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# FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

YOUR HOMETOWN, "GOOD NEWS" NEWSPAPER!

10.25.17

## Study: Region is 'prosperous, family-friendly'

### Survey reveals interesting data about Franklin County workforce

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A recent study by the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) shows that northwest Alabama is a "prosperous, family-friendly region defined by its strong, nationally and globally competitive economy and high quality of life."

The study, known as the 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development

Strategy for Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, Marion and Winston counties, lays out a five-year strategy for economic development in the five-county region. The in-depth analysis was broken into four sections and includes analysis of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, along with an action plan to achieve goals and strategies.

The study shows some interesting data

See 'STUDY,' Page 3

Among Franklin County's 31,704 residents (as of 2010 Census), 62.9 percent completed their education at the high school graduate level or below. An additional 19 percent have some college experience; 6.7 percent have an Associate's Degree; 7.4 percent have a Bachelor's Degree; and 6.8 percent are college graduates or professionals.... Franklin County's median household income is \$35,372.

## New State Farm agent to hold grand opening

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

When offered a choice between starting his State Farm Insurance agency in Birmingham or Russellville, Lee Nickels made the natural choice—Russellville.

Nickels, who opened his Russellville office in July, previously worked in State Farm's agent aspirant program with the goal of having his own agency. Nickels worked for a State Farm agent in Hernando, MS before leaving for the Atlanta training program in February.

He was told about the opening in Russellville that resulted from the retirement

of long time State Farm agent Gus Garrard. Nickels and his wife Mary visited Russellville and made the career move from there.

"It's a nice town with nice people. We like the small-town atmosphere and were already familiar with that," Nickels said. "During my agent training, I had an opportunity to interview for Birmingham but decided to take Russellville."

"I'm fortunate and blessed to service Gus's customers. We knew coming in we'd have an existing book of business. Even with two other agents in town, I trusted that State Farm knew what it was doing and that if I put in the hard work I'd be successful."

Nickels will hold a grand opening for his office this Thursday, October 26 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at his office located at 13760 Highway 43, Suite 6, across from Walmart.

The event will feature giveaways, food and drinks, an open house and a ribbon cutting with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.



Lee Nickels

See 'AGENT,' Page 3

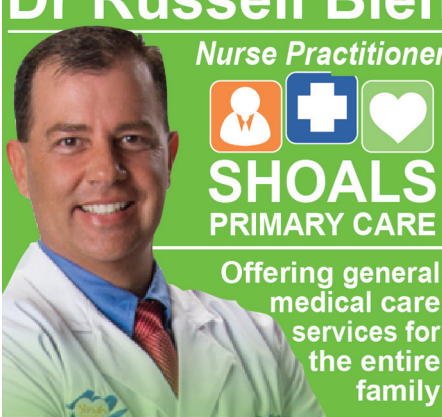
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**Erma Cheatham**, Russellville, age 93  
Died Monday, October 16, 2017. Graveside service held at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**Michael L. Fleming**, Florence, age 56  
Died Thursday, October 12, 2017. Memorial service held at Trinity Episcopal Church, Florence.

**Jane Craig Jones**, Russellville, age 81  
Died Saturday, October 14, 2017. Graveside service held at Mt. Hope Methodist Church Cemetery.

**Celia Diane McClellan**, Russellville, age 71  
Died Wednesday, October 18, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.

**Frederick Lowell Williams**, Phil Campbell, age 94  
Died Wednesday, October 18, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in P.A. Williams Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

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## 256-331-2092

# Dream Center staff, residents give back to community

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

For ten years, the staff and residents of the Russellville Dream Center have worked to improve their own lives through a Christian-based recovery program.

They also strive to improve the lives of others in their community through service projects and their outreach program. The latest example came Saturday when Dream Center residents painted a building at the corner of Franklin and North Jackson Avenue. The building, owned by Wayne Miller, is used as a church.

City officials approached Dream Center senior pastor/director Shawn Reathford to see if his residents would be willing to do the work, and they quickly committed to the project.

"It's just part of giving back to the community," Reathford said. "We're doing a lot of downtown remodeling. We're working with a contractor at the new restaurant going in downtown. We're doing all the construction other than the major electric and plumbing. We're working on the framing and contract work there."

Reathford said his residents and staff enjoy giving back to the community that has helped support the program for a decade now. While there were some doubters early on, the Dream Center has proven itself to be a valuable program both for its residents and for Franklin County.

"I think to be here ten years has proven a lot to some people who didn't believe we'd still be here,"

Reathford said. "The longer you stick with it and the longer you prove yourself, the more credibility and character you have."

With 23 residents and nine staff members, the Dream Center is a six-month Christian life recovery program that provides food, clothing and residency for men and women wanting to get their lives back on track by applying Biblical truths. The Dream Center focuses on recovery from alcohol and substance abuse addiction.

"Our vision is to impact the issues of substance abuse, moral decay, homelessness and poverty that exist in our city and surrounding communities," reads the Dream Center website, [www.russellvilledreamcenter.net](http://www.russellvilledreamcenter.net).

Founded in 2007, the Dream Center also hosts regular clothing and food drives for the community. Twice a month, Dream Center residents do a community outreach at Westside and Eastside Apartments that includes a clothing and food giveaway.

Reathford said being civic-minded is part of the recovery process and helps his residents feel a part of their community.

"They are learning how to give back and how to be grateful for what they have been given," Reathford said. "This is something they do with excellence and pride."

Russellville mayor David Grissom said he appreciates Reathford and the Dream Center residents for helping improve the look of their downtown.

"They are always willing to help in any way we need assistance," Grissom said. "I want to thank Shawn, his staff and residents for all they have done to improve the beauty of Russellville."



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville city officials joined with residents and staff of the Russellville Dream Center for a community beautification project downtown this past Saturday.

The lift used in the job was donated by Tommy Davis and MS Industries.

## 'AGENT,' from page 1

The public is invited.

"It's an opportunity for people to come by and let us meet them and let them know we are here open for business," Nickels said. "We'd love to meet everyone we can."

New State Farm agents start with a 12-month probationary period to demonstrate they can be successful with their own agency. So far, Nickels has enjoyed the experience of having his own office, and he looks forward to a long relationship with the Russellville community.

"It's definitely different. But it's a wonderful change knowing I own my own business," Nickels said. "Having my own people working with me and wearing different hats is a great experience. Instead of working in the business, it's working on the business."

Nickels genuinely believes in the company he represents and that makes it easier to promote State Farm products.

"State Farm has one of the best claim paying experiences. They pay claims very well," he said. "They have a very robust agent system with close to 19,000 agents. If you need help anywhere in the U.S., you can go into any office and get help.

**Offered the option of starting his agency in Birmingham or Russellville, Nickels made the natural choice—Russellville.**

**"It's a nice town with nice people. We like the small-town atmosphere and were already familiar with that," Nickels said.**

**"During my agent training, I had an opportunity to interview for Birmingham but decided to take Russellville."**

"State Farm sells close to a hundred different products, so instead of taking care of one or two needs, we

can take care of it all when it comes to your insurance and financial needs. State Farm has been number one in auto insurance since 1942 and number one in homeowners since 1962.

"Why would I want to be with anyone less than number one?"

Nickels has three full-time and one part-time employee in his office. They include Susie Dickerson, who previously worked for Garrard for six-and-a-half years, who serves as office manager. Steven Hargett and Marilyn Hutto serve as account managers, and Russellville High School graduate Hailey Peters is the office representative.

"I think I've got a good team working with me who really cares for our customers," Nickels said. "They have a lot of great experience under their belts to serve the needs of our customers."

To contact State Farm agent Lee Nickels, call 256-332-0052.

