

See Page 3 for a review of the general fund budget for Franklin County for the fiscal year 2017-18.

A local church has joined with Big Star Supermarket to help serve needy families during this holiday season.



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VFW honorees exemplify leadership

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The two recipients of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5184's annual law enforcement and firefighter of the year awards both exemplify leadership within a young department, and that hasn't gone unnoticed by their chiefs.

Russellville Police Department lieutenant Scotty Lowery was named the J. Edgar Hoover Gold Medal Award honoree for Post 5184 at a ceremony held Sunday afternoon following the annual Russellville Veterans Day Parade.

Russellville Fire Department lieutenant Johnathon Pace was honored as Post 5184's nominee for the Emergency Services Gold Medal Award for the outstanding local firefighter of the year.

Lowery has 24 years' experience with RPD, where he has served as a patrolman, investigations sergeant, investigations lieutenant, criminal and narcotics investigator and senior patrol lieutenant. After years of working in the RPD investigative division, Lowery recently returned to the streets as a senior patrol lieutenant. RPD



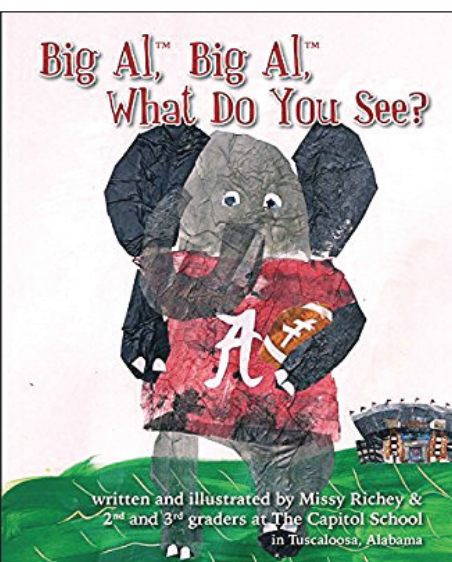
PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville Police Department lieutenant Scotty Lowery (right) was named the J. Edgar Hoover Gold Medal Award honoree for Post 5184 at a ceremony held Sunday afternoon following the annual Russellville Veterans Day Parade.

See 'VFW,' Page 9

Former RCS teacher pens 'Big Al' book

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press



He won't be bringing coach Nick Saban along, but Big Al will visit Russellville this Friday, November 10, along with former Russellville City Schools teacher Missy Richey, who has penned a new book, *Big Al, Big Al, What Do You See?*

The children's picture book was published in April of 2017 and tells about all Big Al sees during an Alabama football game. Richey, a former kindergarten teacher at West Elementary School, now teaches at the Capital School in Tuscaloosa. Second- and third-graders at the school helped with the book's illustrations.

Richey's book came out in April.

Richey will have books for sale Friday evening at the Russellville Public Library, 110 Lawrence Street East, from 6-8 p.m. Children can meet Big Al during their visit to the library, and tailgate-style refreshments will be served.

Children under age 18 can sign up for a drawing where a football autographed by Saban will be given away. The football was donated by Nick and Terry Saban's foundation, Nick's Kids.

The book actually began as a project for Richey's students, who were assigned to write their own stories about Big Al. Last year, those 26 students visited the Paul W. Bryant Museum to read their stories. Each

See 'BOOK,' Page 8

Have an opinion?
Story idea?



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Joe Borden, Russellville, age 77
Died Saturday, November 4, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Ethellean Flannigan, Russellville, age 73
Died Tuesday, October 31, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Old Bethel Cemetery in the Wiley Branch area of Bear Creek.

Leslie Hill Fuller, Phil Campbell, age 46
Died Friday, November 3, 2017. Funeral will be held Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 3 p.m. at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment will be in Mountain View Baptist Church in Phil Campbell.

Carol Eugene Martin, Russellville, age 65
Died Sunday, October 29, 2017. The family was planning to hold a memorial service at a later date.

Harold R. Montgomery, Northport, AL (formerly of Russellville), age 73
Died Monday, October 30, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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THS financial investigation ends; no charges filed

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

An investigation into use of a Tharptown High School credit card ended last Thursday after a Franklin County grand jury failed to issue an indictment.

Franklin County district attorney Joey Rushing confirmed last Friday morning that a grand jury heard evidence regarding the investigation and decided there was insufficient evidence to indict any individuals.

"The Alabama Bureau of Investigation's financial investigation into Tharptown High School has been concluded with no charges against any individual after presentation to a Franklin County grand jury this week," Rushing said.

The investigation involved use of a school-issued credit card by THS assistant principal Jonathan Odom. No charges were ever filed against Odom, and (through his attorney, Tim Case of Florence) Odom denied any wrongdoing and cooperated fully with law enforcement officials in the investigation.

"My representation of Mr. Odom was to assist him in fully cooperating with and making him available to officials," Case said. "This was not because he was worried about anything he might have been accused of, but to help him through the process and get him cleared."

The investigation began last spring after a financial audit of Franklin County Schools and when school officials were contacted by a local bank about checks presented on the Tharptown account with insufficient funds.

Rushing said the ABI was contacted and that agency began an investigation that, in part, looked at certain credit card charges made by Odom on the school card.

"With a case like that involving local schools, we get an outside agency involved in a sensitive matter like this," Rushing said. "I do think they did a thorough investigation and all facts were looked into, and they did a good job in getting everything presented to our office and the process was fair to everybody."

Rushing declined to address specific factual questions about the investigation due to the fact that the matter was no-billed by a grand jury and the case is now considered closed.

Franklin County district attorney Joey Rushing confirmed last Friday morning that a grand jury heard evidence regarding the investigation and decided there was insufficient evidence to indict any individuals.

Alabama law calls for a grand jury to consist of 18 citizens, 12 of whom must find probable cause that a crime was committed after presentation to the grand jury in order to issue an indictment. Barring some new information, Rushing said the matter is legally concluded.

"This case is considered closed unless the investigating agency brings new evidence or additional evidence to our information that would warrant a new investigation," Rushing said.

Case said neither he nor his client were ever "formally notified of the accusations" against Odom. Case said a search warrant was executed on Odom's home as part of the investigation and that his client cooperated fully in that process as well.

"I don't want to comment on specifics," Case said. "It was explained to the grand jury. We just went in there and said here we are and here are our records."

According to Tharptown's school website, Odom

began coaching and teaching at the school in 2006. He previously coached basketball and track at the school before being named assistant principal.

Case confirmed that his client testified before the grand jury, something he doesn't usually recommend to his clients.

"I've only done that six or seven times, and never before in Franklin County," Case said. "But [Odom] had nothing to hide and we were showing our full cooperation, and apparently the grand jury agreed and he was cleared of everything with no charges filed."

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton confirmed Friday that he had been notified by Rushing that the case, after presentation to a grand jury, was no-billed. Hamilton declined to say whether any further action would be taken by the school system regarding the allegations.

"It's a personnel matter, and I can't comment much on it," Hamilton said last Friday. "I was notified today by Joey Rushing that the ABI investigation into Tharptown School was resolved. That's about all I can say."

Rushing declined to say whether any school officials other than Odom testified before the grand jury.

"I just can't go into who testified," Rushing said. "The ABI handled the case, and they were the ones involved in interviewing and doing the investigative work on the case."

Case said his client was pleased to have the matter behind him.

"From getting to know Jonathan through this, I've learned he has a great reputation and passion for being a school administrator, teacher and coach," Case said, "and that's what he's going to continue to do."

Franklin County budget sees lion's share for salaries

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A review of the general fund budget for Franklin County for the fiscal year 2017-18 shows total revenue of \$5,215,779.83 and total expenditures of \$6,561,347.18.

That leaves a shortfall of \$1,345,567.35 that will be made up by operating transfer from the following sources: Public Highway and Traffic Fund \$40,000; Public Building Fund \$880,000; Capital Improvement Fund \$100,000 and the 2013 Capital Project Fund ATRIP \$202,001.14.

The budget also reflects an operating transfer out of the general fund into the 2015 PBA Jail Warrants Fund in the amount of \$284,701.26, leaving a shortfall of \$284,701.26 that will be made up by the fund balance brought forward from the previous fiscal year in the amount of \$750,000.

If all line items don't change, that will result in the county having a general fund ending balance of \$341,732.53 as of September 30, 2018, the end of the fiscal year.

The *Franklin Free Press* obtained a copy of the 2017-2018 general fund budget, and the expenditures by department are outlined below. The budget for the Franklin County Solid Waste Department and the Franklin County Highway Department are not part of the general fund budget, but the budget for the Franklin County Sheriff's Department is

included.

•COUNTY COMMISSIONER: Total expenditures of \$353,750.09 include \$213,998.08 in salaries and wages. As with most departmental budgets, salaries and wages comprise the largest share of the budget. That figure does not include overtime, retirement, health and life insurance and Social Security costs for the employees.

