My take 'Humble and Kind' offers on this.... lessons on communication

Gail Motes
For the FFP

I don't know if you have ever heard the song by Tim McGraw called "Humble and Kind," but I love it. So many things written in the song could make us better people if we would apply them to our daily lives. The title itself would be a good starting place for many of us.

As we know, every story and idea has a beginning, and that brings me to "parenting." A child born with 'humble beginnings' has a better chance of becoming a humble and kind adult.

Parenting is a lot of trial and error. An error can only be made through trial, and success only comes through trying. Since trying is a word of action, that is proof enough to me that parenting requires action, and action requires doing.

I'm sure you have heard at least once or twice a parent comment on how their child never talks to them about anything or how they never come to them about anything, even though they are in the house and the child can come to them any time. Maybe you've heard parents say, "How would I know they were sick? They never tell me."

I have my own idea about such a statement. Have you as the parent ever perceived that the child might appreciate you coming to *them*? That small step would show that you cared, and sometimes a child won't go to a parent because they feel like the parent doesn't care. Sad thought, but true.

Some children have been fortunate enough to have been shown the importance of communication, one-on-one time and the importance of being kind and

being appreciated.

If you are the parent who waits for you child to come to you and you finally realize you have never considered approaching them to be an option, now can be the appropriate time to be humble and kind and go to them first.

Parenting is a lot of trial and error. An error can only be made through trial, and success only comes through trying. Since trying is a word of action, that is proof enough to me that parenting requires action, and action requires doing.

A child born with humble beginnings has a better chance of becoming a humble and kind adult.

As I've said so many times, "As long as there is life, there is hope." Of course, I've also said, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," and, "Laughter is the best medicine." Being a person of many words and having a talent for talking, I have said many things. Ha!

I hope you will get a chance to hear the song, "Humble and Kind." Better yet, take the time to request the song on WGOL-AM 920 or 100.7 FM. I suggest you listen to the lyrics of "Humble and Kind."

Even if you don't prefer country music, it really could make a difference and enhance the person you are or inspire you to strive to be a better you!

Let's all take action to be the beset we can be, whether parents or non-parents. Until next time, as you all know by now, this is just "My Take on This."



A sight for sore eyes

Tips on safely viewing the eclipse

Dr. Martha Morrow
For the FFP

After practicing Optometry in north-west Alabama since the 1970s, I have been intending to write some "eye facts" to help the people understand questions that I get every day. I realize that there are concerns everyone has about your eyes, eye health and eye safety. With the eclipse coming, I decided that now is the time to start!

On Monday, August 21, 2017, all of the United States will have a solar eclipse. The moon will cover at least part of the sun for two to three hours.

Halfway through, anyone within a narrow path from Oregon to South Carolina will experience a brief total eclipse. The moon will completely block the sun's bright face for up to two minutes and 40 seconds. Day will turn into night, and (weather permitting) one of nature's most awesome sights will become visible: The sun's shimmering outer atmosphere, or corona.

The American Optometric Association, in partnership with the American Astronomical Society, is providing detailed information so that you can safely view the eclipse.

1. *Use approved solar eclipse viewers.* The only safe way to view a partially eclipsed sun is through special-purpose solar filters, such as "eclipse glasses" or viewers that meet international standard ISO 12312-2 for safe viewing. Sunglasses, smoked glass, unfiltered telescopes or magnifiers, and polarizing filters are unsafe. If you can't find eclipse viewers, build a pinhole projector to watch the eclipse.

2. *Technique of the pros.* Before looking at the sun, cover your eyes with the eclipse viewers while standing still. Glance at the sun, turn away and then remove your filter. Do not remove the filter while looking at the sun.

3. *Totality awesome!* Only within the path of totality--and once the moon completely blocks the sun--can eclipse viewers safely be removed to view totality. Once the sun begins reappearing, however, viewers must be replaced.

4. *If you should experience discomfort or vision problems following the eclipse,* visit your eye doctor for a comprehensive eye examination.

You should never look at the sun directly without equipment that's specifically designed for looking at the sun. Even using binoculars or a telescope, you could severely damage your eyes or even go blind!

Solar eclipses themselves are safe. But looking at anything as bright as the sun is NOT safe without proper protection. And, no, sunglasses do NOT count. Here is the link to build a pinhole projector, if needed:

<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/learn/project/how-to-make-a-pinhole-camera/>

Do not look through a telescope/binoculars/camera without proper solar filter, even if you are wearing eclipse glasses! EXPOSING YOUR EYES WITHOUT PROPER EYE PROTECTION DURING A SOLAR ECLIPSE CAN CAUSE "ECLIPSE BLINDNESS" OR RETINAL BURNS, ALSO KNOWN AS SOLAR RETINOPATHY.

Please enjoy this rare event, but be careful!!!



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Home improvement debt?

Dear Dave,
I'm debt-free except for my home, and I'm considering having solar panels installed on the roof of the house. It would cost about \$27,000. I have \$80,000 in savings, but the company doing the installation will finance it all for just one-percent interest. It's almost like free money. My electric bills average around \$310 a month, and I thought this would be a good way to save money in the long run. What do you think?

Michael

Dear Michael,

If you have to finance the project, my answer is no. My guess is the break-even analysis you're trying to give me is the sales pitch your solar panel company gave you. That's how they sell solar panels, but it doesn't justify going into debt.

You told me you have around \$80,000 in savings right now. Why not just write a check? Let me ask you a question. What if you could borrow \$10 million at one-percent interest and put it in the stock market? Would you do that? Of course not. It would be way too risky, right? Basically, we're talking about the same kind of thing. I made you feel the risk by scaling things up in my scenario. You're not feeling the risk right now because we're talking about \$27,000 instead of millions.

This move wouldn't bankrupt you, but wealthy people don't do the kind of thing you're talking about. Either pull the money out of your savings account and buy the panels, or don't buy them at all!


Dave

Problem plan

Dear Dave,
I make \$48,000 a year, and I have \$35,000 in credit card debt. I owe \$25,000 on my home, and I was thinking about taking out a loan against my house to pay off the credit cards. Is this a good idea?

Mike

*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.




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For updates on news and sports throughout the week, visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

Dear Mike,

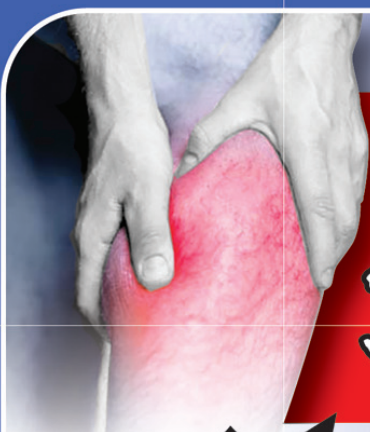
I would never advise anything like this, unless it's to avoid bankruptcy. Here's the problem with that kind of plan. Most people who do that kind of thing don't change their financial habits. In fact, they end up with a new mortgage and new credit card debt somewhere down the line.

You need to start building a track record of paying off debt. Cut up the credit cards, slash your spending and start living on a tight, written, monthly budget. Prove to yourself that you're not going to take out a mortgage and turn around and run up a bunch of new credit cards.

I want to see you not take on any new debt and reduce that \$35,000 credit card bill dramatically over the next six months. If you can knock out half of it in a year, you can take care of the other half in another year or less. Then, you wouldn't need a second mortgage!

Dave

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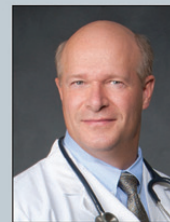
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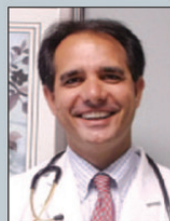
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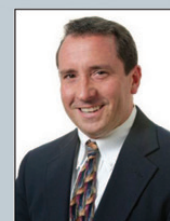
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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS



The Spruce Pine Historical Society will be having Craft Night on the third Thursday of each month. This month's meeting will be this Thursday, August 17. This month's craft will be Flower Arrangement. Meetings are at the Spruce Pine Community Center at 6:30 p.m. For more information, please call Kim at 256-436-3992.



The Franklin County Extension Service will host a free "Peas and Cornbread" lunch this 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!



The Franklin County Cattlemen's Association will hold its annual Watermelon Festival Steak Sandwich Sale this 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.