## 'STUDY,' from page 1

about Franklin County and its workforce. Among its 31,704 residents (as of 2010 Census), 62.9 percent completed their education at the high school graduate level or below. An additional 19 percent have some college experience; 6.7 percent have an Associate's Degree; 7.4 percent have a Bachelor's Degree; and 6.8 percent are college graduates or professionals.

Franklin County's median household income is \$35,372. That means half of Franklin County homes have combined income beyond \$35,372 and half below \$35,372. Per capita income is \$18,595, and 22.5 percent of Franklin County residents live below the poverty line. Alarming, 13.5 percent of Franklin County residents live below the food insecurity rate, meaning that due to economic and social living conditions, they reported uncertain access to food for their families.

The county's largest employment sector is in manu-

facturing, with 4,253 residents reporting jobs in the manufacturing industry, with average annual earnings of \$46,579.

The next largest area of employment for Franklin County workers is jobs with state or local government. According to the study, 1,819 county residents work in that area, with average annual salaries of \$48,434.

The only two employment areas to show an increase in Franklin County from 2011 are manufacturing and accommodation and food services.

Breaking down the county population, 16 percent are over age 65 and 24.2 percent under 18, with a median age of 38.8. The county shows a minority population of 11.7 percent and a Hispanic population of 15.7 percent.

Colbert County reports a median household income of \$40,576, with 17.4 percent of individuals living below the poverty line. Again, manufacturing is the

largest area of employment, with 6,655 residents earning an average salary of \$62,688.

Interviews with industrial employers in northwest Alabama show a need for technically trained employees who understand the basic operation of the equipment they will be operating. This calls for additional work-based education in high school and expanded technical programs, dual enrollment programs and work-study opportunities, like those offered by the Franklin County Career Tech Center.

The study finds the five largest employers in northwest Alabama to be:

1. North American Lighting, 1,437
2. ECM Hospital, 1,222
3. Pilgrim's Pride, 1,140
4. Constellium, 1,135
5. Tiffin Motor Homes, 1,108.

# Honey Do List: Fire pits

The temps have dropped significantly, and the sun is disappearing more quickly these days. One way to extend the evening's outdoor activities is with a fire pit.

Marshmallows, hot dogs, ghost stories or just gazing into the dancing flames can really help you reminisce about bygone times or create new memories to cherish.

Fire pits come in many styles, types and materials. You may choose a lightweight metal style that can be easily placed on a patio or deck, or build an elaborate stone pit that will last for years. Here are a few safety tips to remember when placing, building or using a fire pit.

**The first thing to do is place the fire pit away from flammable objects. "Ten feet away" is a good rule of thumb. This includes structures (such as the house and outbuildings), tree limbs and branches, and shrubs. Put the fire pit in an area where it won't be a hazard to kids at play.**

Of course, the first thing to do is place the fire pit away from flammable objects. "Ten feet away" is a good rule of thumb. This includes structures (such as the house and outbuildings), tree

limbs and branches, and shrubs. Put the fire pit in an area where it won't be a hazard to kids at play.

Be prepared for emergencies with a nearby charged water hose, a bucket of sand or a fire extinguisher.

Metal bowls are very inexpensive and can be moved or stored when not in use. Their light weight makes them good for use on decks or camping. It would be a good idea to keep the fire fairly small and to use a thermal barrier underneath. Wood decks can be damaged by embers, and composite decking can melt under the heat of a fire pit. Many come with fire screens to control those errant embers that may try to fly away.

Stone fire pits may be crafted from rocks harvested from your property or bought in a kit. A layer of sand in the bottom of the pit creates a great bed for the burning embers. These are not very portable, so put some extra thought into the location.

October is "National Fire Prevention Month," so think safety and be prepared for the cold months to come.

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



Doug Green

## OUR HOUSE by Ree Shannon



## Smart tricks for a happier Halloween

We love Halloween. What other night can you dress like a hot dog and eat all your favorite childhood sweets without having someone judge you?

The problem is, we may love it a little too much.

According to the National Retail Federation, Americans will spend around \$9.1 billion—that's "billion" with a "b"—on Halloween this year. If you're tight on cash, that figure may sound scary. The good news is you can spend as little as you like and still have a great time.

### 1. The Costume Games

Instead of buying a \$40 Batman or Star Wars costume for each of your three boys—or sewing some rough-looking versions from scratch—turn it into a family game. Think *Project Runway* meets *Supermarket Sweep*. Here's how it works: Head to the consignment shop or thrift store with your brood and give each child an envelope with five or ten bucks inside. Split into teams to pick out a costume, or find materials to make a custom creation. When time's up and purchases are made, head home and have the kids dig into their closets for the rest of their getups. Then hit the runway, and may the best designer win!

### 2. DIY Decorations

Your attic, basement and coat closets are already overflowing with Christmas wreaths and ski gear. Even if you could afford that giant, inflatable cat in a pumpkin, where in the heck would you put it? Unless you're reusing decorations from last year, there's no need to go all out for Halloween.

Instead, take a sunny afternoon trip to your local pumpkin patch, and let each child pick one small pumpkin. Spend the rest of the day walking around the farm or enjoying a hayride. Back at home, carve or paint your pumpkins and display them on the porch with a few homemade signs to welcome your trick-or-treaters. When Halloween's over, there's no storage!

### 3. Candy Portion Control

Just because you live in a neighborhood that gets carloads of kids every year, that doesn't mean you have to buy carloads of candy. If you already know you'll be visited by 100 princesses and superheroes, skip the gourmet chocolate bars and grab a bulk bag of assorted candy instead. And don't feel like you have to get the brand-name stuff either. Just buy what you can afford, and when it's gone, it's gone. These kids are getting a lot of sugar, so you're not depriving the latecomers. Early birds get the gummy worms!

### 4. Free Fall Activities

There are heaps of harvest and Halloween festivals this time of year. And they're usually free! So, take advantage of what's already going on in your church or community, and budget a little extra for any special games, crafts or kiddie rides. And since fair food can add up, save some cash by packing a picnic and a cozy quilt before you go. Just be sure to budget for a funnel cake—it's a fall festival essential.

### 5. Family Traditions

Carve out a weekend or two for some quality time together. You don't necessarily have to paint pumpkins or dress up, but it can be fun to start a few new fall traditions. How about a harvest-themed cooking day? Try caramel apples, pumpkin pie and jack-o-lantern pizzas (use the pepperonis and veggies to make the face). Or have everyone vote for their favorite fall movies, then hunker down on the couch (or maybe under a fort) to snuggle and munch the day away. And if you'd rather be outside, head over to the park for a scavenger hunt and enjoy the scenery.

There's no wrong way to celebrate Halloween. As long as your loved ones are together, laughing and soaking in the blessings of the season, you'll have a blast—even on a bite-size budget!

—Used with permission from DaveRamsey.com

## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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### What's the difference?

Dear Dave,  
What's the difference between a credit union and a bank?

Jake

Dear Jake,  
A bank is owned by stockholders. When the bank makes a profit—and they *should* make a profit—the stockholders, who are owners of the company, get that profit. It can be dispersed in the form of dividends, or the value of their stock is increased. A credit union is run more like a cooperative. Technically speaking, it's operated not for profit, and the owners are the credit union members, who are also customers.

As a customer of a credit union, what-  
ever you pay into the credit union—the

“profit”—is returned to the members in the form of increased services or actual disbursements. Sometimes, you actually get a check from the credit union.

A lot of banks don't like credit unions, and say they have an unfair advantage because of their non-profit status. This really isn't true. Credit unions, with whatever “profits” are made, put that money right back into creating cheaper checking accounts, better interest rates on loans, or higher interest rates on savings.

A bank could do the same thing, if it were willing to make less profit. So, there's no disadvantage. They're just trying to keep stockholders happy and sell stuff to customers. But really, that all means nothing if you don't get good service from the organization!