Outside of labor-related costs, the largest expense is \$15,000 for accounting and auditing services.

•COURTS—JUDGES: \$3,500 is allocated from the general fund budget for these expenses.

•CIRCUIT CLERK: \$2,800 for telephone expenses for this office is the lone general fund expense in this office.

•COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS: The \$205,798.18 budget goes completely to salaries, wages, retirement, insurance, Social Security, worker's compensation and unemployment compensation.

•DISTRICT ATTORNEY: The only general fund expense for this state office is \$3,000 for telephone expenses.

•COURT REPORTER: The general fund budget includes \$2,400 for a fixed expense allowance, \$2,552 for salaries and wages and Social Security for a total expense of \$4,952.

•PROBATE JUDGE'S OFFICE: This office has a total general fund budget of \$334,352.03 that includes \$125,945.93 for the probate judge's

salary.

•REVENUE COMMISSIONER: Of the \$499,270.92 budgeted for this office, \$67,675 is for the revenue commissioner salary and an additional \$93,207.70 for supernumerary salaries for previous office holders.

•ELECTIONS: \$133,815.29 is allocated for elections, including \$11,000 for absentee manager expense and \$21,250 for election workers' fees.

•BOARD OF REGISTRARS: This office has a general fund budget of \$61,873.62, which includes \$3,240 for a fixed expense allowance and an additional \$51,840 for other salaries and wages.

•TAX EQUALIZATION BOARD: There is \$1,000 allocated for salaries for this office.

•VETERANS ADMINISTRATION: The \$3,250 allocated for this office goes for internet service and telephone expenses.

•FRANKLIN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: There is \$77,830.34 budgeted for this office charged with promoting industrial development in Franklin County. \$60,000 of this amount is applied to salaries and wages.

•TECHNOLOGY: The general fund provides \$33,586.57 for technology, again most going to salaries and wages (\$21,028.80).

•COURTHOUSE OPERATING EXPENSES: There are \$207,122.13 budgeted for these expenses, including \$68,409.20 for salaries and

Honey Do: To leave, or not to leave? That is the question....

Aren't they beautiful?

One of the most beautiful times of the year in our area is when the leaves change color and, of course, fall to the ground. It's nature's annual process of removing the old and recycling matter back into the ground to secure the promise of new life in the spring.

Even though it is a natural process, we humans can't stand for our lawns and yards to be littered with these discarded tree parts.

If you really want a clean yard, invest in a mower with a bagger system. This will chop up the leaves as it picks them up, and you can dump the leaves by the street for city pick-up.

So, what do we do with all these leaves? Do we leave them alone or haul them away?

There really are several options for removing leaves, including burning, raking and mulching. If you live in the city, burning is not a very neighborly option—especially on these mild days when folks may have their windows open. Consider raking them up and piling them by the street. The city is out every day

with their leaf collection truck, and they will vacuum them up and haul them away. Pile them in such a way that they won't blow into the street or hinder traffic.

If you really want a clean yard, invest in a mower with a bagger system. This will chop up the leaves as it picks them up, and you can dump the leaves by the street for city pick-up.

How about being more environmentally conscious and letting nature take its course? You can rake the leaves up and allow them to rot and decay in garden areas where they become great mulch that will enrich the dirt. Over the winter, mix in food waste and coffee grounds, and soon you will have a very nice start to a mulch pile. In the process you will also be creating a small eco-system where lots of beneficial small animals and insects can thrive.

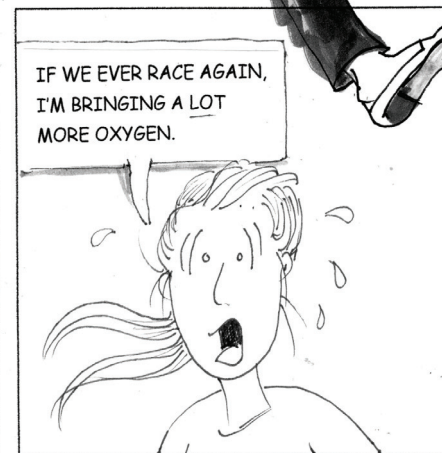
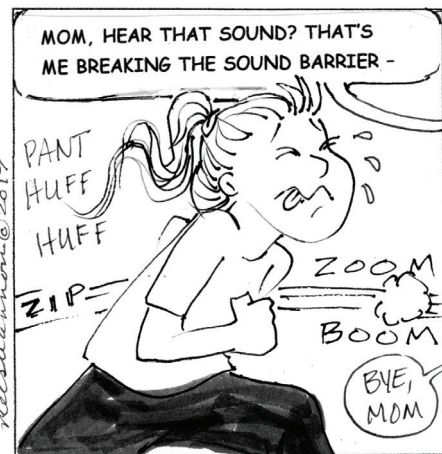
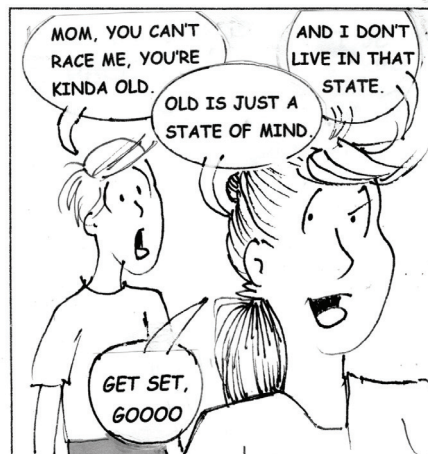
Another way to handle this problem is to leave the leaves laying, or



Doug Green

See 'LEAVE,' Page 10

OUR ^{OLD} HOUSE By: Ree SHANNON



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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The Franklin Free Press strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

The Franklin Free Press is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The Franklin Free Press reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

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Tips for driving more safely in the dark

Driving at night is tough!!!

With the time change and driving home with it getting dark earlier, I was talking to my husband, Johnny Mack, about how tremendous a problem night driving is. I don't care how good you can see (either with God-given sight, eyeglasses or contact lenses), it's tough!

There are a few tips that hopefully will make your drives in the dark safer.

Never look directly at an oncoming vehicle regardless of the type of headlights it has. If an oncoming vehicle's headlights seem too bright, or if the driver does not dim their high beams, ease off the gas, try not to look directly at the car's lights and maintain your position in your travel lane until the offending vehicle passes.

First, never look directly at an oncoming vehicle regardless of the type of headlights it has. If an oncoming vehicle's headlights seem too bright, or if the driver does not dim their high beams, ease off the gas, try not to look directly at the car's lights and maintain your position in your travel lane until the offending vehicle passes.

Secondly, keep your windshield clean. Dirt, streaks or fogged windshields can cause glare-reducing visibility.

Thirdly, adjust your lights. Use high beams when appropriate, but not in fog! Keep inside lights to a minimum. This reduces light you are not looking toward. Be considerate of others by dimming your high beam when there are oncoming cars or if you are behind a vehicle.

Also, slow down! Of course, obey traffic speed signs but also drive only as fast as you are able to bring your vehicle to a complete stop within the illumination of your headlights. Conditions of the road most definitely need to be considered, such as rain, snow or ice.

Remember to blink! Increased concentration can reduce blink rate which can cause (or make worse) dry eyes. This causes more glare! Aim air vents away from your face, as this dries out the eyes excessively.

There are many causes of glare, which we will discuss at a future article, but if glare is an issue for you, anti-reflective lenses are beneficial.

Please be safe driving!



Dr. Martha Morrow

Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!



by Dave Ramsey

Touching their hearts

Dear Dave,
What are some ways to teach pre-teens the value of giving versus getting during the holiday season?

Phil

Dear Phil,
As a parent, one of the best things you can do is be a living, breathing example of the importance of giving and caring about others. There's nothing wrong with having some stuff, but many of today's marketing messages can lead kids to believe it's all about *them*. And the sad truth is advertising firms are often more aggressive with *their* teaching than parents are in theirs.

I would encourage you to find giving experiences in which you can participate as a family. Volunteering for a day at a homeless shelter is a wonderful example of giving that requires absolutely no money. Or maybe you could pull out your wallet and spend the day shopping for groceries and Christmas gifts for families who are financially less fortunate.

Make sure your kids are involved physically, mentally and emotionally in the entire giving process. Let them experience the grateful, and

sometimes ungrateful, responses that go along with giving. With a little thought and planning, you can create some incredible teaching and family bonding experiences that will change everyone's lives forever!

Dave

Trust is trust

Dear Dave,
I have a medical condition, and I finally got an appointment with a specialist I'd like to see. The office requires credit card, debit card or bank account information be kept on file. Having this kind of information out there with them makes me uncomfortable, but I really want to see this doctor. What should I do?

Chelsey

Dear Chelsey,
If you're uncomfortable with this practice having your financial information, then you should also be uncomfortable with any medical opinions they would render. If you don't feel they're trustworthy enough to professionally handle something like a debit card or bank account number, then they're not trustworthy enough to treat you—period.