Gateway Church (formerly Russellville Church of God) will start revival week number six with Rev. Jody Rogers from Dallas, TX this Sunday, August 20. Services at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday and 7 p.m. each night Monday, August 21 through Friday, August 25. Everyone is welcome!



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!



TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weight loss support group meets each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center. Weigh-ins being at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more information.



The Russellville High School football team, volleyball team, cross country team, band and cheerleaders will take part in a special "Meet the Tigers" event on Tuesday night, August 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the Russellville Middle School gym. The public is invited to come meet the players and coaches.



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



Gentiva Hospice offers a grief support group, "Grieving Well Together," that meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Lenox room at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. The next meeting will be held August 24. You are invited to attend.



If you are interested in the study of the Civil War and have an ancestor who was in the Confederate Army, join the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month (except January and July) at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center. Next meeting will be September 7. The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized at Richmond, VA in 1896, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the period from 1861-1865 is preserved. Membership in the SCV is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate Armed Forces. Membership can be obtained through either direct or collateral family lines, and kinship to a veteran must be documented genealogically. We hope you can join us for the celebration of our heritage! The minimum age for membership is 12. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317.



The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, September 9 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, September 14.



Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Friday and Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Karaoke at 7 p.m. on Thursday nights. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs allowed. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, 3rd building on left. For more info, call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

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State president speaks to local BamaCarry chapter

Kadin Pounders
For the FFP

It has been nearly 230 years since the United States Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787. In that time there have been a few changes made, but the most basic of American freedoms prescribed in the document's Bill of Rights have survived to be expressed today.

One of those amendments, the Second Amendment, states, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

That single but important sentence is the reason why more than a dozen individuals gathered last Thursday night at Taylor's Restaurant in Russellville, where the Franklin County chapter of the organization BamaCarry held its monthly meeting.

BamaCarry, which has 18 chapters around the state, is an educational non-profit that promotes gun rights for all law-abiding citizens. According to the BamaCarry website, the organization is "Alabama's only 'No Compromise' gun rights group" and is working towards "constitutional carry" for the state of Alabama.

"I feel like 'shall not be infringed' is pretty clear," said Eddie Fulmer, the state president of BamaCarry. "The government has overreached into powers we never gave them."

Fulmer, a founding member of BamaCarry who sits on the organization's seven-member board, was at the Franklin County meeting to give an educational presentation. The group typically has a speaker or an educational program at each month's meeting.

"We are listed as an educational non-profit," Fulmer

said. "Our main goal is to educate people. We want to educate them about their rights and about their elected officials, and we want to teach them about gun safety and provide training when we can."

Last Thursday night, Fulmer spoke to attendees on the topic of "situational awareness."

"Usually we're telling you how and when and where you can use your weapon," Fulmer said to the group. "Tonight I'm going to talk about how to avoid having to use your weapon."

Fulmer's presentation, which lasted around an hour, included tips and advice on how to detect and avoid dangerous people or situations.

"I feel like 'shall not be infringed' is pretty clear," said Eddie Fulmer, the state president of BamaCarry. "The government has overreached into powers we never gave them."

"Start thinking about things going on around you, and be mindful of them," he said. "Our goal is to get out of a situation without using our weapon."

While BamaCarry advocates for the right to own, carry and use a weapon for protection and self-defense, Fulmer said he never wants to discharge his own gun.

"I don't ever want to have to fire my gun if I don't have to, but I believe it is our right to protect ourselves from others," he said. "That's why we have these educational programs like tonight. We want to avoid situations where pulling the trigger is our only choice."

BamaCarry has recently started a new program called "Every Home Protected," which focuses on training individuals to use a gun to protect their homes.

"BamaCarry highly encourages [gun] training," Fulmer said. "We just started the 'Every Home Protected' program, which will have BamaCarry instructors who are NRA-certified training others how to use their weapon."

BamaCarry also takes an active role in the political scene. Among those in attendance at the Franklin County BamaCarry meeting was Jamie Kiel, a Republican seeking the Alabama House District 18 seat. While the BamaCarry organization as a whole has a policy of not endorsing specific political candidates, local chapters are allowed to endorse politicians.

"We believe the local groups know best when it comes to endorsing local politicians," Fulmer said. "We try to educate people on politicians and elected officials, and we'll post news stories online, but we don't want to tell anyone how to vote."

Fulmer and Gary Blackburn, the Franklin County coordinator for BamaCarry, both praised the organization's growing numbers and encouraged gun owners and carriers to join if they haven't already.

"We're steadily growing, and we're working on getting our name out there," Fulmer said. "We're getting more involved, we're meeting with legislators and we are going to hire a lobbyist this year, too. This is an exciting time for BamaCarry, and we want more to join us. We don't do this for money; I don't take a salary. We're in this to protect our freedoms."

According to Fulmer, BamaCarry has more than 1,200 paying members and many more that show up to regular meetings or follow the organization on its social media and website. Membership to BamaCarry is \$20 annually and comes with benefits. According to the

See 'CHAPTER,' page 10

'FESTIVAL,' from page 1

for Something.

That song peaked at No. 6 on the Billboard Country Singles Chart, and it opened a door that Tippin never expected. And on the other side of the door was the Bob Hope show. Tippin quickly bonded with the idea of performing for American troops stationed abroad and across the United States.

"Bob Hope kicked my career off," Tippin said. "I appeared in Christmas 1991 on the Bob Hope Show, and that's where it all started. That was the beginning of serving our troops, and it just kept going. Over twenty-seven years, I've been to Afghanistan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Germany, Japan, Italy, plus stateside travel."

"I have a great appreciation for those guys and gals. As long as they're deployed, I'll go."

Tippin recorded six albums with RCA from 1990 through 1996, when his greatest hits album was released. That's an ambitious schedule, but one that was necessary with the rapid growth Tippin saw in his career.

"That's the nature of the beast," he said. "You try and strike while the iron is hot. When I did my twenty-five-year album, I had a lot more time to pick through and select the right material. But you've got to run with what's going on and happening in the business."

Through the 1990s, Tippin developed a reputation as a performer who connected with working class Americans. Songs like *Working Man's PhD* resonated with fans who could relate to Tippin's message that hard work was something to embrace.

"The meat and potatoes of Aaron Tippin's career has been and remains working-class Americans," Tippin said. "They've kept me out here touring, and that's my niche. I've never been about the latest, greatest love song. I write stories of everyday life. Fans like to hear that, and I'm thankful for that."

"That's one thing different about me over most country singers."

Tippin has released a total of nine studio albums and two compilations, with five gold and one platinum certification among them. He's charted more than 30 singles on Billboard, including three number ones in *There Ain't Nothing Wrong With the Radio*, *That's as Close as I'll Get to Loving You* and *Kiss This*.

Even with his success, Tippin says it's never been about No. 1 hits.

Tippin will headline the Saturday, August 19 talent lineup at this year's Watermelon Festival in downtown Russellville. His concert is set to begin at 8:30 p.m.

"After twenty-seven years, folks still come out and see me," Tippin said. "That's what this is about. I'm always happy to step out there and see all the folks at each show. My shows are more like a family reunion than a show."

"As I went through the music business, I realized number one ain't what it's about," he said. "It's about hit songs. I had a lot of songs that weren't number ones, but they were hits. That showed up in album sales. My *Blue Angel* was an example. Some stations didn't play it because it said 'hell' in it. Number one isn't always what it takes to have a hit."

Tippin received national attention in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy with the release of his hit *Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly*. Although the song became part of the American soundtrack in that era, along with Lee Greenwood's *God Bless the USA* and Alan Jackson's *Where Were You*, Tippin actually wrote

the song a couple years before September 11, 2001.

"That song was written before the 9/11 attack," Tippin said. "I turned it in with the rest of my songs for the album *People Like Us*. The record label didn't want to do anything patriotic on that album. After the attack, there sure enough were a lot of great songs, most about being sucker punched by the enemy."

"It was a sad day in the history of our country, but I didn't want a sad song. This song is about being proud to be an American. That's what I wanted to deliver to America, something to make us proud of who we are. I suggested to the label after the attack that I wanted to put that song out to America."

In addition to writing and performing music, Tippin's resume includes a variety of work and jobs, including welding and work as a commercial pilot.

"I just love work," he said. "I love welding—love being able to step back from a piece of metal I've just bonded together with a welding rod. I take great pride in that. I love loading hay and stacking it just right. That turns me on. As an airplane pilot, I love making a perfect landing. That really turns me on. Just as long as I'm working I'm probably happy."