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.*

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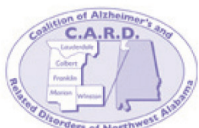
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# RHS 2017 HOMECOMING



**Clockwise, from top left:**  
***Sydney Belle Burcham***  
 Escorted by Rudy Fernandez  
***Gabby Cook***  
 Escorted by Riley Reeves  
***Stephanie Fuentes-Salvador***  
 Escorted by Carlos Martinez  
***Maleia Ann Gist***  
 Escorted by Landon Ezzell  
***Madison Hargett***  
 Escorted by Brock Malone  
***Ellie Kerby***  
 Escorted by Noah Gist  
***Emily Murray***  
 Escorted by Brayden Bendall  
***Chloe Beth Plott***  
 Escorted by Israel Gonzalez



# RHS 2017 HOMECOMING

Clockwise, from top left:

*Bailey Rose*

Escorted by Jaret Ward

*Jocelyne Solares*

Escorted by Lucas McNutt

*Casiday Hope Underwood*

Escorted by Hunter Briles

*Emma Whitfield*

Escorted by Cade Fretwell

For detailed bios on each of the twelve senior girls who make up this year's Homecoming Court, please visit us online at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net).

This year's Homecoming Queen will be announced at a pep rally Friday afternoon and will be recognized, along with each member of the Court and their escort, at halftime of Friday night's homecoming game against Ardmore.

Pictured below (L to R) are the members of this year's Russellville High School Homecoming Court: Bailey Rose, Sydney Belle Burcham, Emma Whitfield, Stephanie Fuentes-Salvador, Gabby Cook, Maleia Ann Gist, Ellie Kerby, Emily Murray, Casiday Hope Underwood, Chloe Beth Plott, Madison Hargett, Jocelyne Solares.



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# What's Happening


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


 **L**ifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital this Wednesday, October 25 from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at [deborah.lindsey@curahealth.org](mailto:deborah.lindsey@curahealth.org). Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive a free T-shirt, an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, a free cookie dough card from Papa Murphy's and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES! Please call if you have any questions, and thank you for giving the gift of life!


 **A** Senior Health Fair will be held this Thursday, October 26 from 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the A.W. Todd Center in Russellville. Doors open at 8:30 a.m.! Learn more about Social Security updates, weight management, healthy eating, estate planning, funeral planning, exercise, breast cancer updates, tours & trips, and much more! Area exhibitors will be on site! Event is free of charge, and lunch will be served. Pre-register by calling the Franklin County Extension Office at 256-332-8880 or the Foster Grandparent Program at 256-332-6800. Sponsored by Foster Grandparents and Alabama Extension.


 **A** Broadband Meeting to discuss county-wide broadband internet service will be held this Thursday, October 26 at 6 p.m. at the PCHS auditorium. Steve Foshee, president/CEO of Tombigbee Electric Cooperative, will speak at the meeting. The event will be hosted by the Franklin County Water Service Authority, which is charged with overseeing and managing countywide broadband after Franklin County citizens approved a ballot referendum in 2014.


 **M**ount Moriah Baptist Church (6350 Coburn Mountain Road, Tusculumbia) will have a Fall Festival this Saturday, October 28 from 1-3 p.m. Trunk or Treat starts at 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome!


 **I**sbell United Methodist Church will host a Fall Festival this Saturday, October 28 from 4-6 p.m. There will be games, a cake walk, face painting, and much more! You can also buy a chance to throw a pie in the preacher's face! At 6:30 p.m., there will be a Trunk-or-Treat. There will also be a chili cook-off with three judges and a chili supper following. Bring your favorite chili! Pastor Michael Cole and congregation invite everyone to attend!


 **M**ount Hebron Baptist Church (located at the intersection of Co. Road 26 and Hwy. 59) will host a "Tailgate and Treat" from 6-8 p.m. this Saturday, October 28. Tailgate food, candy for kids, and games! Everyone welcome!


 **G**ateway Church (formerly Russellville Church of God) on Hwy. 43 North in Russellville will celebrate Homecoming this Sunday, October 29. Alton Bristo will preach at the morning service at 10:30 a.m., with lunch to follow and a singing with the Woodall's at 1:30 p.m. Everyone is invited! For more information, please call 256-332-7176 or 256-627-7935. Also, Gateway Church will have a Trunk-or-Treat on Tuesday, October 31 from 6-8 p.m.


 **A** Community Trunk or Treat will be held Tuesday, October 31 from 6-8 p.m. in downtown Russellville on Jackson Avenue. Admission is free. To register your organization or for more information, call 256-332-1760. Deadline for registration is October 27, 2017.


 **T**he Russellville Scorpions Elite 9-and-Under Baseball Team is selling chances on 30 Guns in 30 Days as a team fund raiser. Drawing begins November 1 and continues for 30 days, with one gun given away daily. Donations for chances are \$30/ticket. You do not have to be present to win. Funds will be used for team travel and expenses. Chances available through October 31. Call Blake Entrekin at 256-483-7512 for more information.

 **I**f 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 November 2. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317 for more information.

 **T**he United Methodist Women will sponsor their annual Rummage/Bake Sale from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. on Friday, November 3 and 7-11 a.m. on Saturday, November 4 in the Ministry Center directly behind the First United Methodist Church in downtown Russellville. This event is held to raise money for local and foreign missions. Items for sale include household goods, furniture, books and white elephants. Cakes, pies and other homemade baked goods are available for purchase. A \$3 lunch, including homemade chili, crackers and tea, will be served beginning at 11 a.m. until it is gone. Take-outs will be available.

 **R**estoration Church will hold its first annual golf tournament at Twin Pines Country Club on Friday, November 3. The tournament will be a four-man scramble format with a cost of \$65/person. Registration begins at 11 a.m. with tee-off at noon. Prizes for first and second place teams. For more information, contact Pastor Kevin Palmer at 256-324-7047.

 **T**he 4th-6th grade kids class at Belgreen Baptist Church will have a yard sale fundraiser on Saturday, November 4 from 8 a.m.-noon to raise money for coats and non-perishable items for missions.

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County (25100 Hwy. 24, Russellville) will host a Fall Festival & Judgment Hayride on Saturday, November 4. Gates open at 5 p.m. Games in the arena and food from the chuck wagon. First hayride leaves at 7 p.m. Last hayride leaves at 8 p.m. Gates close at 9 p.m.



# City council declares vacancies within RPD

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council declared two vacancies within the Russellville Police Department at the council's October 16 meeting.

The council accepted the resignation of Sergeant Jessica Clements and authorized the promotion to the position from within the classified service. Additionally, two vacancies for patrol officer were declared, and the council asked the Russellville Civil Service Board to add an additional name to the list.

In other action the council:

- Approved a financial claim from Mary Abernathy for tire damage relating to a broken curb at the intersection of West Lawrence St. and Dillard Hollow Road in an amount less than \$100.

- Approved a revised volunteer firefighter roster.

- Approved a resolution recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

- Approved a proposal for engineering services for the 2016 TAP rant for sidewalk renovations on Lauderdale Street, Madison Street and Coffee Avenue.

- Authorized a resolution approving application for a grant for federal assistance for the Russellville Municipal Airport and authorized mayor David Grissom to sign the pre-application. The city is seeking \$76,500 in federal funds, \$4,250 in state funds and the local match for the City of Russellville will be \$4,250, for a total of \$85,000.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Russellville City Council will be Monday, November 6 with work session at 6 p.m. and the meeting immediately following.