I hope that wasn't unclear.

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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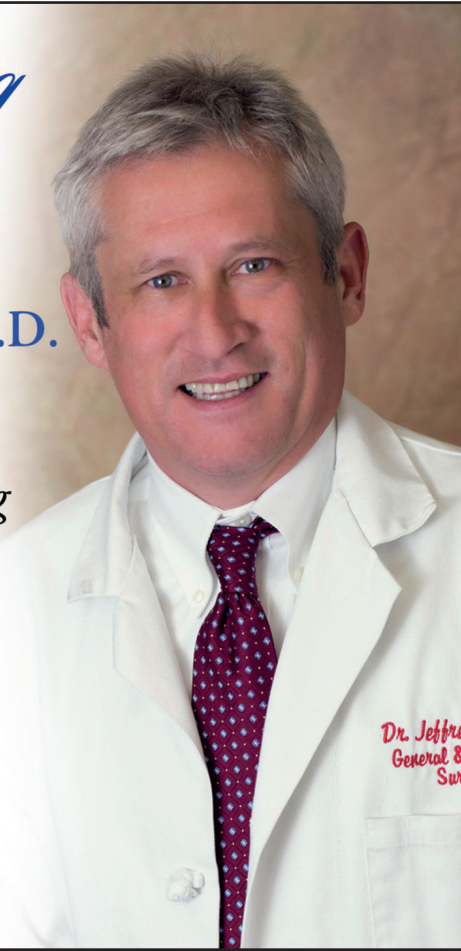
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What's Happening


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


 **R**ussellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling hams for Thanksgiving. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Wednesday, November 22 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.


 **R**ussellville High School invites all veterans, service men and women, and their families to attend its upcoming Veterans Day Salute this Thursday, November 9 at 8:30 a.m. in the RHS Auditorium.


 **E**ast Franklin Junior High School will hold its annual Veterans Day Program on Thursday, November 9 at 8:30 a.m. at the school. Veterans and their families are invited.


 **R**ed Bay High School will host a Veterans Day Program this Thursday, November 9 at 1 p.m. in the Red Bay High School Gym. All veterans, their families and the public are invited to attend.


 **A**merican 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, November 9.


 **T**he Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay will present its first production of the 2017-2018 season, *In-Laws, Outlaws and other People (That Should Be Shot)*, by Steve Franco, on November 9-12 at Community Spirit Bank's Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. Thursday-Saturday shows at 7 p.m., Sunday show at 2 p.m. Tickets are on sale now and are \$8.00 each. Go by or call the Weatherford Centre from 2-4 p.m. weekdays to purchase or reserve your tickets, or call 256-356-9829. Call Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286 for group sales.


 **G**od Cares For You Worship Center (located behind the A.W. Todd Center in downtown Russellville) will have a gospel singing with Jeff and Sherry Easter this Saturday, November 11 at 6 p.m. You are invited each week to attend Sunday School at 10 a.m., Sunday worship services at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., and Wednesday night service at 7 p.m.


 **T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests NMBR11 at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, November 11 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.


 **D**uncan Creek Baptist Church is celebrating 150 years of serving the spiritual needs of their community and Franklin County. Where: Duncan Creek Baptist Church, 3925 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville, AL 35653. When: This Sunday, November 12 at 10:30 a.m. We will have guest speakers Rev. Harley Hollingsworth, Rev. Larry Dover and our Pastor Rev. Joe Thorn. Also, special music. Followed by refreshments in the fellowship hall. All friends and family of Duncan Creek Baptist Church are invited! Come and help us celebrate!


 **S**amaritan's Purse (Operation Christmas Child) shoeboxes are being collected November 13-20. Go online to samaritanpurse.org/occ to find drop-off locations, hours of operation and suggestions for packing a shoebox. Deadline is Monday, November 20 at noon. Anyone interested in volunteering should stop by any of the drop-off locations during hours of operation; all help is welcomed!


 **T**he Spruce Pine Historical Society will be having Craft Night on the third Thursday of each month at the Spruce Pine Community Center at 6:30 p.m. For more information, please call Kim at 256-436-3992.


 **G**entiva Hospice offers a grief support group, "Grieving Well Together," that meets the third Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Lenox room at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. Next meeting will be Thursday, November 16. You are invited to attend.

 **M**ountain Top Homemakers will hold their annual Bazaar on Saturday, November 18 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at New Hope Methodist Church, located on Hwy. 81 in the Oak Grove community. All money goes to charity, such as local fire departments, police departments, St. Jude's, the Shriners, and hospice needs and nursing home needs for local residents. Decorative towels, pictures, wreaths, lots of assortments of Christmas gifts. Come see us!

 **T**he Reedtown Back to Basics Life Skills Center will sponsor a free fellowship Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday, November 19 from 2-4 p.m. at the Chucky Mullins Center on Hamilton Street in Russellville. All are welcome!

 **T**he Roxy's *Legend of Toyland*, a much-loved musical written and directed by Lanny McAlister, will premiere at the historic Roxy Theatre on November 29 and run through December 3, with 12 performances. Tickets will be sold the second Saturday of each month prior to the Kerry Gilbert Band and Guests Show at the Roxy. For updates on events and ticket sales, visit the Facebook page, The Legend of Toyland.

 **T**OPS (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.

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

A public notice from the Russellville Gas Board

RUSSELLVILLE GAS BOARD
1296 Walnut Gate Road
Russellville, AL 35654

The Russellville Gas Board is required by Federal Law to implement and maintain a Damage Prevention Program and a Public Awareness Program. The following information is provided in compliance with those requirements.

I. Damage Prevention Program

- A. The Russellville Gas Board (RGB) is to notify parties who periodically excavate in areas where RGB's natural gas lines are located and to inform those parties to request that RGB's natural gas lines be located. Requests for line locations may be made by calling Alabama Line Location Center at 1-800-292-8525 or the Russellville Gas Board at 1-256-332-2020. A 48 hour notice is required.

II. Public Awareness Program

- A. Natural gas has no odor, therefore, in order to identify possible leaks, the Russellville Gas Board (RGB) adds a foul smelling substance to natural gas. If you detect a foul smell near appliances, apparatus, equipment or at any other location near natural gas lines call the RGB at 1-256-332-3850 or after hours at 1-256-332-2230. If the odor is strong, proceed as follows.
- 1) Leave the structure.
 - 2) Do not flip light switches.
 - 3) Do not use electrical equipment.
 - 4) Do not create a spark or flame.
 - 5) Notify the RGB.
- B. Repairs or alterations to any natural gas facility should be performed by a licensed and bonded pipefitter.
- C. It is unlawful to attempt to repair or alter natural gas pipelines or facilities owned by RGB.
- D. The RGB's natural gas pipelines are located underground throughout the area of service. In order for the public to identify the approximate location of underground pipelines, the RGB incorporates the following measures:
- 1) Bright yellow markers identify the existence of underground natural gas pipelines.
 - 2) Above ground facilities are painted silver. Fences have signs attached identifying RGB facilities.
 - 3) An on-site location of natural gas pipelines is available by calling Alabama Line Location Center at 1-800-292-8525 or the RGB at 1-256-332-2020.
 - 4) Detail maps are available at the RGB office located at 1296 Walnut Gate Road, Russellville, AL, 35654.
- E. In the event of damage to RGB's natural gas facilities the affected public should leave the area and the party causing the damage should:
- 1) Leave the equipment and premises immediately.
 - 2) Do not create a spark or flame.
 - 3) Notify the RGB immediately.

Natural gas is a safe and reliable form of energy. By implementing the Damage Prevention Program and Public Awareness Program, the Russellville Gas Board is committed to ensuring that it stays that way.

Russellville Gas Board

La Comisión de Gas de Russellville
1296 Walnut Gate Road
Russellville, AL 35654

La Comisión de Gas de Russellville por requerimiento de la ley Federal tiene que implementar y mantener un Programa de Prevención de Daños y un Programa de Conciencia Pública. La siguiente información va de acuerdo a dichos requerimientos.

I. Programa de Prevención de Daños

- A. La Comisión de Gas de Russellville (RGB) deberá notificar a las partes que periódicamente excavan en áreas en que la RGB tiene líneas de gas natural e informar a dichas partes que piden que las líneas de la RGB sean localizadas. Para pedir la localización de las líneas puede hacerlo llamando al Centro de Localización de Líneas de Alabama al número 1800-292-8525 o en la oficina de la Comisión de Gas de Russellville al teléfono 1-256-332-2020. Se requiere notificar con 48 horas de anticipación.