"I grew up at the airport. That's what I'm supposed to be doing. The music business was always a sideline deal that was something fun to do when I'm not flying airplanes. I'm standing in my hangar right now doing this interview. When I ain't making music, I'm at the airport flying airplanes."

Tippin said his Russellville show will mainly stick to the hits, with a few surprises thrown in.

"Folks want to hear the old hits," he said. "Basically, that's what I keep it around. I'll put together a bicycle for Toys for Tots while singing *Workin' Man's PhD*. It's a pretty rockin' little show. I hope folks enjoy the fact that it's like that and I can see everyone enjoying the show."

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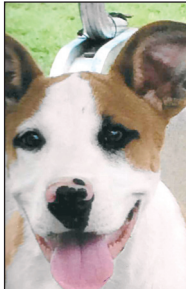
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Bryant named Franklin County DYW

Submitted to the FFP

The annual Northwest Alabama Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program was held on August 5 at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama.

Twenty-eight young women from Colbert, Franklin, and Lauderdale counties competed in scholastics, interview, fitness, talent and self expression categories. One participant from each county was selected to represent her county at the state program, which will be held in January of 2018.

Franklin County's 2018 Distinguished Young Woman is Alison Bryant. Bryant also won the fitness, talent, self expression and scholastics categories. Brianna Wood was named 2nd Alternate, and Cecelia McLemore was awarded 1st Alternate.

Colbert County's 2018 Distinguished Young Woman

is Megan Cook. Cook also won the fitness and talent categories. Katelyn Burrow won the scholastics category, and Isabella Thompson won the self expression category. Valerie Hutcheson was named 2nd Alternate, and Komal Kaur was awarded 1st Alternate.

Lauderdale County's 2018 Distinguished Young Woman is Lindsey Killen. Killen also won the fitness and talent categories. Emma Griffin won the scholastics category. McKinley Morris won the self expression category and was awarded 1st Alternate. Sydney White was awarded 2nd Alternate.

Valerie Hutcheson was also awarded the Distinguished Young Women Spirit Award, and Catherine Lambright won the "Be Your Best Self" Essay Contest.

For more info on scholarship opportunities for young women in this area, please contact Susan Hargett @ 256-710-9239 or Beth Hammock @ 256-668-0045.

'CHAPTER,' from page 9

BamaCarry website, membership dues go toward educational materials and to support criminal or civil trials where a gun owner was arrested under "unconstitutional statutes," among other things.

Blackburn founded the Franklin County chapter of BamaCarry and has been its coordinator for four years. Although the group has not made any official endorse-

ments, Blackburn said it was leaning toward supporting Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate election.

To learn more about BamaCarry, individuals can visit BamaCarry.org. Locally, Blackburn can be contacted at Gary.Blackburn@BamaCarry.org. BamaCarry of Franklin County meets at Taylor's Restaurant at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Council honors local boys for service

Kadin Pounders
For the FFP

The Russellville City Council convened last Monday night to discuss and approve a number of items on the meeting's agenda. The action got started during the work session when Chris Ozbirn, who serves as the chief archivist at the Franklin County Archives, asked the council for its help in restoring two of the oldest cemeteries in the city.

"Old Town Cemetery and Sadler Cemetery are a mess," Ozbirn told the council. "I don't know what it is, but something has to be done."

Ozbirn said both cemeteries have headstones that have been knocked over or destroyed, and parts of the cemeteries have been vandalized.

"In February, we'll begin celebrating our bicentennial, and a lot of people will be coming here," she said. "It is not a good reflection on us, with the cemeteries in the shape that they are in."

Ozbirn asked the council to consider taking action in order to clean up and maintain the two cemeteries. Mayor David Grissom and councilman William Nale both vocally expressed their intention to look into her request.

After Ozbirn spoke, the council recognized two young men for their service to the community. Gabe and Dakota Patterson were acknowledged by councilmen Gary Cummings and Jamie Harris for voluntarily cleaning up around Sloss Lake after the Fourth of July celebration.

After the celebration, around midnight, Cummings said he and Harris spotted the Pattersons walking around picking up the trash others had left behind. Cummings and Harris approached the two boys and asked them who paid them to clean up. The two were not being paid but said they were cleaning up because they wanted to.

"No one asked them to do it. No one told them they had to be there," Harris said. "These two should be recognized for doing something right and for doing something good for their community."

The Pattersons were applauded by those in attendance and were presented gifts by Cummings and Harris before taking a picture with the mayor and council.

Moving on to the city council meeting, the first major item the council approved was allowing the mayor to

accept the funding agreements with both the Alabama Department of Transportation Aeronautics Bureau and the Federal Aviation Administration for a project at the Russellville Municipal Airport. The grants are worth over \$150,000 and will go to address drainage at the airport.

"This project has been on the table for months now," Grissom said. "What the council did tonight was give me approval to accept the grants so we can finally get started on the project."

The council also approved the 2017 Retiree Act resolution. Under the provisions of Section 2 of Act 367 of the Regular Session of the 2017 Alabama Legislature, municipalities have the option to provide certain retirees or beneficiaries of deceased retirees with a one-time lump sum payment.

In October, the city will pay out a lump sum of \$25,788 to retirees.

"This is a big deal, I think, because [Russellville] is one of the first cities to do this," Grissom said. "I believe it's just another way to show our retirees how much we appreciate their service."

And to close out the meeting, the council approved the appointment of nine Park and Recreation Department Board members. Kevin Stone (District 1, five years), James Hamilton (District 2, seven years), Zach Mosley (District 3, six years), Howard Hillman (District 4, four years), Gloria Butts (District 5, three years), Chad Whitfield (At-Large, seven years), Mary Scofield (At-Large, two years), Brandon James (At-Large, seven years) and Heath Grimes (At-Large, one year) were all approved to serve on the Park and Recreation Department board.

In other action at last week's meeting, the council:

- Authorized the sale of surplus Street Department equipment by sealed bids.
- Appointed Hunter Butler as Dispatcher in the Russellville Police Department.
- Accepted bid from Affordable Service for a new air conditioning unit for the A.W. Todd Centre in the amount of \$4,794.
- Authorized abatement of nuisances at 704 East Franklin Street, 705 East Franklin Street, 1233 City Lake Drive, 917 Burgess Street, 412 Sockwell Avenue and 141 Webster Circle.
- Considered claim by Cathye Garrison totaling \$234.65.



PHOTO BY KADIN POUNDERS

At its meeting last week, the Russellville City Council recognized Gabe and Dakota Patterson for their volunteer efforts to help clean up around Sloss Lake following the city's Fourth of July celebration.

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Have a Sports Story?

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Where did all the great coaches go?

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

As recently as 2015, the SEC was home to a handful of football coaching giants, with a couple of all-time greats roaming the sidelines every Saturday and at least a couple more who could lay claim to being among the most successful coaches in the history of their respective school.

Two years later, the coaching landscape in the best football conference in America looks drastically different. Mount Rushmore, it is not.

Nick Saban, already on the short list for the Greatest College Football Coach Ever, shows no signs of slowing down after leading Alabama to five SEC championships and four national titles in his first ten seasons in Tuscaloosa. Unlike in 2015, however, no other current coaches in the SEC are within a country mile of Saban in terms of pedigree or accomplishment.

Saban was already the cream of the crop among SEC coaches, but at least he had some company. Not anymore.

The purge of Saban's peers began in October of 2015, when Steve Spurrier abruptly called it quits at South Carolina after a 2-4 start to his 11th season in Columbia. He guided the Gamecocks to their first SEC Championship Game in 2010 and then went 33-6 over the next three years, elevating South Carolina football to a sustained level of success it had never reached. Including his 12 wildly successful seasons at Florida, Spurrier won 208 games as a head coach in the SEC, second-most in conference history behind only Bear Bryant.

The SEC coaching fraternity took another hit at the end of that 2015 season when Georgia decided to part ways with Mark Richt after 15 years, five SEC East titles and two conference championships. Richt won at least 10 games eight times during his 15 seasons in Athens and finished with 145 wins, placing him in the conference's all-time Top 10.

Missouri had only been in the SEC for four short years when long-time head coach Gary Pinkel retired at the end of the 2015 season, but in those four years Pinkel twice led the Tigers to at least 11 wins and an East division title. He finished his 15-year career at Missouri with 118 wins, the most in school history.