## Welcoming Patients!

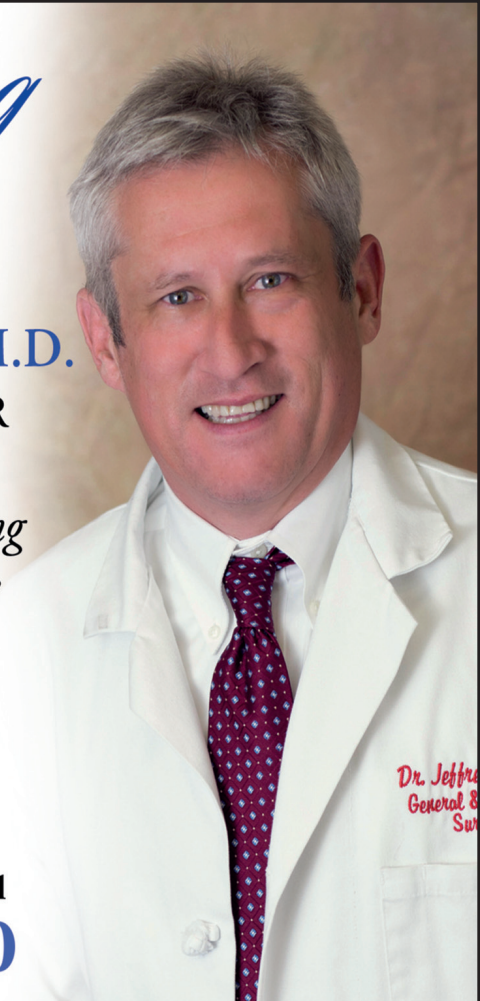
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Christmas Yard Sale at 3151 Hwy. 43, Phil Campbell, on Friday, Nov. 3 from 6 am-6 pm and Saturday, Nov. 4 from 6 am-noon. Lots of Christmas decorations (Christmas dishes, tablecloths, napkins, ornaments, snowmen, candles, etc.), porcelain dolls, plus-size ladies' clothing and much more! Weather permitting.

The 4th-6th grade kids class at Belgreen Baptist Church will have a yard sale on Saturday, Nov. 4 from 8 a.m.-noon to raise money for coats and non-perishable items for missions.

Big three-family yard sale this Friday & Saturday, Oct. 27-28, 807 Gaines Ave NW. Men's jeans, shirts, shorts, plus-size women's and children's clothes, misc. Come one, come all!

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House for rent to own in Russellville. 149 Wedgewood Drive. \$2,000 down. \$550 a month. Call 256-412-8333. (1)

House for sale in Colbert Heights. 2 BR, 1 BA. Lease to own. Call 256-263-8716. (5)

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# City of Russellville chosen to host CHAMPS event

John Pilati  
 Franklin Free Press

As one of only 31 cities nationwide to be part of the Cities Combating Hunger through Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs (CHAMPS), the city of Russellville was chosen as the Alabama location to host an event celebrating after-school meals.

The event was held last Tuesday at the Chucky Mullins Center. CHAMPS is operated through the National League of Cities and the Food Research Action Center. CHAMPS works with city leaders and agencies to find ways to grow participation in the federally funded after-school and summer meal programs.

The meal programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through state agencies in California, Alabama and Kansas, the only three states chosen to participate in CHAMPS. Russellville is one of 10 Alabama communities selected.

“Russellville has been a great CHAMPS example, and we are excited to be able to feature and highlight the city’s efforts to increase access to these vital nutritional and educational programs,” said Dawn Schluckebier with the National League of Cities.

Last Tuesday’s event was organized by the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department and director Chad Sears, along with Russellville City Schools Child Nutrition director Elaine Vaughn and Laura Lester from the Alabama Food Bank Association.

The event was designed to highlight the after-school meals program in Russellville and the link between student success and nutrition and to raise awareness in Russellville about the after-school meal program sites, which are the Ralph Bishop Community Center and the Mullins Center. Organizers also demonstrated Russellville’s work as a model for other cities in Alabama to replicate.

CHAMPS was established in 2010 with the federal Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act. Children can eat free meals at sites offering educational enrichment activities after school, during the weekends and on school holidays.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Pictured above are city of Russellville officials, along with representatives of the National League of Cities, at last Tuesday’s grand opening for the CHAMPS after-school meal program. The event was designed to highlight the after-school meals program in Russellville and the link between student success and nutrition.

The USDA also funds summer nutrition programs through the National Summer Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option and the Summer Food Service Program, where kids can eat for free at sites meeting the eligibility criteria for the program.

City leaders are encouraged to address issues of food insecurity and promote the availability of meal programs in their community. Russellville mayor David Grissom said there is a direct link between proper nutrition and student performance in the classroom.

“It’s important both at school and after school that our

children receive healthy, nutritionally balanced meals that allow them to achieve maximum performance in school,” Grissom said. “CHAMPS is an effective tool in seeing that kids in Russellville have access to nutritious meals after school as well.”

The after-school program offered by the City of Russellville is open to all children ages 6-18. For more information, contact Sears at 256-332-8770. The Mullins program is run by Leamon and Fredrick Mosley and the Bishop Center program by Carrie Dover and Jeff Studdard.



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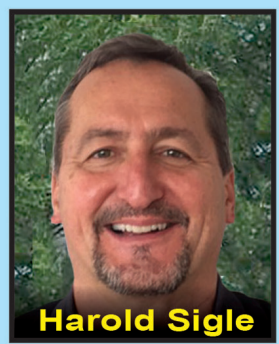
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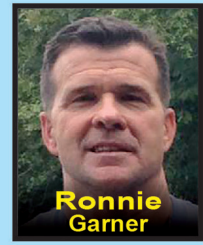
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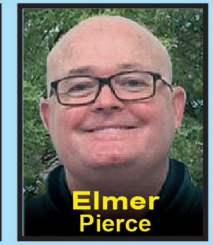
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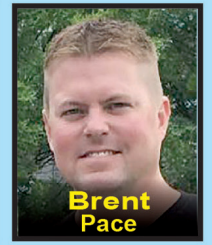
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## Week 9 in the SEC



**Mike Self**  
Sports Editor

Heading into the final Saturday of October, Alabama and Georgia remain on a collision course to meet in Atlanta on December 2 for the SEC title and a spot in the College Football Playoff. That game, should it materialize, could be just one piece of a fascinating conference championship weekend puzzle.

Consider the following scenarios:

- The winner of this Saturday's clash in Columbus between Penn State and Ohio State proceeds to win out through November and then faces unbeaten Wisconsin in the Big 10 title game. The winner of said title game earns a playoff spot.

- Oklahoma State and Oklahoma both survive this weekend's tests (at West Virginia for the Cowboys, versus Texas Tech for the Sooners), making next Saturday's Bedlam game in Stillwater a battle between two one-loss teams. The winner of said battle proceeds to win out through November and then faces unbeaten (or, perhaps, one-loss) TCU in the Big 12 title game. The Big 12 champ earns a playoff spot.

- The two winners of next Saturday's ACC showdowns between Clemson and N.C. State in Raleigh and Miami and Virginia Tech in Coral Gables both make it to the conference championship game with one loss. The winner of said conference championship game earns a playoff spot.

With apologies to the Pac-12 (where every team in the South already has at least two losses), four conference title matchups doubling as play-in games for the CFP would be terrific theatre. Will things unfold that way? Almost certainly not. [The team most likely to upset the apple cart is Notre Dame, which has games remaining with both N.C. State and Miami and is starting to look very much like a playoff contender in its own right.] It's still fun to ponder, though.

For now, let's focus on picking the Week 9 slate in the SEC.

**Last week's record: 4-0**

**Season record: 23-9**

**Saturday, October 28**

**Florida (4-3, 3-2 SEC) at Georgia (7-0, 4-0)**

If ever there was a year where Georgia should take Florida to the woodshed, this is it. [The Bulldogs opened as two-touchdown favorites.] Then again, we've thought that before.