II. Programa de Conciencia Pública

- A. El gas natural no tiene olor, por lo tanto para poder identificar posibles fugas, la Comisión de Gas de Russellville (RGB) le agrega una sustancia de olor fétido al gas natural. Si usted detecta este olor cerca de algún aparato o equipo o en cualquier otro lugar cerca de una línea de gas natural llame a la RGB al teléfono 1 256-332-3850 o después de horas de servicio al 1-256-332-2230. Si el olor es fuerte, haga lo siguiente:
- 1) Aléjese del recinto.
 - 2) No prenda luces o apagadores.
 - 3) No use equipo eléctrico.
 - 4) No cree una chispa o flama.
 - 5) Notifique a la RGB.
- B. Reparaciones o alteraciones a cualquier instalación de gas natural deberá ser hecha por un tubero con licencia y certificado.
- C. Es contra la ley intentar reparar o alterar una línea de gas natural o instalación propiedad de la RGB.
- D. Las líneas de gas natural de la RGB se localizan bajo tierra en el área de servicio. Para que el público pueda identificar la localización aproximada de líneas enterradas, la RGB incorpora las siguientes medidas:
- 1) Marcadores de color amarillo brillante identifican la existencia de líneas subterráneas de gas natural.
 - 2) Servicios sobre el suelo están pintadas de color plateado. Las cercas tienen señales identificando servicios de la RGB.
 - 3) Se encuentra disponible un servicio para localizar líneas de gas natural llamando al Centro de Localización de Líneas de Alabama al teléfono 1-800-292-8525 o a la RGB al 1-256-332-2020.
 - 4) Hay mapas detallados disponibles en la oficina de la RGB localizada en 1229 Walnut Gate Road, Russellville, AL, 35654.
- E. En el caso de daño a los servicios de gas natural de la RGB el público afectado deberá alejarse del área y la parte que cause el daño debe:
- 1) Dejar el equipo y el lugar inmediatamente.
 - 2) No provoque una chispa o flama.
 - 3) Notifique la RGB de inmediato.

El gas natural es una fuente de energía segura y confiable. Implementando el Programa de Prevención de Daños y Conciencia al Público, la Comisión de Gas de Russellville esta comprometida a asegurar que siga de esa manera.

Comisión de Gas de Russellville



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COURTESY PHOTO

Morris Woodruff and his wife Linda won a new Bad Boy 4x4 four-wheeler as part of a fundraiser for the Cahaba Shriners. Woodruff purchased the ticket at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival. Nobles Terry Bolton and Stanley Champion are pictured above with the Woodruffs. The Franklin County Shrine Club thanks everyone who helped with this fundraiser.

'BOOK,' from page 1

story was titled *Big Al, Big Al, What Do You See?*

University of Alabama School of Social Work professor Kevin Corcoran learned of the project and contacted Richey about publishing a children's book that combined the students' best illustrations.

Proceeds from the book are divided between the Capital School and the University of Alabama School of Social Work.

As part of the 'field research' for the book, Richey took the students to the University of Alabama's spring football game on A-Day last year.

According to an interview Richey gave the Tuscaloosa News, her inspiration for the idea came during her time in England, where it's common for elementary students to learn about different subjects by compiling short books about them.

"When you're studying a subject, you do a book on it," Richey said. "We always want to try and do new, exciting things."

Richey has taught in Alabama and Tennessee. She is a lifelong Alabama football fan, and she holds special her childhood memories of watching the Crimson Tide with a large extended family of cousins,

aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents.

Richey and her husband Ben have three children, Art, Alex and Liza Jane. Alex is a drummer in the University of Alabama Million Dollar Band.

"When you're studying a subject, you do a book on it," Richey said. "We always want to try and do new, exciting things."

Richey has dedicated the book to all of the "wonderful students I have taught in Tuscaloosa, Cottondale, Russellville, Mount Hope, Moulton, Florence and Huntsville, Alabama, and Murphreesboro, Tennessee."

She also dedicated it to all of her relatives who are former educators, along with her father, Bill Wright, and uncles William Flippen, Joe Flippen, Murphree Flippen, Sammy Flippen and Joe Laster.

The hardcover book is also available on www.Amazon.com and wee.mascotbooks.com for \$14.95. Copies are also available at the Capital School, the Paul W. Bryant Museum and the Supe Store in Tuscaloosa.

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VFW honors Red Bay students with awards for essays

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5184 hosted its annual Veterans Celebration Sunday afternoon after the Russellville Veterans Day Parade.

The post honored two Red Bay students with awards for essays they wrote as part of the VFW's "Voice of Democracy" and "Patriot's Pen" programs. The programs provide high school stu-

dents with the unique opportunity to express themselves with a Democratic and patriotic-themed essay.

The Voice of Democracy audio-essay program sees more than 40,000 9th-12th grade students enter to win their share of \$2.1 million in scholarships and incentives awarded through the program. The national first-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship. Post 5184's 2018 recipient for the Voice of Democracy was Red Bay High

School student Chase Allen. His essay was titled *American History: A Hope for Our Future*.

The VFW's Patriot's Pen youth essay contest is open to sixth-eighth grade students. The national first-place winner receives \$5,000 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Red Bay eighth-grader Emma Nethery is this year's Patriot's Pen honoree. Her essay was titled *America's Gift to My Generation*. Both essays are printed below. Congratulations to both students!



American History: A Hope for Our Future

By Chase Allen

There is a saying that goes, "To get where you are going, you have to know where you have been." The people of our country can find truth in this statement. There have been tremendous leaders and role models that have set the standard for us. It is our responsibility and privilege as Americans to learn from those men and women who have gone before us.

George Washington, our country's first President and well-known war veteran, is a prime example of how our past can help build our future. He was one of the most respected heroes of the American Revolution. He displayed bravery and integrity, and those characteristics earned him the title of America's first President.

Being the first President of the United States, George Washington was the founder of many American traditions that we still honor today, such as ending the Presidential oath with "so help me God." George Washington can be quoted as saying, "I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man." These are definitely words to build a future on.

"Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him." This is a very fitting quote by another American hero and veteran, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower served in World War II as an Army Five Star General. He was also the 34th President of the United States. Eisenhower had a great love for his country and is still esteemed by scholars to be one of America's greatest presidents.

He was elected to a second term for President in 1956 based on these qualities quoted by his voters: "His sincerity, his integrity and sense of duty, his virtue as a family man, his religious devotion, and his sheer likeableness."

These same qualities are valued today and will shape a country we can have hope in.

Another inspirational American veteran we can learn from is Senator John McCain. Like his father and grandfather before him, John McCain was a graduate of the Naval Academy. He volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam, where he flew planes on bombing missions.

During one of his air missions, the Vietnamese shot down his plane. McCain survived the crash with a broken leg and two broken arms. However, the Vietnamese held him captive as a prisoner of war for more than five years, where he was repeatedly beaten and tortured.

In 1973, after the Vietnam War has ended, he and other American POWs were released to go home. After coming home to the United States, McCain decided to enter into politics and has served his country in the House of Representatives, Senate and has even run for President.

John McCain once said, "Americans never quit. We never surrender. We never hide from history. We make history." This is how we can build our future; by learning history from people like John McCain.

America is the greatest country in the world. It is the land of the free and the home of the brave. We can remember and learn from the people before us that sacrificed so much for their country, sometimes, even their own lives.

The hope of America's future is that we will continue to be the great country that was founded in 1776. The only way to keep that hope alive is to learn from our history.

God Bless America!

'VFW,' from page 1

chief Chris Hargett said Lowery's experience and dedication serve as an example to the many young officers in the department.

"His experience and years of service and his dedication to the department are primary reasons he is being honored today," Hargett said. "Lieutenant Lowery has a willingness to go above and beyond what is asked of him, and he's a positive influence on other officers, particularly the younger officers in our department."

Lowery served in the United States Army National Guard from 1991-94, and his first patrol officer job was with Phil Campbell Police Department. His training and experience includes certification as a basic narcotic investigator; operator with the Franklin County Special Response Team, where he was placed in charge of intelligence operations; advanced sexual assault investigation; certification as a hazardous materials technician, homicide investigator, TASER instructor, basic internal affairs investigator, advanced interview and interrogation certification; and FBI certification as a crisis negotiator.

Lowery was promoted to lieutenant in 2006, and he earned the RPS Outstanding Service Award that same year. With a department that has only 20 years of combined experience in its patrol division, Lowery said he wanted to return to patrol to work with younger officers and better serve his department.

"I really enjoy it," he said. "I've finally come full circle from patrol to investigations to narcotics and criminal investigations, and now back to patrol again. With such a young department, we felt it would be beneficial to the department for me to return to senior patrol lieutenant this year. I want to do whatever works best for this department."

Pace began his tenure with the Russellville Fire Department in May of 1999. RFD chief Joe Mansell said Pace has always focused on pushing himself on the educational aspects of the job and he works diligently to pass that knowledge on to younger firefighters. Pace was promoted to lieutenant on December 19, 2011.

"Johnathon is one of those who always shows dedication," Mansell said. "He goes above and beyond every day, and he's not afraid to pass his knowledge on to the younger group. He's always striving to do better, and as a lieutenant he strives daily to see his guys do better. He's a very appropriate recipient of today's award."