Finally, the last remaining SEC coach even remotely in the same stratosphere as Saban bid farewell (though not voluntarily) in September of 2016, when LSU fired Les Miles on the heels of an 18-13 loss to Auburn that dropped the Tigers' record to 2-2. Lack of offensive creativity

Watch this

High school football kicks off next week. Here's a sneak peek at a few of the games you can't miss.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Last week, we took a look at some of the marquee college football games that will demand our attention on Saturdays this fall. But what about Friday nights?

Here's a schedule primer for the 2017 high school football season, which is set to kick off in just nine days. We'll give you a must-see game (involving one of the six teams in the *Free Press* coverage area) for each week of the regular season, plus a bonus game just in case you can't make the headliner.

Are you ready for some football? [That's a rhetorical question.]

Friday, August 25

Must See: Red Bay at Colbert Heights

Last year's game, played on a wet, stormy night at Fred Bostick Memorial Stadium, wasn't decided until the final 30 seconds, when Red Bay quarterback Kolby Bragwell hooked up with tight end Max Bullen on a 38-yard touchdown pass to break a 26-26 tie and give the Tigers their sixth straight win over the Wildcats. Bragwell and Bullen are both back this season, as is Colbert Heights linebacker Korey Saint, whose terrific all-around effort in last year's game included six tackles, an interception, a fumble return for a score and a 15-yard touchdown toss on a half-back pass—one of six fourth-down conversions between the two teams in a combined six attempts.

This year's meeting at Amos Mitchell Stadium might not deliver as much drama, but there is a little history on the line—Red Bay's Michael Jackson is one win shy of 100 for his career as a high school head coach.

Bonus Game: Phil Campbell at



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

K.J. Hamilton and Tharptown will open the season at home against Phil Campbell on August 25. The Wildcats will be searching for their first-ever home win over the Bobcats.

Tharptown

The Wildcats will be seeking their first-ever home win over Phil Campbell. The Bobcats have won four of five meetings all-time, including last year's weather-shortened 20-0 victory at Parrish Field.

Friday, September 1

Must See: Russellville at Deshler

Mark Heaton will be looking to join Doug Goodwin as the only head coaches in RHS history to win their first four meetings with the rival Tigers. This won't be the official Deshler debut for new head coach Bo Culver [the Tigers open their season a week earlier at Haleyville], but it will be his first taste of one of northwest Alabama's fiercest, oldest rivalries. It will also be his first head-to-head meeting with Heaton, the man he replaced as head coach at Haleyville back in 2014 when Heaton left to take the Russellville job.

The Golden Tigers have won 13 of the last 17 meetings with Deshler, including the last three by a total margin of 70 points. This one could be much more competitive, what with Russellville looking to replace a boatload of veteran talent and Culver and company showing some signs this summer of turning the Tigers around quickly following

a 2-8 season in 2016.

Bonus Game: Colbert Heights at Phil Campbell

Last year's meeting on The Mountain produced plenty of offensive fireworks, including nearly 500 rushing yards by Colbert Heights, 225 passing yards and two touchdowns for Phil Campbell quarterback Peyton Thomas, and 73 total points [the Wildcats prevailed, 47-26]. Thomas, now a senior, will try and help the Bobcats snap a six-game losing streak in the series.

Friday, September 8

Must See: Russellville at Lee-Huntsville

There's almost no way this one can match the heart-stopping drama of last year's meeting at Golden Tiger Stadium, which Russellville won 38-35 on a fourth-down touchdown toss from Payton Nichols to Colin Garrison with barely two seconds remaining. Still, it's the all-important region opener for both teams, and every win will be critical in what should be a highly competitive playoff race in Class 5A, Region 8.

Like Russellville, Lee lost its fair share of veteran talent (including dual-threat quarterback Diamonte Douglas and big-play receiver

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Bobcats work to put together new pieces

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Thanks in large part to the proliferation of 7-on-7 camps and organized team activities (OTAs), high school football coaches now have ample opportunity during the summer to observe their players in the heat of battle. Despite that increased evaluation time, though, the first week of fall practice can still resemble the process of putting together a giant puzzle.

And Phil Campbell head coach Ryan Swinney couldn't help but notice last week that there seemed to be a few more loose pieces lying around than usual.

"Oh yeah, absolutely. We've got a lot of new faces," said Swinney, now in his fifth season with the Bobcats. "We're gonna have a new starter at every skill position except for quarterback. The good thing is, I think we may have some depth at those spots. Our overall numbers are down, but we've got a pretty good number of skill guys we can move around. We've got two or three who can play at each position."

With the August 25 season opener at Tharptown rapidly approaching, Swinney characterized his team's first few days of fall camp as a success.

"It went well. I felt like it was pretty productive," he said. "We tried some different people in different places and started to settle on a few positions. We still have a lot of special teams stuff to get put in, but I thought the first week went well."

"We've got a lot of new faces," Swinney said. "We're gonna have a new starter at every skill position except for quarterback. The good thing is, I think we may have some depth at those spots. Our overall numbers are down, but we've got a pretty good number of skill guys we can move around. We've got two or three who can play at each position."

Swinney and his staff face the unenviable task of replacing a handful of departed seniors who started for multiple years on both sides of the ball, guys like Colby Baker, Malique Nalls, Trey Nalls, Austin Riner and Nick Swinney. Senior quarterback Peyton Thomas, who has thrown a total of 30 touchdown passes over the past two seasons, provides a veteran presence on offense, but the cast of skill players around him—aside from senior tight end Brody Nix—is almost entirely new.

"We may not have a lot of starters back," Swinney said, "but we still have guys who got some experience last year, guys who got to play some. Seth Brindley, who's gonna be our running back, got to play a good bit last year, because we tried to give Colby some breaks on offense since he was playing both ways."

"Of course, Seth starts on defense, too."

While Brindley takes over as the featured runner, senior Daniel Smith and sophomore Ben Williams will try and replace the big-play threat Riner provided at outside receiver.

Senior Joe Hardy, who thrived last season as an H-back and slot receiver, would undoubtedly have been the Bobcats' primary offensive weapon this season, but injuries have forced him to end his playing career prematurely. Hardy missed virtually all of his sophomore season in 2015 after suffering a broken leg in Week 1 against Falkville. He recovered from that setback and had scored a team-best eight combined touchdowns rushing and receiving through five games last season before sustaining a broken ankle against rival Phillips in Week 6.

Hardy, a multi-sport athlete who also plays basketball and baseball at Phil Campbell, made the difficult choice this summer not to return to the football field.

Hoping to bounce back from a disappointing 2-8 season last year and return to the playoffs, the Bobcats will have to press on without Hardy, whose leadership in the locker room was just as valuable as his production on the field.

"That hurts," said Swinney, a staunch admirer of Hardy's determination and passion for the game of football. "It's understandable, though. To go through what he went through, nobody should have to go through that—especially a kid who loves the game like he does. It was a decision he made with his family and the doctors, and I'll honor it a hundred percent."

"As a parent, I understand it. As a coach, I hate it, because I'd love to have him out there. But as a parent, I'm almost glad he's not, not after what he had to go through the last two years."

Swinney hopes to see Hardy exert whatever positive influence he can on the Bobcats this season.

"He's still gonna be a part of our team," Swinney said. "We want him to be down there on Friday nights and at practices whenever he can, because all of our guys respect him so much. He's still a Bobcat football player. It's just not the role he wanted to be in. But it's a decision that had to be made, and it's the right one."

The tall task of replacing Hardy at H-back and in the slot falls to the trio of Sam Pierce, Brandon Baker (who had a strong spring game in May) and Hunter Hutcheson, who filled in capably for Hardy last season before sustaining an injury

See 'BOBCATS,' page 15

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Veterans embrace two-way roles for Russellville

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Mark Heaton believes that his 2017 Russellville football team is forging an identity built on the foundation of mental and physical toughness.

Given how many key players the Golden Tigers are expecting to play both ways, they better be.

"One of the things you can sense from these guys is that the closeness of this group and the commitment of this group has been really good," said Heaton, now in his fourth season at RHS. "Our kids are gonna continue to strive and make that better. I see the commitment of a lot of our older guys to play both ways. They're grasping that and understanding that's the best opportunity for us to be successful as we build depth throughout the year. Some of those older guys have started to relish that and understand that, and they're taking it on as part of our identity.

"Our kids are gonna be mentally and physically tough. They know they're gonna have to do some of those things as we grow and some other guys come on."