**The Pick: Georgia 24 Florida 13**

**Tennessee (3-4, 0-4) at Kentucky (5-2, 2-2)**

Both of these teams lost 45-7 last week; only one of them was supposed to. For all that's gone wrong in Knoxville of late, Butch Jones has managed not to lose to Kentucky. Yet.

**The Pick: Kentucky 20 Tennessee 17**

**Arkansas (2-5, 0-4) at Ole Miss (3-4, 1-3)**

The Rebels just lost their starting quarterback; the Razorbacks could get theirs back this week. They could also get their first SEC win. Maybe.

**The Pick: Arkansas 28 Ole Miss 27**

**Miss. State (5-2, 2-2) at Texas A&M (5-2, 3-1)**

The winner earns a bowl bid and the unofficial title of fourth-best team in the West. The leaves have started to turn, which means it's time for the Aggies' annual fall swoon to begin in earnest.

**The Pick: Miss. State 35 Texas A&M 28**

# Still standing

A gut-check road win showed that the Golden Tigers still have plenty of fight left in them—not to mention a chance to earn a playoff spot

*Mike Self*  
*Franklin Free Press*

To hear Mark Heaton tell it, Russellville's gritty, gut-check, season-saving 17-13 win at East Limestone last Friday was simply the culmination of the hard work and persistence in the face of adversity that he's been seeing behind the scenes for weeks.

"I've tried to tell people how hard these guys have continued to work,"

**See 'STANDING,' page 14**

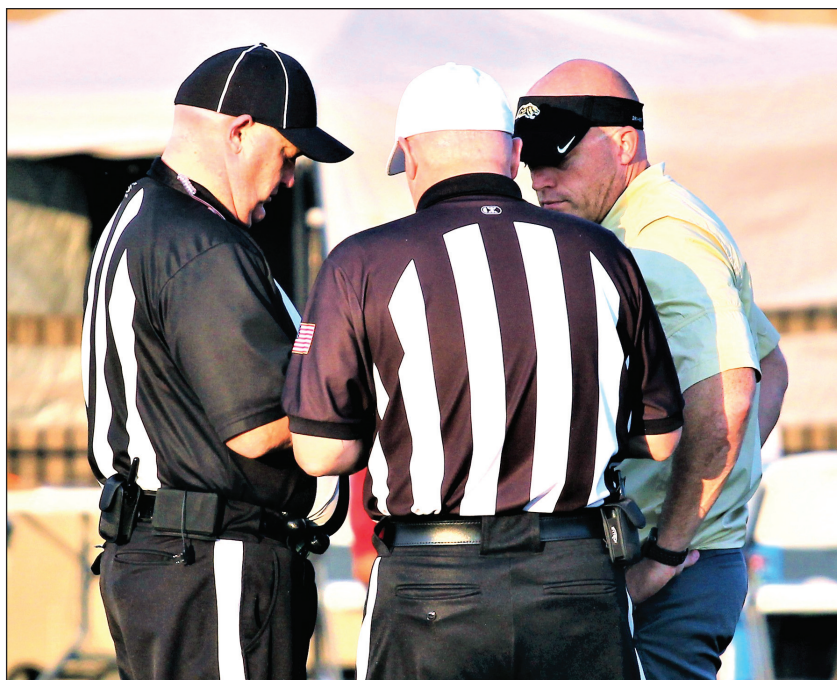


PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Heaton (far right) and the Golden Tigers face another must-win game on Friday against Ardmore.

## Dream season continues for 'Cats

*Mike Self*  
*Franklin Free Press*

Taylor Leathers is not opposed to doing a little scoreboard watching this time of year. What he absolutely will not do, though, is count his chickens. Not this time.

"If I learned anything last year in my first year as a head coach," Leathers said, "it's that you never say you're in until the final game has been played. Because things can change at the drop of a hat."

A year ago at this time, Leathers appeared to have Colbert Heights on the verge of ending a four-year playoff drought in his first season as head coach. All the Wildcats needed to do to punch their postseason ticket was beat a 1-7 East Lawrence team in their final regular season game. Instead, they came up an inch short of the marker on a critical fourth-down play in the fourth quarter and lost to the Eagles 30-24.

The stunning defeat proved doubly costly when West Morgan upset Lexington that same night, swiping the fourth and final playoff spot in Class 3A, Region 8 and leaving Colbert Heights out in the cold.

"I remember going into that locker room at East Lawrence and seeing a lot of eyes full of tears," Leathers said.

Under their head coach's guidance, the Wildcats turned that failure into fuel. Leathers had special wristbands made for each player bearing the slogan, "*Get That Inch*," and the 'Cats have spent this entire season taking a mile. After dominating the second half of last week's game at Lauderdale County to earn a hard-fought 28-13 win, Colbert Heights (8-1 overall, 5-1 in region play) now sits in a three-way tie with the Tigers and West Morgan atop the Region 8 standings.

The playoff drought will officially end on November 10, but now the Wildcats have a chance to win their

first region championship since 1999 or, at the very least, earn the right to host a first-round game. For either of those things to happen, they must first beat East Lawrence in the regular season finale on Friday at Amos Mitchell Stadium.

"We told our guys today, 'You've put yourself in a position to be in a three-way tie for the region,'" Leathers said on Sunday night. "I don't think we'll have any trouble finding the motivation to beat East Lawrence. That's the one that got us last year. We wear it on our wrist every day: 'Get That Inch.'"

**"East Lawrence was a 1-7 team last year, and they beat us," Leathers said. "Our guys are not gonna let that happen this year. We've come too far as a football team to not play well in this game."**

"East Lawrence was a 1-7 team last year, and they beat us. Our guys are not gonna let that happen this year. We've come too far as a football team to not play well in this game."

This time around the Eagles are 0-8 on the season and haven't scored a single point in October, getting outscored 105-0 by West Morgan, Lexington and Clements. If Colbert Heights can close the deal and finish 6-1 in region play (and 9-1 overall for the first time since 2007), then the scoreboard watching can begin in earnest.

West Morgan (8-1, 5-1) is most decidedly the favorite this time against Lexington (3-5, 3-3); should the Rebels win, both they and the Wildcats will turn their attention toward Leighton, where Colbert County (5-3, 4-2) will be playing host to Lauderdale County (5-3, 5-1). A win at home by the Indians would drop

**See 'DREAM,' page 18**



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### 'STANDING' from page 13

said Heaton, the Golden Tigers' fourth-year head coach. "But if you're not there, it's really tough to see their commitment and dedication. I thought those things really showed on Friday night. That's what I've been seeing the last seven weeks, watching those kids pour their heart out and lay themselves on the line every day.

"To see them rewarded for it was great."

Trailing 6-3 at halftime after a handful of missed opportunities on offense, Russellville (2-6, 2-4 in Class 5A, Region 8) rode some tough running by senior back Bernard Phinizee and some timely passing from freshman quarterback Luke Barnwell to a pair of clutch scoring drives in the third quarter. A new-look defense (featuring five down linemen instead of the usual three) took care of the rest, keeping the Indians (4-4, 3-3) off the scoreboard for the final 19-plus minutes of the game and holding them to just 203 total yards and seven first downs on the night.

The final result was a thoroughly satisfying win, one that not many people saw coming and one that suddenly has the Golden Tigers right back in the thick of the playoff chase.

"There was a lot of excitement in the locker room

when I got in there," Heaton said. "Our guys were still celebrating. This was big for us—not just to get a win, but to get one on the road against a quality opponent, and to get one that shakes up the playoff picture and puts pressure on some people. It was a big win. We needed it, and the kids deserved it, with the way they've continued to work through all of this.

**"That's what I've been seeing the last seven weeks," Heaton said, "watching those kids pour their heart out and lay themselves on the line every day. To see them rewarded for it was great."**

"To be 1-6, going on the road and playing a tough region opponent, and to come out with the win the way they did says a lot about them."