Pace's training in the fire safety field includes certification as a firefighter 1 and 2, fire investigator, EMT Basic, fire instructor 1 and 2, fire inspector 1 and 2, hazardous materials technician, rescue technician for confined space and trench and fire officer 1 and 2.

Pace and his wife April have three children, Daniel, Carson and Malorie.



America's Gift to My Generation

By Emma Nethery

America has given many gifts to my generation. Our nation's strong and efficient military and the Constitution have given us protection and freedom. There are better chances and opportunities. For example, we have better education and more research, and there is better technology now to help with natural disasters and other issues.

Our nation's military has given people a chance to better their lives. It gives men and women a chance to gain skills, have a purpose in life, protect our country and ensure freedom for our nation. Colleges offer Reserve Officer's Training Corp (ROTC), which gives college-age men and women a chance to gain education and training. It also gives a scholarship to help pay for college.

The U.S. Constitution has given us many freedoms. For example, it has given us the right to bear arms, freedom of speech, petition, press, religion and many others. This allows us many opportunities in this country. One opportunity is that we have the right to bear arms, which means we can own guns to protect ourselves.

Our country has great schools and job opportunities. Thanks to this, we have opportunities to discover new things like the cure for global warming or for new cures to troubling illnesses. Maybe one day, since we have these opportunities, we can find the cure for cancer and other serious and deadly diseases. We are also able to learn how our government works, which can help improve it and maybe we can even run it one day.

Our technology is better, and thanks to this we can make Americans safer. For example, the recent hurricanes could have caused a lot more deaths than they did, but thanks to the weather services, thousands of lives were saved. Using technology, they got the news of the hurricane out and issued an evaluation. The advancement of our technology helps us learn and research things that we didn't know and makes us more aware of our surroundings.

America has given my generation many great opportunities. It is our choice how we use them. I hope we use these to better ourselves and our country.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville Fire Department lieutenant Johnathon Pace (right) was honored as Post 5184's nominee for the Emergency Services Gold Medal Award.

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Yard Sale this Friday, November 10 from 7 am-3 pm and Saturday, November 11 from 7 am-until on 243 just past the airport on Airport Road. Watch for signs. Turn on gravel road behind Mountain View Church, third house on the right, fenced in yard. Men's, women's, and baby clothes and much more!
Huge Yard Sale this Saturday, Nov. 11 at 7 am. 10 miles out Hwy. 48 - 605 Witt Store Rd. Home of Pat Shelton.

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Moving/Yard Sale this Saturday, Nov. 11 from 7 am-until at 214 Walnut Avenue. Corner of Walnut & Cemetery St.
Inside yard sale this Saturday, November 11 at 403 Hall Ave. NE, Russellville. Tool, toys, fire places, too much to list! Call 256-460-9218 for more info.
Yard Sale this Saturday, November 11 from 8 am-until at 1306 Underwood

Road. Baby clothes, boys' clothes, etc.
Two-family yard sale this Saturday, November 11 from 7 am-until at 2434 Lawrence Street west, behind Freeman's Fitness. Come see us! Lots of everything!

GIVEAWAYS

Free black walnuts in the Newburg community. Bring your own containers. Call 256-460-1910.

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Land for sale. 2808 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville. 5 acres. \$19,900. \$300 down, \$250 per month. Call 256-335-8274. (2)

For rent: New, nearly 1,200-square-foot one-bedroom duplex apartment. Ceramic floors. Washer/dryer hookup. All appliances. \$395/mo. Call 678-634-1835. (2)
House for rent to own in Russellville. 149 Wedgewood Drive. \$2,000 down. \$550 a month. Call 256-412-8333. (3)

FURNITURE

Furniture for sale. Couch and chair, \$75. Two café booths, \$100 for both. Call 256-412-4012.
Burgundy recliner, \$75. Computer desk, \$45. Big Boy chair, \$75. Call 256-332-0068. (2)

MISC. FOR SALE

For Sale. A good A/C unit for your shop. 3 1/2 ton gas pack. The heat exchanger is bad, but the A/C is good. \$200. Call 256-332-3837.
Firewood for Sale. \$65/load. Call 256-460-8467. (1)
Firewood for sale. Call 256-324-9779. (1)
Baby swing for sale.

Runs on 3 speeds. Plays music. \$25. Please call 256-324-2917. (2)
Two Fenton baskets, \$37 each. MK purse, \$40. Green Carnival glass pitcher and six glasses for \$60. Call 256-332-0068. (2)
For sale: 70 concrete blocks. Also, small bush-hogger and small box blade. Call 256-810-7359. (2)
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‘LEAVE,’ from page 4

mulch them into the yard to provide nutrients to your lawn. Leaves will not kill the grass, unless there is a pretty thick layer. You can always rake down the areas that accumulate deep piles and level it out over your property.
 Use great care when using power equipment to remove leaves. Engines and mufflers get very hot very fast, and it's very easy to start a dan-

gerous fire.
 Don't allow leaves to pile up over the mower deck as you work, and clear them away when you finish the job.
 Next week we'll look at some special fall maintenance tips for you and your equipment. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.

‘BUDGET,’ from page 3

wages. \$56,000 is allocated for utility expenses.
 •SHERIFF'S OFFICE: The budget here is \$1,704,268.37, including \$92,382.29 for official's salary and an additional \$822,384.84 for other salaries and wages. There is an allocation of \$2,250 for each of the five constables elected in Franklin County.
 •JAIL: The jail budget is \$1,765,092.37, with \$897,457.80 for salaries and wages. \$226,644 is budgeted for medical and dental expenses for inmates at the Franklin County Jail.
 •EMA: This office received a budget of \$102,398.97, including \$42,991 for salaries and wages.
 •CORONER: The general fund allotment is \$12,261, which includes a \$300 salary for the coroner and an additional fixed expense allowance of \$4,200. Deputy coroners share a \$2,100 line item.
 •YOUTH SERVICES: The county budgets \$126,590 for youth services, with \$124,590 going to housing and feeding juveniles who are detained.

•COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT: There is a \$25,000 appropriation to the Franklin County Health Department in the general fund.
 •ANIMAL CONTROL: The animal control department receives \$109,311.18 in funding, including \$57,075.20 in salaries and wages. An additional \$8,000 is paid for contract services to dispose of animals.
 •FRANKLIN COUNTY EXTENSION: Extension services receive \$54,025 in the general fund, described as "direct support/appropriations."
 •JAIL PAYMENT: The general fund sees \$577,146.12 spent on principal payments (\$291,440.81) and interest payments (\$285,705.31).
 •INTERGOVERNMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS: There are \$136,503 appropriated for other governmental agencies. The largest of these include \$25,000 to the Franklin County Soil Conservation, \$10,000 to the C.I.T.Y. Program, Riverbend Center for Mental Health and Franklin County Development Authority. \$16,000 is appropriated for the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC).

It's in the bag



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Big Star owner Hal Keeton prepares food giveaway bags last Wednesday afternoon. The bags are available for a reduced cost of \$5 and will be donated to the First United Methodist Church food pantry for local distribution.

Local church, Big Star team up to serve families in need

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

First United Methodist Church and Big Star Supermarket of Russellville are teaming to help needy families during the November-December holiday season.

For the next two months, Big Star customers can purchase a pre-bagged sack of groceries for only \$5. Each of the grocery bags will be given to the First United Methodist Church food pantry for local distribution to families who need assistance with food.

Each bag, sold at Big Star's actual cost, includes tuna, crackers, macaroni and cheese, soup and a bag of rice. If a customer purchases the bag and doesn't want to take it to the organization or family of his or her choice, the store will donate the bag to the church.

Big Star owner Hal Keeton said he has done a similar promotion with his Red Bay location and has found it to be a great way to help folks at home in their community.

"In Red Bay, we had some first-graders take up money and do this as a class project," Keeton said. "They came in and bought several bags for distribution. It could be a worthwhile project for a Sunday School class, school or civic group to do a project that benefits people right here in Russellville.

"It's very important to us at Big Star to keep the assistance right here in our local community. We want to be a strong supporter of

local folks."

First United Methodist operates a food pantry out of the church office. Families or individuals in need can come in and receive a bag of food on either Wednesday or Thursday mornings from 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. at the church office. Each family may receive assistance only once every 90 days to ensure that the pantry can serve as many families as possible.

In addition to the food pantry, FUMC also sponsors the giveaway of food boxes during months that have a fifth Thursday, like this month. This project supplements the Faith Mission Outreach food box giveaway that takes place the first four Thursdays of each month.

FUMC member Buddy Perdue said the church has small groups that each came up with mission projects to serve the community. Perdue's group took on the project of providing food boxes for local families on months with five Thursdays.

"Our study group came up with the idea once we found out the mission didn't give out food on fifth Thursdays," Perdue said. "Our group took that project on, and this bag promotion will be added to that."

First United Methodist Church is located at 311 North Jackson Avenue. For more info on the food pantry, call 256-332-2955.