"Some of those guys, realistically, won't come off the field much," Heaton said. "They're taking it upon themselves to be ready to handle that responsibility."

Russellville's two-way starters [iron men, as Heaton calls them] will include senior John David Aycock (right tackle, defensive end) and junior Will Rushing (left tackle, nose) up front, along with junior Devin Buckhalter (quarterback/receiver, strong safety) and seniors Bernard Phinizee (slot receiver, outside linebacker), Logan Jones (receiver, corner), Robert Hamilton (receiver, free safety), Kevin Partrich (receiver, corner) and Connor Stults (inside linebacker, fullback) at the skill spots.

"Some of those guys, realistically, won't come off the field much," Heaton said. "Bernard Phinizee will probably never come off the field. They're taking it upon themselves to be ready to handle that responsibility."

How well they handle it will be key to the Golden Tigers' fortunes—particularly early in the season while a large group of freshmen and other less experienced players get acclimated to the varsity level. Heaton said Monday that those young players are progressing nicely.

"They're growing up and starting to feel more comfortable with their roles," Heaton said. "When you're doing some different things that you haven't had to do before, there's that minute of newness where you're just trying to get comfortable before you can start focusing on actually getting better. Once you start to feel comfortable, that's when you start getting better with your technique and your assignments and things of that nature. We've started to see a shift in that area, and it's encouraging because that's where you want to be."

The Golden Tigers, who will travel to Athens for a preseason game on August 25 before opening the regular season at Deshler on September 1, kicked off camp last week, and Heaton was pleased with how his team transitioned from the summer into fall practice.

"It went great. We had a good week," he said on Monday morning. "Four out of the five days, we were limited to ninety minutes, so we had some short practices, but overall we had a good week. We don't have any practices that last week of July before we come back, so I always feel like we're knocking the dust off and getting

See 'EMBRACE,' page 16

'BOBCATS', from page 14

of his own in the season finale at Hackleburg. Swinney said Monday that Hutcheson had just recently gotten his medical release to return to the field.

With only 26 players expected to dress out on Friday nights this fall, the Bobcats will certainly need all hands on deck. Many players—including Brindley, Nix, junior guard/linebacker Gage Cook and senior fullback/end Jason Mansell, among several others—will play key roles on both sides of the ball.

"We'll have some guys who may never come off the field," Swinney said. "Conditioning-wise, we're in pretty good shape on that. It's been so hot and humid, I don't know if you ever get prepared for that. But most of the guys are doing well."

Swinney said special teams would be a priority for the Bobcats this week, and then next week their focus will shift to the opener against the county rival Wildcats. Phil Campbell beat Tharptown 20-0 last season in Week 1 in a weather-shortened game at Parrish Field.

"We've got a lot to do this week," Swinney said. "Last week we had three days in shorts, and then we did some hitting on Thursday and Friday, a little scrimmaging. We'll pick that up this week. We've gotta get our kicking game and special teams stuff lined up.

"This week is a critical week. We'll have to work on all of it every day to get ready."

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'EMBRACE,' from page 15

back into consistent practice mode. We got sharper as the week went along. I thought Thursday and Friday were two pretty good days, and I expect that to continue today.

"Our motto for this year is to just get better one period at a time. We did that all week. We had a short, controlled type of scrimmage at the end of practice [on Friday], and I felt really good about where we were. We had guys on both sides of the ball make great plays, and our special teams looked good."

Much of the focus this fall is on the quarterback position, where Buckhalter (an athletic dual-threat junior with a big arm) and freshman Luke Barnwell (a skilled pocket passer who shined during summer competitions) both continue to get reps.

Heaton said Monday that he's not ready to name a starter for the Deshler game.

"No, we're not quite there yet," he said. "A lot of it depends on the situation we're in. Devin feels really comfortable with the things he does well, and Luke feels comfortable with the things he does well. Our goal is to make sure we have the right guy on the field when certain situations arise. Right now, that's still a growing process as we figure out what those situations are."

When Barnwell takes the snaps, Buckhalter is free to move back to outside receiver, where he led the team last season with 35 catches for 514 yards and then had a monster third quarter in the spring game against Saks in May. Don't be surprised to see a good bit of Buckhalter at quarterback, though—especially early in the season.

"We have total confidence in both guys," Heaton said. "Right out of the gate, I think it's imperative that Devin take a lot of snaps there, just with the experience he has on the field and under the lights. At the same time, I won't hesitate putting Luke in that situation as well. I don't think the moment will be too big for him."

"Having two guys with different skill sets like these guys have is a very good thing. It's really hard to find a guy as dynamic [as a runner] as Devin who can also throw the ball as well as he can. And Luke's a dynamic thrower who can also run it a little bit. Devin is definitely a little bit further along in the running department, and Luke has grown tremendously in the throwing department. Both of them have different skill sets, but they're both incredible leaders and hard workers."

On the other side of the ball, where a few more starters and key contributors from last season return, Heaton is optimistic about the Golden Tigers taking a big step forward defensively.

"I think we're gonna have a very strong defensive unit," he said. "I've been very encouraged by the progress on that side of the ball. We're getting better every day over there. I really think that's going to be the strength of our team going into the fall, which is good."

"The last time I said that, we made it to the state quarterfinals [in 2015]. Hopefully that will hold true again."

Russellville will have another controlled scrimmage at the end of this week and then transition into its game-week routine on Sunday, preparing for next Friday's preseason game at Athens.

The football team (along with volleyball, cross country, band and cheerleaders) will take part in a special "Meet the Tigers" event on Tuesday night, August 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the Russellville Middle School gym. The public is invited to attend.

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'COACHES', from page 13

notwithstanding, Miles went 114-34 in 11-plus seasons in Baton Rouge, winning two SEC titles and the 2007 BCS national championship.

And then there was one.

Saban was already the cream of the crop among SEC coaches, but at least he had some company. Not anymore.

Consider the following facts:

- Aside from Saban, the longest-tenured head coach in the league is now Dan Mullen, who is about to begin season number nine at Mississippi State. Mullen has had a very good run in Starkville [his 61 wins in eight years are only 14 less than the school-record 75 wins Jackie Sherrill posted in 13 seasons with the Bulldogs], but State has finished higher than fourth in the SEC West just once since he took over in 2009.

- The fall of Hugh Freeze last month at Ole Miss leaves only three SEC head coaches with five years of service at their current school: Saban, Mullen and Kevin Sumlin, whose seat at Texas A&M seems to be getting uncomfortably warm.

- The 14 SEC head coaches (including newbie Matt Luke, who was promoted to replace Freeze on an interim basis in Oxford) have combined to win 389 games at their current institutions. Saban has accounted for 119 of those wins, or nearly 31 percent.

- As previously mentioned, Saban has won five SEC titles at Alabama. The league's other 13 head coaches have combined to win one—Gus Malzahn at Auburn in 2013.

- Aside from Saban and Malzahn, the only other SEC head coach to even *play* for an SEC title is Jim McElwain, who has guided Florida to Atlanta in each of his

first two seasons. [That bears repeating: Eleven of the 14 current head coaches in the SEC haven't been to the conference title game without buying a ticket.]

You get the picture. Outside of Saban, this current crop of SEC head coaches isn't a particularly accomplished group. That, of course, could change over time.

McElwain is 19-8 in two seasons in Gainesville with two division titles, and Kirby Smart looks like an up-and-comer [he's certainly *recruiting* like an up-and-comer] heading into his second season as Richt's replacement at Georgia. Malzahn was one defensive stop away from winning a national title at Auburn in 2013, and if things break right the Tigers could find themselves in the playoff hunt this fall.

Mullen could be the winningest head coach in Mississippi State history by the end of the 2018 season, and maybe South Carolina's Will Muschamp will fare much better in his second act as an SEC head coach than he did in his first. Perhaps Sumlin will survive—and even thrive—in College Station, and maybe Butch Jones will finally break through at Tennessee.

Heck, who knows, maybe even Ed Orgeron will make fans forget all about Miles at LSU.

For now, though, the Mount Rushmore of current SEC head coaches has a few empty spaces to fill.