The Golden Tigers' lunch-pail, hard-hat approach to last Friday's game was embodied by Phinizee, a running back/receiver who made his debut the previous week as the team's Wildcat quarterback in a loss to Brooks. Taking direct snaps in the shotgun and running behind physical senior fullback Jeff Lloyd and a surging offensive line, Phinizee gashed the Lions for 56

yards on nine carries before suffering a stinger in the second quarter and exiting the game for good. He returned to action at East Limestone and was relentless in the Wildcat formation, grinding out a career-high 150 yards on 28 workmanlike carries.

"You're talking about a guy being kind of your bread and butter, your featured back," Heaton said. "Taking the direct snap, they know what's coming. We're a hundred percent run every time he's been back there. Our offensive staff has done a great job with formationing and getting numbers inside and outside the box the way we want them, and getting certain techniques the way we want them to give us an advantage. We've also been able to utilize some other guys to help us like Robert [Hamilton] and Logan [Jones] and some of those guys, because they're still a threat to run on the perimeter.

"The thing is, you've gotta stay in the game to be able to do a lot of that."

Thanks to a salty defensive effort (and a muffed punt by East Limestone that set up a 24-yard field goal from junior kicker Kenner Perez), the Golden Tigers were very much in the game at halftime. Heaton implored his players to do what they had done all season—keep

See 'STANDING,' page 15

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## 'STANDING' from page 14

fighting.

"I challenged them at halftime," he said. "We were down 6-3, and I went in there and told them, 'This is what we've been trying to do all year, keep a game close into the second half and into the fourth quarter.' We believe that if we go into the fourth quarter with it being a tight game, a one-possession game, we can win that game. That's what we've hung our hat on the last three years. We've won so many like that.

"So I challenged our guys at halftime. A lot of the issues we've had throughout the year, we've had guys who couldn't finish the game for one reason or another. A lot of times, there's not anything you can do about that. But I told them the other night, 'We need everybody to finish the second half.' Every player in there had to play those last two quarters to give us a chance to win. Even if they were banged up or bruised or turned an ankle or whatever, I challenged them to fight through that and give us everything they could for as long as they could. If we could accomplish that, I thought we had a great chance to win that game."

Russellville's defense set the tone, forcing the Indians to go three-and-out to open the third quarter. Phinizee then ripped off an 18-yard gain out of the Wildcat, one of five runs he had in the second half that went for at least 10 yards [he had no such runs in the first half]. Two plays later, Barnwell completed a 10-yard pass to Jones on third-and-three, setting up an 18-yard touchdown run by Phinizee that give the Golden Tigers a 10-6 lead with 7:40 left in the third.

Russellville was in the Wildcat formation on the majority of its 58 offensive plays, but Barnwell made the most of his opportunities. The freshman was money on third down, completing 6-of-9 passes for 82 yards; five of those completions went for first downs, and the other was a beautifully thrown ball to Jones on a corner route for a 13-yard touchdown to put the Golden Tigers in front to stay with 2:22 remaining in the third quarter.

"We had good balance," said Heaton, whose team finished with 155 yards rushing and 104 yards passing. "I thought Luke made some tremendous throws, and Logan Jones had two big third-down catches, one for a touchdown and one to extend a big drive for us. Those are pressure situations where our guys are starting to make plays.

"Having Bernard running those different sets and taking the direct snaps has taken some added pressure off Luke. He's not having to throw it as much, and that's helped him eliminate some errors that come with that. It's tough on a ninth-grader who's trying to throw it twenty-five or thirty times a game and trying to win it that way."

After Phinizee's touchdown run early in the third quarter gave the Golden Tigers their first lead, East Limestone quarterback Andrew Parris answered with a 60-yard sprint down the right sideline to put the Indians back in front 13-10. Barnwell extended Russellville's ensuing drive with a 13-yard completion to senior receiver Calen Bragwell on third-and-six and then dropped the dime to Jones in the end zone a few plays later to make it 17-13.

Barnwell made one more critical third-down throw, a 12-yarder to fellow freshman Rowe Gallagher on a clock-killing drive in the fourth quarter, and finished the night 9-for-16 for 104 yards. He went over the 1,000-yard passing mark for the season and has completed 60 percent of his attempts with seven touchdowns and eight interceptions—solid numbers for a freshman playing his first season of varsity football at the 5A level.

**"Our offensive line did a tremendous job," Heaton said. "They just mauled East Limestone on that last drive. Our guys gutted it out. Almost our entire O-line was playing both ways, with the exception of our two guards. We had several skill guys playing both ways. As physical a game as it was, we still needed them to do that, and they didn't shy away from it."**

"Luke knows what he's doing," Heaton said. "He practices hard. He watches film. Coach Voss [Brett, the team's offensive coordinator] gives him a script with notes on every play, and Luke studies that. He looks at film and tries to get better.

"A lot of those situational throws on third down are very detail-oriented and well planned. He knows exactly where he's gonna go with the ball most of the time. We try to take out some of the reads for him and set him up where he knows the coverage and knows where he's going with the ball. His preparation is a big part of that."

Phinizee was a beast in the second half, rushing 16 times for 123 yards—including six carries for 49 yards on the Golden Tigers' final possession of the night that ate up a large chunk of the fourth quarter and left East Limestone with virtually no time to mount a desperation, length-of-the-field drive.

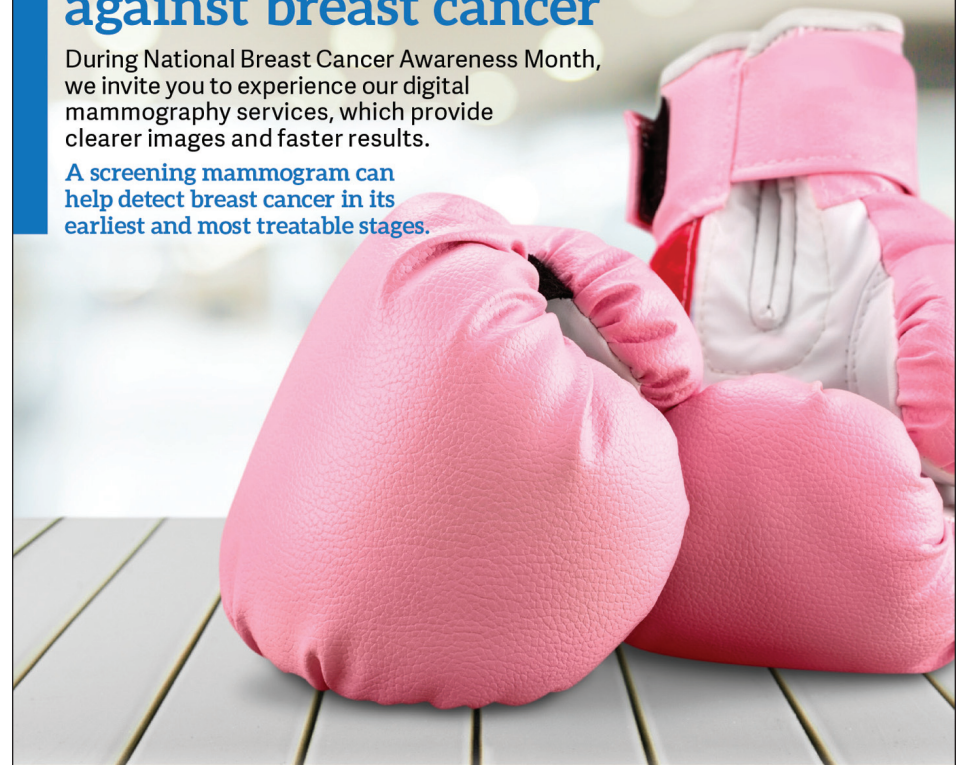
"Our offensive line did a tremendous job," Heaton said. "They just mauled East Limestone on that last drive. Our guys gutted it out. Almost our entire O-line was playing both ways, with the exception of our two guards. We had several skill guys playing both ways. As physical a game as it was, we still needed them to do that, and they didn't shy away from it."