Big Star Supermarket is the anchor tenant of the Big Star Shopping Center located at 314 South Jackson Avenue.

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Q & A with Peyton Thomas

We threw some high hard ones at the Phil Campbell slugger in advance of his signing with UNA.



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SPORTS

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Week 11 in the SEC



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Four teams (Ohio State, Penn State, Oklahoma State and Virginia Tech) in the top 13 of the initial College Football Playoff rankings saw their Final Four hopes take crippling blows with losses this past Saturday.

Among the consequences of all that carnage is one inescapable fact: A scenario in which Georgia and Alabama *both* make the playoff looks a lot less far-fetched than it did at this time last week.

Let's assume that both teams survive their respective trips to Auburn and arrive in Atlanta with identical 12-0 records. Clearly, the winner of the SEC title game would be the No. 1 seed for the playoff. And, thanks to the events of this past weekend, the loser would still have a very good chance of remaining in the committee's top four.

There's no way around it—Saturday's losses by Ohio State and Penn State were disastrous for the Big 10. The conference's best—and last—hope for getting a team into the playoff now appears to be Wisconsin, which is unbeaten but lacks anything remotely resembling an impressive win.

Even if the Badgers win out and beat Ohio State or Michigan State in the Big 10 title game, their weak schedule could still leave them on the outside looking in; if they don't, then the likelihood of a two-loss conference champ from the East making the playoff is an even longer shot. [The lopsided nature of their shocking 31-point loss to unranked Iowa all but eliminated the Buckeyes, and Michigan State faces a steep uphill climb from No. 24 in the initial rankings.]

Things look even more dire in the Pac-12, where Washington is the lone remaining one-loss team. The Huskies—who debuted at No. 12 in the initial rankings—haven't beaten much of anyone either and would have to hope that closing with wins over Stanford, Utah, Washington State and USC (in the conference title game) would be enough to sway the committee; if Washington were to drop any of those games, show's over. [How ironic that in a year when the Rose Bowl is hosting one of the semifinal games, the two conferences with traditional ties to the bowl might both fail to put a team in the playoff.]

Finally, there are only two one-loss teams left in the Big 12 (Oklahoma and TCU), and they play each other this weekend in what is likely to be the first of two meetings. Should Saturday's loser retaliate with a win in the conference title game on December 2, then the Big 12 would also be left with a two-loss champion, one that would be far less appealing to the committee than a 12-1 SEC runner-up Georgia or Alabama.

Bottom line, imagining a Final Four that

See 'SEC,' Page 19

48 minutes

That's exactly what one of the most successful regular seasons in program history has earned Colbert Heights. Another game. They intend to make it count.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Taylor Leathers heard it from a couple of people at church on Sunday morning. Then he heard it again at the local gas station that afternoon.

Everywhere he went, it seemed, Leathers fielded some version of the same question.

'After Locust Fork, where do we go?'

He knows his Colbert Heights football players

See 'MINUTES,' Page 15



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Senior tackle Cain Phifer (65) leads a stout Wildcat defense that allowed only 10.7 points per game during the regular season.

RHS girls building off strong finish

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

According to head coach Corey Thomaston, Russellville's late-season surge last year was primarily the product of a discovery process that was bound to take time. Before the Lady Golden Tigers could start finding wins, they had to first find an identity—and embrace it.

"The biggest key for us was figuring out who we are," said Thomaston, whose second season at Russellville will tip off on Saturday, November 18 with a game against Hartselle. "Those kids were on their third coach in three years, and it takes time to develop and adjust to a new coaching style and a new style of play. It takes time to buy into the process we want to instill—especially when things don't look right early on."

Not much looked right for Russellville in the early going last season, but the Lady Golden Tigers eventually turned a corner and won three area games in the month of January—including a signature overtime win on the road against eventual area champion Lawrence County. The season ended with a loss to the Lady Red Devils in the first round of the Class 5A, Area 16 tournament, but progress was evident.

"It took time for our kids to believe that what we're doing is effective—if we do what we're doing *better*," said Thomaston, who came to Russellville from Shoals Christian and also spent seven years coaching Division III women's basketball in Texas. "We fought that a little bit last year with some of our personnel wanting to go outside the box of what we were trying to do. Once we got into January, we were starting to believe in the

strengths we have and what we could do to make this work, and that really helped."

Thomaston said the Lady Golden Tigers continued to build on that foundation with a strong off-season.

"That confidence we developed over the last month of the season carried us into the summer," he said. "We had a really productive summer. We were able to play four different play dates and really work on ourselves a lot. We simplified things this summer, offensively and defensively. We limited ourselves with regard to what we're looking at, just trying to hone in on some of the things within those two areas that we could improve upon. We got a pretty good idea of how those things fit into what we want to do."

"The biggest key for us was figuring out who we are," said Thomaston. "It took time for our kids to believe that what we're doing is effective—if we do what we're doing better."

"Obviously, once the season starts, we'll have to expand the playbook because of scouting and things like that, but it was good just to spend some time working on us. We re-addressed the way we want to play, as far as the tempo we want to play with and the style of defense we want to play. I was really pleased with how things went."

"We finished above .500, which is a huge improvement over last year. We competed at a higher level this summer and did some things we were not able to do last season. We finished better in transition, we hit more shots, and we defended with a little more purpose. It was a good summer for us."

See 'STRONG,' Page 19

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Bobcats going guard-heavy

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Two years ago, Phil Campbell rode the one-two punch of post players Noah Williams and Hayden Copeland all the way to Hanceville, finishing just a few points shy of reaching the Elite Eight. Williams graduated that May, but last season the Bobcats won 17 games and reached the sub-regional round behind another dynamic duo in the post, with 6'3 senior Thomas Baker sliding in next to the 6'5 Copeland.

Now Copeland and Baker are both gone as well, necessitating a changing of the guard for head coach Brett Thomas and the 'Cats—with the emphasis on *guard*.

"We're not gonna be able to pound it down low and get buckets that way," said senior Peyton Thomas, a 6'1 wing who earned first-team All-County honors from the *Free Press* last season after averaging a team-high 15.8 points per game. "Thomas and Copeland could both just back someone down and shoot over them and get an easy bucket. We're gonna have to work a little harder for it this year. We'll have to be a better shooting team."

"We'll more than likely start four guards."

Thomas has the size and strength to play in the paint, and rugged 6'2 senior Brody Nix should also be ready to help fill the void down low after averaging 3.3 points per game on 50-percent shooting off the bench last season. But there's no doubt about it—Phil Campbell will be a more perimeter-oriented team this year, and probably a more up-tempo one as well.

"We'll try and get up and down and get those transition buckets, as Coach Thomas says. We'll almost have to out-shoot people, I would say," said Peyton Thomas, who knocked down 21 threes last season and shot 47 percent from the field overall. "If [opposing teams] go into a zone, we don't have big guys who can sit down there and go over someone else's big man and score. Copeland and Thomas could do that, but not a whole lot of people had Copelands and Thomases last year."

"We'll have to be able to shoot."

If this year's Bobcats are indeed a little less ground-and-pound and a little more run-and-gun, that should suit senior guard Rhett Benford just fine. Prior to sustaining a knee injury on December 23 of last year, Benford was giving opponents fits with his frenetic style of play on both ends of the floor and averaging 11.8 points per game; he gutted it out the rest of the season but was clearly hampered by the bum wheel, scoring a total of just 49 points over his final 11 games.

A full-speed Benford would be a handful in the open floor and a major catalyst for Phil Campbell's more perimeter-oriented game.

"He looks almost a hundred percent," Peyton Thomas said of Benford, who hit 16 threes last season, came up with 31 steals on the defensive end and shot a solid 68 percent from the foul line. "He's not back to what he was before he got hurt, but he's definitely better than what he was when he was trying to play through it last year. He's getting quicker. He's almost back to normal. It will take him more time, but he's getting there."


"He's our snowbird guy. We catch the ball and throw it out to him, because he can get to the other end faster than all the rest of us."

As Benford continues to round into form, Thomas is happy to be healthy heading into basketball season for a change. In each of the previous two years, nagging leg injuries from the football field either limited his minutes in the early going or sidelined him entirely for the first few games.



FILE PHOTO

Benford (1), who was averaging 11.8 points per game last year prior to injuring his knee at Christmas, will look to lead Phil Campbell's perimeter-oriented attack.



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'MINUTES' from page 13

are hearing the same thing. And that's what worries him. Because, in the playoffs, the quickest way to get left behind is to start looking ahead.

"The last thing we need to do is be talking about or making plans for the following week," said Leathers, whose Wildcats will host Locust Fork in the first round of the Class 3A playoffs on Thursday night. "I told our guys, 'Don't buy into the things you're hearing.' Their parents love them, and the community loves them. Those people mean well. And they're excited. But the fact is we don't go anywhere. The only thing on our minds is playing forty-eight minutes of football against Locust Fork.