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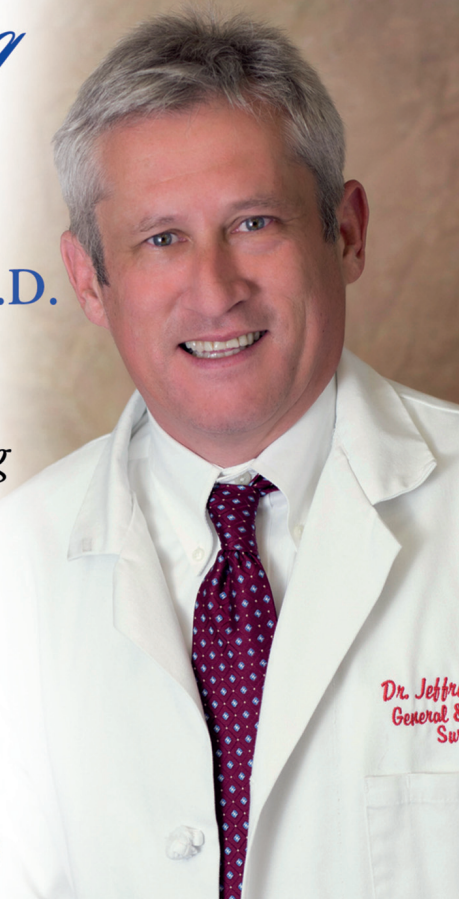
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'WATCH' from page 13

DeShun Grays), but the Generals do return three-star recruit Malik Langham, a 6'5, 255-pound defensive end with a size-17 shoe and the wingspan of a seven-footer. As of late July, Langham, who finished the 2016 season with 70 tackles (including 10 for loss) and eight sacks, had narrowed his college offers down to Tennessee, Washington, Vanderbilt, Penn State, Louisville, Kentucky and Ole Miss.

Bonus Game: Lamar County at Phil Campbell
A late rally by the Bobcats fell just short last September in a 21-19 loss to Lamar County, which went on to win the Class 2A, Region 8 title. Phil Campbell hasn't beaten the Bulldogs since a 21-17 win in 1999, losing the last six meetings.

Friday, September 15
Must See: Lawrence County at Russellville
The Golden Tigers haven't lost to Lawrence County since World War II, but each of the last three meetings has been highly competitive—not to mention downright nasty. There's no love lost between these two programs, and the feisty Red Devils would like nothing more than to spoil Russellville's only home game in the season's first six weeks.

The transfer of stud tailback Zaye Boyd (whose 165 rushing yards and three touchdowns carried the Golden Tigers to a 43-27 win in Moulton last September) from

Russellville to Lawrence County this summer only serves to thicken the plot.

Bonus Game: Hackleburg at Tharptown
The Wildcats, who have a talented collection of skill players led by Russellville transfer K.J. Hamilton at their disposal, will be better in year number two under head coach Kevin Lacey. An early visit from Hackleburg—a team Tharptown has never beaten and rarely challenged in seven all-time meetings—should provide an indication of just how much better they are.

Friday, September 22
Must See: Lexington at Colbert Heights
Colbert Heights head coach Taylor Leathers served as Lexington's offensive coordinator for four years prior to taking over the Wildcat program in 2016. His old pals didn't do him any favors last year, though—the Golden Bears fumbled five times in a stunning 17-7 loss to West Morgan in the season's final week, a result that kept Colbert Heights (which failed to handle its own business in the season finale, losing 30-24 at East Lawrence) out of the playoffs for the fifth straight season.

If senior quarterback Kevin Shaw and the Wildcats are to succeed in ending that postseason drought this year, a win at home over Lexington would go a long way.

Bonus Game: Russellville at Mae Jemison
J.O. Johnson, Mae Jemison...call it what you want, but these two programs have a track record of producing classic finishes when they get together. Last year, the Golden Tigers overcame a fast start by Jemison to prevail 21-20 on a last-minute touchdown. The last three meetings—all Russellville wins—have been decided by a total of just five points.

Friday, September 29
Must See: Russellville at Hartselle
Think Hartselle will remember Devin Buckhalter? In last year's game at Golden Tiger Stadium, the dynamic receiver spearheaded a rousing second-half comeback, catching eight passes for 152 yards and a score as Russellville rallied from a three-touchdown deficit to pull even at 38-all with roughly three minutes to play. Hartselle scored late and held on for a 45-38 win, its fifth in the last six meetings between these two rivals, but Buckhalter certainly left his mark.

Perhaps the biggest question heading into this year's meeting at J.P. Cain Stadium (where the Golden Tigers haven't won since a quarterfinal playoff game in 2008) will be whether the 5'11, 170-pound junior lines up at quarterback [he spent the summer splitting reps with freshman Luke Barnwell] or receiver. Most likely, the answer will be both. [Just not on the same play. Not even Buckhalter is *that* good.]

Bonus Game: Phil Campbell at Phillips
The Bobcats beat the Bears 35-20 last year to snap a five-game skid in the series, but they haven't won in Bear Creek since 1983.

Friday, October 6
Must See: Red Bay at Lamar County
Last season, Lamar County held off a Red Bay rally (due in part to a botched extra-point attempt midway through the fourth quarter) to prevail 21-20, ending the Tigers' streak of 23 consecutive wins in regular-season play and 20 straight wins in Class 2A, Region 8 play.

This season, junior quarterback Kolby Bragwell (who rushed for 85 yards and a touchdown and also threw an 81-yard scoring strike to then-senior Kaleb Burroughs in last year's meeting) will try and help Red Bay exact its revenge in Vernon.

Bonus Game: Tharptown at Waterloo
The Wildcats beat the Cougars 29-21 at home last



'WATCH' from page 18

season, giving Kevin Lacey his first win as a high school head coach. This year, Tharptown will make the long trek to Waterloo in search of its sixth win in the last seven meetings.

Friday, October 13

Must See: Brooks at Russellville

Last year's meeting in Killen (won by Brooks, 31-21) ultimately decided the Class 5A, Region 8 championship. This season the Lions will travel to Russellville and play at Golden Tiger Stadium—in front of what promises to be a hostile home crowd—for the first time since 1985.

Big tailback Deondre Hampton, who gashed the Golden Tigers for 274 yards on 37 carries in last year's win, is no longer around, but Brooks might be the favorite to win the region again anyway. Quarterback Lake Spurgeon and receiver Lazarius Decatur (who hooked up for a pair of touchdowns against Russellville last season) are both back, and 6'4, 330-pound tackle Kam Stutts (an Auburn commit) leads what should be a very good offensive line.

If they survive a mid-September visit from Lawrence County, the Golden Tigers will still be unbeaten at home in region play under Heaton when the Lions come calling.

Bonus Game: Phil Campbell at Mars Hill

The Bobcats won the first two meetings in 2014 and 2015, but Mars Hill got on the board with a 24-13 victory last year. Neither of these teams made the playoffs last season. Both would like to this season.

Conventional wisdom says that only one—at most—will get in, which makes this one a must-win affair.

Friday, October 20

Must See: Red Bay at Sulligent

Red Bay's Michael Jackson, who has logged 15 years on the sideline as a high school head coach, called last year's meeting with the Blue Devils "probably the most exciting game I've ever been involved with as a coach." He'll get no argument from us. Trailing 14-6 with five minutes left in the game, the Tigers got an 80-yard kickoff return for a touchdown from then-senior Jesus Kelly and wound up winning 30-29 in double-overtime when Kelly scored the clinching two-point

conversion on a quarterback sweep out of the Wildcat formation.

It's doubtful that this year's meeting can match that instant classic in terms of pure drama, but it could be just as important in the Class 2A, Region 8 race.

Bonus Game: Russellville at East Limestone

In three seasons under Mark Heaton, the Golden Tigers have played 21 region games. They've lost only two—at Brooks last year, and at East Limestone in early October of 2014. Russellville cruised to a 35-14 win at home last year, but the Indians are 2-2 versus the Golden Tigers all-time in Athens.

Friday, October 27

Must See: Phil Campbell at Red Bay

Much like the Alabama/Tennessee rivalry at the college level, it's been one-sided of late, but you still want to watch. Phil Campbell took a step in the right direction last season, competing with the Tigers for four quarters in a 30-13 loss at Parrish Field. Red Bay had won the previous three meetings by a margin of exactly 56 points apiece and has now beaten the Bobcats 11 consecutive times.

Phil Campbell will try and end that streak on the final Friday night in October in a game that could have region and playoff implications for both teams.

Bonus Game: Vina at Tharptown

The Wildcats pulled out a 27-26 victory at Vina last year, winning their third straight meeting with the Red Devils following seven consecutive losses to begin the series. This year's meeting can't possibly be any closer, but it could be more meaningful for Tharptown, which hopes to still be in the playoff mix come late October.