Center John David Palmer and offensive tackles Will Rushing and John David Aycock all played significant snaps on the other side of the ball as well, teaming with regular defensive linemen Lloyd, Roman Cortez and Andres Tomas to help hold the Indians to just 95 rushing yards on 24 carries. Cortez had a sack and a tackle for a loss, and Aycock teamed with freshman linebacker Brooks Scott to take down Parris for a six-yard loss on the first play of East Limestone's final drive.

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There were plenty of playmakers in the secondary, too, with senior corner Kevin Partrich tackling Parris for a loss of 12 to wreck a third-quarter drive and Jones picking off a pass in the first half and breaking up another in the second.

"I thought our defensive staff had a great plan," Heaton said. "We felt good about our plan going into the game, and just from talking to our defensive staff after the game, they really bragged on the kids. They said, 'Hey, those kids did a good job executing the game plan.'

"That's the key to anything, really—special teams, offense, defense—those kids stepping up there and executing. That's what I'm thankful for. Our kids are so locked in right now. We talked about that pre-game, and they took it to heart and were locked in all night."

The Golden Tigers will most assuredly be locked in again for Friday's homecoming game against Ardmore (2-6, 1-5). A win by Russellville, along with losses by East Limestone at Brooks and Lawrence County (4-4, 3-3) at home to Jemison, would leave the Golden Tigers, Indians and Red Devils in a three-way tie for the fourth and final playoff seed in Region 8.

None of the three teams beat both of the other two [Lawrence County beat Russellville 25-6 and lost to East Limestone 16-6], so the tie-breaking procedures set forth by the AHSAA would take effect, and the total number of wins by each team's defeated non-region opponents would come into play. Long story short, the Golden Tigers are rooting for Colbert County to beat Lauderdale County in Leighton on Friday, which would give the Indians a sixth win heading into next Friday's regular season finale at Russellville. The Golden Tigers would absolutely have to win that game against Colbert County—and perhaps need some help in the form of West Point beating Lawrence County and maybe even Ardmore beating West Limestone—to earn a playoff spot for the 17th time in the last 18 years.

For now, though, Russellville's focus is entirely on Ardmore.

"We just have to control what we can," Heaton said Monday morning. "Our preparation for Friday night, we can control that. That's what we told our kids. There's so many different scenarios. We've gotta win this game, Brooks has gotta beat East Limestone, and Mae Jemison has gotta beat Lawrence County to force a three-way tie for fourth place. Then it comes down to the non-region games. So, for right now, our main focus is taking care of Ardmore and making sure we have a great week of preparation mentally and physically.

"Overall, Ardmore is very much improved. Offensively, they're more dynamic with what they do, and that's helped them. Defensively, at times they've played well and at times they've struggled. They're a lot like us in that way. I think for us to be able to control the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball will be big. If we can make them one-dimensional and force them to throw the football, and if we can continue to run the football on offense, we'll have a great opportunity to win the game."

# 'Humbled' Lady Bobcats eager to bounce back

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Craig Thomas has high standards for his Phil Campbell girls basketball program, so he's more than a little irked by a recent trend that has seen the Lady Bobcats go from 22 wins in his first season as head coach to 17 the following season to 14 last year—against 15 losses, no less.

That sub-.500 record was topic number one for Thomas last week when he addressed his players at Phil Campbell's first preseason practice.

"I told mine the first day of practice on Monday, 'Fourteen-and-fifteen is not acceptable for Phil Campbell basketball.' That was the quote I gave my girls," said Thomas, who has led the Lady Bobcats to a 53-33 record and two regional appearances in his three seasons at the helm. "That's not the way we play, and that's not how we're gonna play. We're gonna have to step it up this year. Like I told them, we're gonna have to practice harder."

In Phil Campbell's defense, Thomas's first team in 2014-15 was senior-heavy, his second team still made it to Hanceville despite the five-win drop-off, and last year's team faced the grind of an extremely tough schedule with a starting lineup comprised entirely of juniors and sophomores. Thomas, however, is not one to make excuses. He'd rather make progress—in a couple of areas in particular.

**"I think it grounded us a little bit," Thomas said of last year's 14-15 finish. "It was a humbling experience. That's a good way to put it. It made our girls realize that we need to work harder. They really buckled down and worked harder this summer."**

"We've gotta cut down on our turnovers this year," he said. "We've matured a little bit, and hopefully that maturity comes into effect there. We averaged way too many turnovers last season, way too many. Our main focus is to cut down on those and also to shoot a higher percentage. We didn't shoot a high percentage last year. We had several games where we shot in the twenty-percent range, and against good teams you can not get away with that."

Internal improvement from Phil Campbell's five returning starters should help in both areas—as should the arrival of 5'9 sophomore guard Kallie Allen, a Russellville

transfer.

Despite battling through injuries last season at RHS, Allen still led the Lady Golden Tigers in scoring (10.8 points per game), three-pointers made (25) and free throws made (71 in 114 attempts, a solid rate of 62 percent).

Allen's perimeter shooting is something the Lady Bobcats desperately need [Darby Elliott led them with 19 threes as a junior last season, and no other player made more than six], as is her ability to handle the ball against pressure and initiate the offense.

"She's gonna help us a ton," said Thomas, who now has the option of playing Allen at the point and moving Elliott [who averaged a career-high 12.9 points per game last year on 47-percent shooting] to the two-guard spot. "Kallie sees the floor so good at the point guard position. That's gonna take a little bit of weight off Darby, because she won't have to handle the ball so much and worry about breaking pressure. Darby penetrates so well and so quickly, she can drive and dish from the two. She can help us more there."

Elliott made major strides last year as a perimeter shooter, but Phil Campbell still saw more than its share of packed-in zone defenses. Allen, who made 53 threes over the past two seasons at Russellville (including five in her second game ever at the varsity level as an eighth-grader), should provide immediate relief in that area.

"She can light it up," Thomas said. "She sure can. We played a three-point game the other day at practice, and she won three out of five. I let winners stand and stay out there and keep shooting, and she won three out of the five games I put her out there."

"She's just a plus-plus. She's 5'8 or 5'9, and she can defend in the post or defend the point guard."

Defense is where the Lady Bobcats have forged their identity under Thomas, and he expects the athletic Allen to fit right in with their aggressive, pressure-oriented style. Elliott, who led the team with 92 steals last season, sets the tone in that regard, along with 5'11 junior post player Abby Davis (50 blocked shots, 32 steals a year ago). Wings Chloe Roberson (22 steals last season as a junior) and Dakota Elliott (27 steals last season as a sophomore) are active on the press, and senior post player Carley Nix is also a tough-minded defender.

"We've got a very athletic group this year," Thomas said. "We're gonna be a lot more athletic this year. Defensively, we should be quick enough to guard just about anybody. We've been working on it already, all last week—pressing, trapping, running the floor on offense."

"What's gonna help us this year is having four guards on the floor, with Abby as the fifth, and she can dribble as well as any of my four guards. We've got some girls who can rebound the ball and go coast to coast with it."

In Davis (15.2 points, 10.2 rebounds per game as a sophomore last season), Darby Elliott (five games of 20-plus points), Roberson (6.9 points, 4.4 rebounds per game), Dakota Elliott (6.4 points per game, 65 percent from the foul line), Nix (4.0 points, 4.6 rebounds per game) and now Allen, Thomas has six starter-caliber players at his disposal—and only five available spots. It's a dilemma he's more than happy to try and figure out.

"It's a good problem," he said. "This is the first time that I can remember in my four years here when I've actually had the problem of, 'Who's gonna start?' It's a good problem to have—as long as everybody can accept their roles."