"After we take care of that, we'll look ahead."

It's hard to blame folks in Colbert Heights for feeling a bit frisky these days. The Wildcats won their final six games to finish 9-1 in the regular season for just the third time in the program's 52-year history, earning the No. 2 seed in Region 8 along the way. They're in the playoffs for the first time since 2011 and only the 13th time ever; only three of the previous 12 playoff teams at Colbert Heights made it out of the first round, and none made it past the second.

This Wildcat team, powered by a physical ground game on offense and a veteran front seven on defense, certainly has the potential to make a deep run—but Leathers understands the danger of looking past Thursday night.

"The playoffs have a way of slapping you in the face," he said on Sunday evening. "There are thirty-two teams in 3A football who still get to practice. Sixteen of them are in the north. After this week's games, eight of those teams will feel like they just got slapped in the face. The season is gonna end like a light bulb going off—instantly. As soon as that horn blows, it's over.

"That's the difference between the regular season and the playoffs. If you know you're not in, then you know that Week 10 game is it, so everybody's hugging each other and you're sort of prepared for it to end. In the playoffs, you don't know, especially in those close games that go down to the wire. All of a sudden, boom, that thing's over, and either your season just ended or you're elated. Eight of these teams in the north are gonna be elated.

"I told our guys today in the film room, 'I don't want this to be the last time we meet.' They looked at me like, 'Wow, Coach, I can see where you're coming from.'"

Leathers came to Colbert Heights from Lexington, where he was the offensive coordinator for Golden Bear teams that lost four straight first-round road games from 2012-15. He knows what it's like to feel that slap in the face. None of his current players with the Wildcats have ever experienced playoff football, so he spent the better part of the bye week last week trying to prepare them for the urgency of the postseason.

"One thing I can guarantee you about the playoffs—and I was fortunate enough to go four years in a row—is that everybody gives great effort," Leathers said. "In the regular season, you might

get up on some team late in the game, and they may give up and say, 'Let's go to next week.' The playoffs are do or die, and everybody you play is gonna give great effort. They're gonna give you forty-eight minutes. They're playing for their life, and we should play for our life, to keep our season alive."

Leathers doesn't want his players looking ahead, but he doesn't want them looking back either. That 9-1 regular season (which included wins over Red Bay, Lexington, Sheffield, Colbert County and Lauderdale County, five teams against whom the Wildcats had posted a collective 2-25 record over the previous six years) was nice; heck, it was downright historic. But it won't count for much of anything on Thursday night at Amos Mitchell Stadium. For that matter, neither will the fact that Locust Fork (the No. 3 seed out of Region 6) finished the regular season 4-6, losing three of their final five games by 20-plus points.

A new season starts on Thursday night. And it lasts 48 minutes.

"The playoffs have a way of slapping you in the face," Leathers said. "The season can end like a light bulb going off—instantly. As soon as that horn blows, it's over."

"Records are out the window," Leathers said on Sunday. "When I talk about us, we're 0-0. Locust Fork is 0-0. What teenagers wanna do is look and see, 'What was their record?' But regular season record doesn't matter at this point. They're a playoff team.

"We've got eighteen seniors on this team. I asked our seniors today, 'Have we had some pretty good teams around here the last few years?' They said, 'Yes sir.' And I reminded them that none of those teams made the playoffs. Locust Fork made it. If they're in, they're a playoff team, regardless of record."

When Leathers watched film of the Hornets, he saw a team similar to the one he used to coach.

"If I was to compare Locust Fork to anybody on our schedule, their offensive sets are similar to what we see out of Lexington," Leathers said. "They run the option. They're double-slot, double-wing, with a lot of jet sweeps, buck sweeps and traps. Their option is built around Wing-T principles, so you see a lot of jet, buck, trap and belly.

"They try and control the ball and control the clock. They're a huddle team, and they snap the ball late. They play that brand of football."

That brand of football happens to be right in Leathers' wheelhouse. His offenses at Lexington ran the triple-option, and he's transformed Colbert Heights into a physical, hard-hitting, line-of-scrimmage kind of team in just two short years.

"I think it's a really good matchup for us, as far as their type of kids versus our type of kids," Leathers said. "I like what I see on film with what they're doing. They're a physical team, similar to the way we like to play the game. I don't know a lot about Locust Fork, but it seems like more of a rural community, really similar to Colbert Heights. Their kids

are similar to ours, and what they're doing is similar to the way we play the game of football.

"They're definitely not a spread, up-tempo team that throws it all over the field. They're the opposite of that."

The Wildcats have thrived this season largely because of how well they've played in the trenches. An offensive line featuring senior Cain Phifer at left tackle, senior Chasson Scott at left guard, senior Isaac Gipson at center, senior Brannon Bradford at right guard and junior Tyler Tubbs at right tackle has cleared the way for senior fullback Dylan Chandler to rush for 958 yards and 17 touchdowns on 149 attempts. Senior quarterback Kevin Shaw has also been a major factor in the ground game, running 146 times for 809 yards and seven scores.

Leathers said his team's veteran O-line will be challenged by Locust Fork's big defensive front.

"They play a four-three, and they're big on the defensive line," Leathers said. "Their defensive tackle is 6'4, 280. He's a really big guy. And they've got another guy who's listed at 6'4, 240."

On the other side of the ball, a Wildcat defense yielding only 10.7 points per game is led by a stout 4-4 front that should be well suited to control the Hornets' ground-centered attack. Phifer is joined on the interior of the D-line by Isaiah Miller, with Tubbs at right end and senior Bud Pratt (61 tackles, including 8.5 for loss) at left end.

Leathers said the ability of outside linebackers Chandler (team-high 76 tackles, including 12 for a loss) and fellow senior Korey Saint (69 tackles) to set the edge will be critical on Thursday.

"Setting the edge with our outside linebackers and stopping the jet sweep will be key," Leathers said. "We can't get trapped either. They hang their hat on the jet and the trap. We'll have to be sound on the option in all phases. Being able to control the line of scrimmage will be the key to the game on both sides of the football.

"We've done a good job with ball security in the second half of the season. We'll have to continue to do that. Against this caliber of team, you can't turn the ball over and give them extra possessions. We want to match their physicality and impose our will on them and play with passion and drive for forty-eight minutes."

That's what one of the most successful seasons in program history has earned the Wildcats—48 more minutes of football. And they plan to make it count.

"I'm certainly proud of what these players have accomplished so far this year," Leathers said. "I'm also so driven as a person that I believe that we did all that to be right here. Those things will not be forgotten. Those are there, written down, and they'll be there for the history of the football program at Colbert Heights. But I would say that we did all that to be doing what we're doing right now."

"We need to be focused on right now. This is Amos Mitchell Stadium. They're coming to our place. Our goal is to play with intense passion for forty-eight minutes and prove that we're the best team out on that field."

Phil Campbell slugger set to sign with UNA

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Phil Campbell senior Peyton Thomas, last year's Class 2A Hitter of the Year, will sign with the University of North Alabama on Wednesday morning in a ceremony at the PCHS library. The *Free Press* caught up with Thomas, who batted .433 for the Bobcats last season and has 22 career home runs at the varsity level, for a Q & A session on Sunday evening.

Seven innings in a high school baseball game, seven questions for the man of the moment.

Batter up.

FFP: What's the most memorable home run you've hit?

PT: Oh, man. There's been a couple that stand out. One of my favorites was probably this past year at Haleyville. It was my second home run of the day. We played a doubleheader, and I hit one in the first game, too. But in the second game, I hit one off one of their pretty good pitchers. He threw me a chest-high fastball, and I swung and missed. I swung out of my shoes. The next time, he threw it again, and I hit it. It went over that big net they have in left field and landed all the way in left field on the softball field. The pitcher was throwing 85 to 88, and I connected with it.

"Another one that sticks out was the Red Bay one [off ace lefty Chandler Allen in the first inning of a game at Red Bay on March 23 of this year]. That's such a big rivalry, and I hit it in the first inning. I tried to get things going, but we ended up



FILE PHOTO

Thomas belted 12 home runs last season and has hit 22 long balls in his varsity career.

losing that game so I don't know about that one."

FFP: You already answered our next question, but here goes: What's the farthest home run you've hit?

PT: "Yeah, it's the one at Haleyville. Even my coach [Jonathan Raper] was like, 'That's the fur-

thest I've ever seen you hit one.' I usually don't know when I hit one, but on that one I started jogging as soon as I hit it. I knew that one was gone."

FFP: Who's the toughest pitcher you've ever faced?

PT: From around here? Probably the guy I've had the least success against is a little lefty at Mars Hill named Seth Swinea. I don't know what it is about that guy, but I've faced him from the ninth grade all the way to the playoffs last year [Mars Hill swept Phil Campbell in a second-round series], and I'm maybe 1-for-9 or 1-for-10 off him. He doesn't throw hard. He's just a regular fastball-curveball-changeup guy. I don't know." [Thomas may get another opportunity to figure out Swinea, who will be a senior for the Panthers this spring.]