Friday, November 3

Must See: Colbert County at Russellville

The final game of the regular season will be Senior Night for the Golden Tigers, who will be seeking revenge following last year's 41-21 loss in Leighton. The Indians snapped a five-game losing streak in the series with that victory, but they haven't won at Russellville in 20 years.

New Colbert County head coach Brett Mask will be looking to become the first Indian coach to win his first



meeting with Russellville since Steve Carter in 1990.

Russellville will have to figure out a way to contain Colbert County tailback Kobi McCoy, who rushed for 219 yards and four touchdowns in last year's win.

Bonus Game: Hackleburg at Phil Campbell
(Thursday, November 2)

Many local fans will check out both of these games, since they'll be on different nights. It's possible that some of those fans can barely remember the last time the Bobcats beat Hackleburg—a 28-20 win way back in 2002. The Panthers have won all 14 meetings since.

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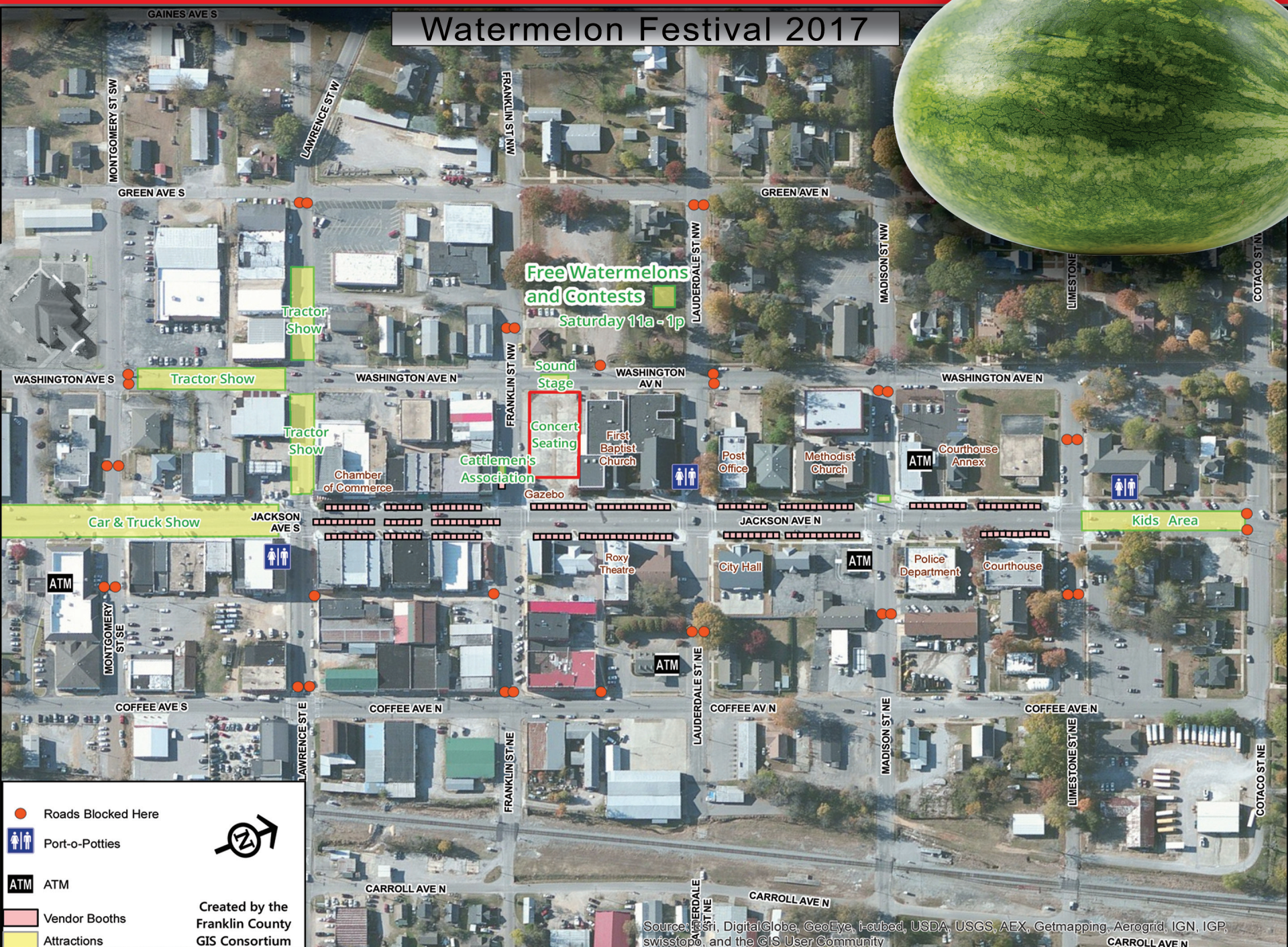
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As luck would have it....



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Jessica Peppers, left, and Kelly Champion recently released their second children's book, *Wally, the Lucky Bug*. The book will be for sale at this weekend's Franklin County Watermelon Festival.

Book inspires readers to chase their dreams

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

This time last year, Kelly Champion and Jessica Peppers were preparing their release for *Watermelon Man* at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival.

The debut for that children's book went so well that the two women are following the same schedule this year for the release of *Wally, the Lucky Bug*, their second collaborative effort. Champion and Peppers will have a booth at the Watermelon Festival with copies of the new children's book for sale at a special price of \$10. Autographed copies of both books will be available. The books are also available on Amazon.com.

Champion, a 30-year educator, wrote *Watermelon Man* as a personal tribute to her father, Roy Grissom, whose giant watermelons have become annual fixtures in the biggest melon contest at the Watermelon Festival. She was inspired by watching her father work with her son Ryan in the garden.

"The first book was definitely personal for me, but Jessica and I have a deep desire to inspire children, and even adults, that dreams can be realized," Champion said. "*Watermelon Man* was a dream of mine to honor my daddy."

Although not a sequel, the new book carries over the character of Wally the Watermelon Cricket from *Watermelon Man*. In the new book, Wally has big dreams, and big things happen for him as he helps the Watermelon Man grow watermelons. Champion and Peppers hope that children will discover they can dream and accomplish great things, no matter how big the task—or the melon.

Champion and Peppers taught together at one time at Phil Campbell Elementary School, where Peppers worked as a part-time art teacher. That's how Champion came to approach Peppers about illustrating *Watermelon Man*.

Peppers' son Colt gets the credit for giving Wally his name. While his mother was completing the artwork on the first book, the picture of the cricket was on display in her kitchen, and Colt named the cricket Wally.

Peppers, an art teacher for Lauderdale County Schools, takes an active hand in both illustrating and in co-writing *Wally, the Lucky Bug*. The women wrote most of the book during the Reader Riot, an event hosted by the Lauderdale County Public Library that features local authors.

Watermelon Man was so successful that the book is in its fifth printing. Champion was contacted by the National Watermelon Association, which ordered several copies of the book to sell at its home office in Lakeland, Florida.

"After the book came out, I was contacted by former students and people I hadn't heard from in years," Champion said. "People showed up at the Watermelon Festival all weekend last year. We never sat down for visiting with people wanting books."

Wally is the third book illustrated by Peppers, who has a passion for art. She is currently pursuing her Masters in Art Therapy at St. Mary of the Woods College in St. Mary's, Indiana.

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2017 Watermelon Beauty Pageant



COURTESY PHOTOS

0-11 months (at left, top): Queen - Presley White; 1st Alternate - Jade Saucedo; 2nd Alternate - Claudia Wilson; Photogenic - Claudia Wilson & Jade Saucedo; Prettiest Dress - Presley White; Prettiest Hair - Claudia Wilson; Prettiest Smile - Natalie Carpenter, Jade Saucedo & Presley White.

1 Year Olds (above): Queen - Lucie Wimberly; 1st Alternate - Kimber Longoria; 2nd Alternate - Autumn Rowe; Photogenic - Paizlee Hammond; Prettiest Dress - Lucie Wimberly; Prettiest Hair - Kimber Longoria; Prettiest Smile - Autumn Rowe & Lucie Wimberly

2 Year Olds (at left, bottom): Queen - Raylee Peden; 1st Alternate - Paisley Balentine; 2nd Alternate - Raylyn West; Photogenic - Raylee Peden; Prettiest Dress - Raylee Peden; Prettiest Hair - Raylee Peden; Prettiest Smile - Paisley Balentine & Raylee Peden.