"Everybody's got a role, and everybody's role is gonna change a little bit. All of our girls will have to learn to accept their roles."

The chemistry may take some time to come together, but motivation certainly shouldn't be an issue—not after last year's losing record and first-round exit from the area tournament.

"I think it grounded us a little bit," Thomas said. "It was a humbling experience. That's a good way to put it. It made our girls realize that we need to work harder. They really buckled down and worked harder this summer."

As for Thomas's standards for success, they haven't changed. The landscape of girls basketball in Franklin County and in Class 2A, Area 14, however, has changed quite a bit—due largely to the retirement of Hall of Fame coach Donnie Roberts and the departure of perennial All-State players Allie Kennedy and Darby Madden at rival Red Bay.

Thomas would like nothing more than to see his team ascend to the top of the mountain.

"We're always expecting to win twenty-plus games—always," he said. "We'd love to host the area tournament this year for the first time in forever. We're looking to break that county championship drought, too. That's our goal. It's probably been twenty years since we won it. Getting back to Hanceville is in the picture, too. We've just gotta hold it together."

Phil Campbell will open its season at home against Phillips on Tuesday, November 14.



Darby Elliott is one of five returning starters for Phil Campbell.

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# 'DREAM' from page 13

Lauderdale County to the third seed and leave Colbert Heights and West Morgan tied for first; by virtue of their 45-25 win over the Wildcats in Trinity on September 15, the Rebels would claim the region title, and Colbert Heights would be the No. 2 seed.

But if Lauderdale County wins in Leighton on Friday (and if West Morgan and Colbert Heights both take care of business), then all three teams would finish tied atop the region at 6-1. Since none of the three teams beat both of the other two (West Morgan lost to Lauderdale County 21-15 on a last-play touchdown in Week 3), then seeding would be determined by the tie-breaking procedures set forth by the AHSAA.

"It can get complicated," Leathers said on Sunday.

Once the chickens can be safely counted, it will be time to start counting wins—as in the total number of wins by each team's defeated non-region opponents. Colbert Heights beat Red Bay, Phil Campbell and Sheffield in non-region play; heading into this week, those three teams have combined for seven wins. Red Bay and Phil Campbell play each other on Friday, which will bump the total number of wins by the Wildcats' defeated non-region opponents to eight. Red Bay then closes the season with a home game against Cherokee on Thursday, November 2, and Phil Campbell will wrap up its season the same night at home against Hackleburg.

Sheffield, meanwhile, has just one game remaining, on the road against 1-7 R.A. Hubbard on November 2. Needless to say, Colbert Heights will be pulling hard for the Bulldogs, the Bobcats and the Tigers on that Thursday night.

Lauderdale County hasn't won a non-region game yet, losing to unbeaten Rogers and unbeaten Wilson, and closes the regular season with a tough game at Class 5A Brooks on November 3. Odds are good that Lauderdale County will finish the season 0-3 in non-region play. West Morgan, meanwhile, has beaten St. John Paul II, Priceville and Cherokee in non-region play; those three teams have combined for seven wins on the year—the same number as Colbert Heights' three defeated non-region opponents. St. John Paul (0-8) closes the season with games against Lee and Clements and will finish with, at most, one win. Priceville (1-7) has games left at Danville and at Westminster Christian; the Bulldogs have more than likely won the only game they're going to win.

That leaves Cherokee (6-2), which will host Waterloo this week and then travel to Red Bay next week. A lot of eyes and ears in Trinity and Tusculumbia will undoubtedly be turned toward Red Bay's Fred Bostick Memorial Stadium on November 2.

All of this amounts to a clear lesson in the value of winning non-region games.

"You think when you play those games that they're not gonna have any bearing on

the playoffs or anything like that," Leathers said. "But you never know. All of our non-region games are with teams who have been on our schedule for a while. We've played them for a long time. We always approach it with the attitude that we want to win every game we play. We prepare the same for a non-region game as we do for a region game, and our goal is to play those games with the same intensity.

"Other teams could make the case that their non-region games are more difficult. Lauderdale County's two non-region opponents so far [Rogers and Wilson] are a combined 16-0, and they've still got Brooks. But we don't make the rules, and we don't set the rules. We just try and win every game we play."

The Wildcats have darn near pulled that off this year, but the last two have been special. They followed up a 35-7 spanking of Colbert County (their first home win over the rival Indians in 37 years) with last week's impressive win in Rogersville. Trailing 13-7 at the half, Colbert Heights out-scored Lauderdale County 21-0 in the second half and finished the night with 255 rushing yards to the Tigers' 88.

Afterwards, LCHS coach Jeff Mason told the *TimesDaily* that the Wildcats had "out-physicaled" his team.

"I've been coaching against Lauderdale County for several years," Leathers said, "and we have a ton of respect for their program and the way they play. They're one of the most physical, hard-nosed football teams in north Alabama. I've told our guys many times, the greatest compliment a coach can give us is to say that we out-physicaled his team or that we matched their physicality. To hear that from Coach Mason was a huge compliment for our guys.

"Lauderdale County is a team that likes to come off the ball hard and low and smash you. To see our guys go knee-to-knee and toe-to-toe with them was really encouraging. This game was evidence that our guys have really embraced the brand of football and the style of football that we like to play."

The Wildcat offensive line led the way last Friday, clearing the way for fullback Dylan Chandler to rush for 151 yards and two touchdowns on 23 carries. Quarterback Kevin Shaw added 106 yards and two scores on 15 rushing attempts, and linebacker Korey Saint (nine solo tackles) and end Bud Pratt (seven total tackles, two for loss) led another stalwart defensive effort. All four players belong to an 18-member senior class that will be honored on Senior Night against East Lawrence.

"This is a really special group of young men," Leathers said. "They've accomplished so much this season, and I couldn't be more proud of them. As coaches, we like to take credit sometimes, and players do, too, but all the glory goes to God. He has blessed us so much this season. I try, and we try, to do things the right way, and by doing that I believe we honor the Lord. He has blessed us so much this season, and not just on the football field."

Leathers is a self-described "slogan guy," and with the Wildcats' first postseason appearance in six years rapidly approaching, he broke out a new one this week: *'Only the strong see the smoke.'*

"When you're out on the field playing a game in November with frost on the ground and you can see the smoke coming out of your mouth when you breathe that cold night air, that's a special thing," he said. "These seniors have never experienced playing past that last game. We've had a great season, but we're not done yet."

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## Dylan Chandler

Senior FB/LB, Colbert Heights



Chandler helped the Wildcats stay in the hunt for a region title with a huge performance on both sides of the ball at Lauderdale County last week.

On offense, the 6'2, 180-pound senior rushed 23 times for 151 yards and two TDs, including a 65-yarder, in the 28-13 win. He added two catches for 24 yards. Defensively, Chandler tied for the team lead with 10 tackles, including two for a loss.

For the season, Chandler leads the 8-1 Wildcats with 16 rushing touchdowns and 73 total tackles, including 10 behind the line of scrimmage.



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Submit your picks to us each week in one of two ways: Fill out the entry form on this page and mail it to us at 113 Washington Ave. NW, Russellville, AL 35653, or email your picks to us along with your name and phone number at franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. Picks sent in by mail for Week 9 must be postmarked by Friday, October 27, and picks submitted by email for Week 9 must be received by Saturday, October 28 at 10 a.m. Each week, the contestant who correctly picks the most games will win a free T-shirt and the chance to pick in the grand-prize final-week contest. If multiple contestants correctly pick the same number of games in a given week, the tiebreaker score will be used to determine a winner. Contestants are only eligible to win the weekly contest once.

Congratulations to Week 8 winner CAROL HARBIN, who correctly picked all 10 games and also picked Alabama to beat Tennessee 48-10!

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