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3-4 Year Olds (at left):
 Queen
 Elsie Kaye Greenhill

1st Alternate
 Izabella James

2nd Alternate
 Brees Evetts

Photogenic-Alaina Riley

Prettiest Dress-Alaina Riley

Prettiest Hair
 Ava Bianco & Emma Bonds

Prettiest Smile
 Elsie Kaye Greenhill

5-6 Year Olds (at right):
 Queen
 Jaley Mae Bragwell

1st Alternate
 McKarlie Wimberly

2nd Alternate
 Jeliyah Jackson

Photogenic
 McKarlie Wimberly

Prettiest Dress
 Tinley Cleveland, Jeliyah Jackson, Jaley Bragwell & McKarlie Wimberly

Prettiest Hair
 Jaley Mae Bragwell

Prettiest Smile
 Jaley Mae Bragwell



7-9 Year Olds (at left):
 Queen
 Erin Hope Grimes

1st Alternate
 Adelyn Hester

2nd Alternate-Raney Stone

Photogenic-Lola Mays

Prettiest Dress
 Erin Grimes, Adelyn Hester, Lola Mays & Raney Stone

Prettiest Hair - Bianka Hill

Prettiest Smile
 Adelyn Hester

10-13 Year Olds (at right):
 Queen
 Sophie Hill

1st Alternate
 Harley Cummings

2nd Alternate
 Halle Grimes

Photogenic
 Harley Cummings

Prettiest Dress - Sophie Hill

Prettiest Hair - Sophie Hill

Prettiest Smile
 Halle Grimes



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Saturday

5:00pm The Cadillacs

6:00 p.m. Southern Heat

7:00 p.m. Joseph Baldwin

8:30 p.m. Aaron Tippin





2017 Watermelon Beauty Pageant

14-17 Year Olds (at left, top)
Queen-Emma Reed

1st Alternate-Abby Montgomery

2nd Alternate-Cecilia McLemore

Photogenic-Abby Montgomery

Prettiest Dress-Emma Reed

Prettiest Hair-Emma Reed

Prettiest Smile
Abby Montgomery & Anna Wilson

18-21 Year Olds (at left, bottom)
Queen-Chloe Erin Brown

1st Alternate-Mercedes Mitchell

2nd Alternate-Mallory Haddock

Photogenic-Chloe Erin Brown

Prettiest Dress-Mercedes Mitchell

Prettiest Hair-Chloe Erin Brown

Prettiest Smile-Chloe Erin Brown

**2017 Watermelon
Queen (at right)
Chloe Erin Brown**



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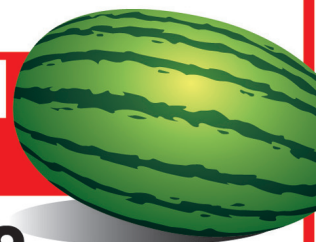
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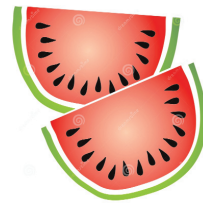
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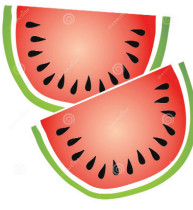
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John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The 37th annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival, set for this Friday and Saturday, August 18-19, in downtown Russellville, promises a weekend full of music, food, crafts and more.

With so many activities, there's something for everyone at the Watermelon Festival, including a smoke-free environment. All types of music will be featured on stage, ranging from country to bluegrass to gospel to soft rock.

Additionally, visitors can enjoy an antique tractor show, a car/truck/motorcycle show, a Watermelon 5K run, special watermelon contests, games, activities and rides for children, numerous craft and food vendors and plenty of free watermelon for everyone!

For more information on this year's event, contact the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce at 256-332-1760

or visit www.franklincountychamber.org for more info and an interactive map.

Main stage entertainment for the weekend includes:

Friday, August 18:
5:45 p.m.—Opening Ceremony with National Anthem performed by BreAnne Gasque
6 p.m.—Purpose
7 p.m.—First Born Sons
8:30 p.m.—7 Bridges
Saturday, August 19:
5 p.m.—The Cadillacs
6 p.m.—Southern Heat
7 p.m.—Joseph Baldwin Band
8:30 p.m.—Aaron Tippin

During the day Saturday, there will be live entertainment at the Roxy Theater beginning at 10 a.m. And children can meet princesses and superheroes on Saturday morning from 10 a.m.-noon at Valley State Bank's downtown location and the Elizabeth Lucas Courthouse Annex.

Welcome to the **2017 Watermelon Festival!**
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See You
at the
2017
Watermelon
Festival

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Welcome to the 2017 Franklin County Watermelon Festival!



Fri., Aug 18	Sat., Aug 19
5:45 Opening Ceremony	5:00 The Cadillacs
6:00 Purpose	6:00 Southern Heat
7:00 First Born Sons	7:00 Joseph Baldwin
8:30 7 Bridges	8:30 Aaron Tippin

Johnny Mack MORROW

ALABAMA SENATE 2018

Paid by Johnny Mack Morrow Senate Campaign, Red Bay, AL.

United We Stand



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville firefighters will be pre-selling breast cancer awareness T-shirts like the ones shown above this weekend at the 37th annual Watermelon Festival. Short-sleeve T-shirts will be \$15 and long-sleeve T-shirts \$20.

RFD raising funds to help women get basic testing

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

Russellville Fire Department firefighters will be pre-selling breast cancer awareness T-shirts at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival to raise funds for basic tests and screenings for women who otherwise can't afford life-saving mammograms. Short-sleeve T-shirts will be \$15 and long-sleeve T-shirts \$20.

The firefighters will set up at the intersection of Jackson and Franklin and will have a banner indicating where they are. Payment for the T-shirts is due at the time of pre-ordering. All pre-ordered shirts will be ready October 1, 2017.

Presale will continue through September 18. If you don't make it by their table at the Festival, you can go to either Russellville fire station and pre-order.

Shirt sizes run from youth small through adult 4X.

Last year, the department raised \$1,630 and presented the check to Russellville Hospital to offset costs of mammograms and other cancer screenings for women who don't have insurance or funds to pay for them.

Residents who believe they may qualify for the program are encouraged to have a physician referral for a mammogram, or they can call the administrative office of Russellville Hospital at 256-332-1611.

Watermelon Festival 2017



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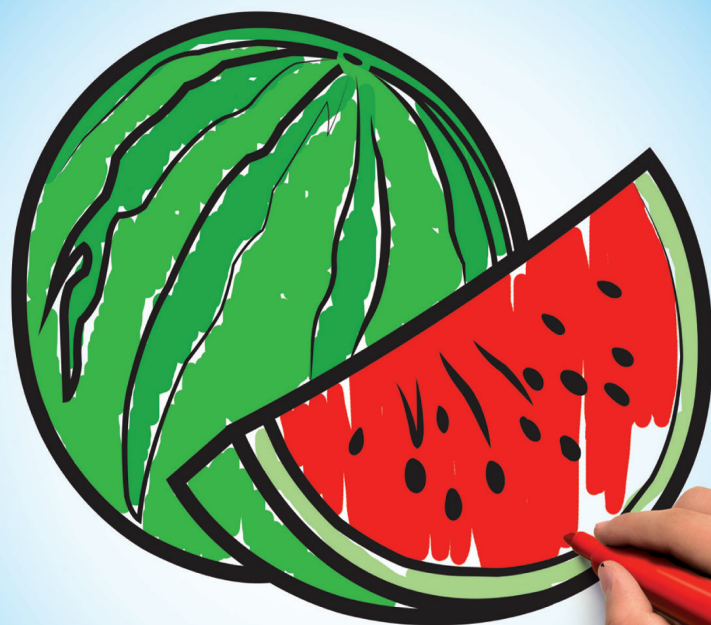
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FDIC**

Russellville

From left: David Palmer, William Nale,
Mayor David Grissom, Gary Cummings,
Arthur Elliott, Jamie Harris



The City of Russellville welcomes you to The 2017 Franklin County Watermelon Festival! We are proud to be a part of The Watermelon Capital of Alabama!



If we may assist you during your stay in Russellville, please call:
Russellville City Hall 256.332.6060
Russellville Police Dept. 256.332.2230
Russellville Parks and Recreation Dept. 256.332.8770