"As far as the hardest thrower I've ever faced I'd have to go to travel ball on that one. I faced a guy this summer named Slade Cecconi [a 6'4 right-hander from Oviedo, Florida]. He pitched against us [Thomas played this summer for Vipers Baseball out of Huntsville] in a tournament in Atlanta. He was 94 consistently, and he topped out at 96. I was the one he hit that [number] against. He was throwing some gas. It wasn't taking that long to get to the mitt.

"I struck out the first time, and I grounded out to second the second time. But I keep telling my friends, I was six inches away from having a double off him. I hit one down the right-field line, and it was six inches from being fair. I was spread out

See 'SLUGGER,' Page 17

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'SLUGGER' from page 16

and choked up. I had never seen anything like that."

FFP: *When was the moment you realized that playing college baseball was possible for you?*

PT: "I guess it was when I started playing against competition other than from around this area, and I could compete. That gave me confidence that I could do it, you know. Nothing against anybody from around here, you know, but any time you have a wider range of players you're ultimately gonna get better competition."

"When I was fourteen, I played my first tournament in Atlanta [for Slam Baseball out of Birmingham]. It was an eye-opener, honestly. I didn't do very well, and it really made me work harder. By the time I went back the following summer or spring, I did a lot better. I realized I could compete against them, and those were guys wanting to go play in college, too."

FFP: *What's the best thing about playing baseball at Phil Campbell?*

PT: "Everybody shows up and we expect to win, regardless of who we're playing or where we're at. We're gonna beat you, no questions asked. Every day at practice or at a game, we show up—Coach Raper makes us show up—and play to the best of our ability. Or it ain't pretty."

FFP: *Coach Raper is known to have a lot of sayings. What's your favorite?*

PT: [Laughing] "If you could only

hear some of the things he says to us...Oh man, my favorite is when he'll get riled up and he gets to where he says, 'Old McDonald' all the time. 'Old McDonald had a farm.' It could be good or bad. Usually, it's a mix. If it's a good thing, he says it in a happy voice. If it's a bad thing, he says it in one of those disappointed voices, kind of like he's surprised we did what we did."

"He says, 'Good golly, Miss Molly' a lot, too. He says some crazy stuff. We all have kind of a joke on the team that he has his own language. We call it Raper-nese. When he gets excited and gets going, sometimes you can't understand what he's saying."

FFP: *What's the number one reason you chose UNA?*

PT: "I just felt at home there. I don't really know what it was. I went into the visit knowing they were gonna be in a transition period going from Division II to Division I [a process that UNA will begin in the fall of 2018]. But they can still compete for conference championships. Then another thing was just the opportunity to play Division I baseball. Everybody wants to do that, at the highest of levels."

"I believe I can go there and play. You never know. No one knows what's gonna happen in the future. I may go there and sit out two years and then play my junior and senior years. But I had confidence that I could go there and play four years at a Division I program."

'GUARD' from page 14

"I finished the game [at Hackleburg] Thursday night and then actually practiced basketball Friday afternoon—without any injuries, except for a few bumps and bruises," Thomas said. "As far as any actual injuries, I didn't have any, so I was happy for that. It's the first time since the ninth grade that I haven't had an injury to start basketball season."

Having Thomas at full strength right out of the gate this season—which tips off next Friday, November 17 at home against Tharptown—could be huge for the Bobcats, who simply don't have another offensive weapon quite like him. Thomas topped the 20-point mark eight times last year while also leading the team in assists and practically living at the foul line, where he made 172 out of a whopping 251 attempts (68 percent).

Poised to surpass the 1,000-point mark for his varsity career [he's currently at 970], Thomas will be asked to carry an even heavier load in his final season. He'll be joined in the guard-heavy lineup by Benford and fellow senior Joe Hardy, who could be primed for a breakout after averaging 4.6 points and knocking down eight threes in 17 games last season. Guards Daniel Smith and Nate Owens will also play key roles on the perimeter.

"It doesn't matter who starts," Peyton Thomas said, "because both of those guys can play. Nate is probably a better shooter than Dan, and Dan is a little more athletic."

With Baker and Copeland no longer around, Logan Hill and Jason Mansell will provide depth in the paint.

"Those guys coming up are pretty good," Peyton Thomas said. "They're not gonna score like Copeland and Thomas did, but they'll do well as far as rebounding and playing defense."

If the Bobcats want a blueprint for how to thrive with their new style of play, they need look no further than last year's game at Belgreen on December 16, when Benford and Thomas attacked the basket relentlessly and shredded the Bulldogs' pressure defense on their way to scoring 24 points apiece in an 85-80 win. More performances like that this season could help the 'Cats continue their winning ways—even without their usual one-two punch in the post.

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ATHLETE of the WEEK

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Cam McKinney

Freshman LB, Red Bay

McKinney capped off a breakout freshman season with another big night last Thursday, making a team-high 11 tackles and picking off a pass in a 22-14 victory over Cherokee. He helped lead a dominant defensive effort by the Tigers, who held the Indians to just 121 total yards and seven first downs.

The 6'2, 235-pound McKinney (who also plays H-back and tight end on offense) was Red Bay's leading tackler in seven out of ten games this year. He finished the season with 98 total stops, an average of 9.8 tackles per game.



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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 11 must be postmarked by Friday, November 10, and picks submitted by email for Week 11 must be received by Saturday, November 11 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 10 winner **MICHAEL WILKINS**, who correctly picked 8 out of 10 games and also picked Alabama to beat LSU 38-24!

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Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

Week 11: November 11

Brady's Pick

Your Pick

Florida at South Carolina

South Carolina

Arkansas at LSU

LSU

Georgia at Auburn

Georgia

Alabama at Mississippi St.

Alabama

Kentucky at Vanderbilt

Vanderbilt

Tennessee at Missouri

Missouri

TCU at Oklahoma

TCU

Oklahoma St. at Iowa State

Oklahoma St.

Michigan State at Ohio State

Ohio State

Notre Dame at Miami

Notre Dame

Tiebreaker Score:

Georgia

Auburn

Your Name:

Phone number:

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'STRONG' from page 13

The challenge for Russellville now will be sustaining that momentum amidst tough early-season circumstances. A broken water heater flooded the RMS gymnasium last month, necessitating the installation of a brand new floor. In the meantime, the Lady Golden Tigers will be taking their show on the road for the foreseeable future.

"We moved every home game we could into January," Thomaston said. "That's just another challenge for our kids, not being able to play in front of their home crowd. We're gonna be challenged on the road night in and night out, and I'm interested to see how our girls respond. We played as well on the road last year as we did at home. Now we're a year older, which can only help. We don't have seven kids who have never played a varsity game before. We've got a lot of kids with a lot of experience from last year, and hopefully that can propel us into this season."

Chief among those returners is sophomore guard Madison Murray, who earned first-team All-County honors from the *Free Press* last season after setting new career-highs with 9.3 points per game and 22 threes made. After scoring in double-figures just five times as an eighth-grader, Murray did so 12 times as a freshman, including a 22-point outing in the big OT win in Moulton.

Thomaston expects Murray, who is at her best offensively when she's attacking the basket in transition or off the dribble, to be an even more productive scorer in her third varsity season.

"Madison is transitioning to more of a scoring guard than a point guard," Thomaston said, "just because our personnel dictates that. I think she'll really flourish in that role. She's starting to get a better understanding of how hard to push the accelerator, when to attack to score and when to attack to distribute. Her growth and maturity in that area will be critical for the production of our offense. She brings a lot to the table."

Also returning in the backcourt are freshman guard Treyvia Pruitt and sophomore guards A.J. Taylor and Krista Sikes, all of whom played key roles as varsity rookies a year ago. Pruitt knocked down 21 threes and averaged 5.0 points per game

as an eighth-grader, making her the team's second-leading returning scorer. Taylor provided a spark with her defensive energy, and Sikes made 15 threes in a reserve role.

"Treyvia will run a lot of point for us this year," Thomaston said. "She was the only player we had last year who played in every game. She really was able to get a lot of great experience as an eighth-grader. She's filling out physically, and she's been working hard in the weight room. We have high expectations for what she can and will do for this program."

"A.J. got a lot of playing time last year after we called her up from the jayvee. She plays with a high motor and a lot of energy, and she's developing skills that will help us on offense. Krista played quite a bit last year, too, and she's been working hard to develop more consistency from the perimeter. She's a kid who can provide some scoring off the bench for us and bust up zones with her three-point shooting."

Senior Madison Hargett, who did not play last season but has extensive varsity experience, is back in the fold this year and adds even more depth to the guard rotation.

"Madison plays with great energy and effort," Thomaston said. "She'll help us a lot handling the basketball at the one and setting the tone defensively by pressuring the ball. She's got a high motor and a great spirit about her that will help us on both ends of the floor."

Hargett is joined in the senior class by 5'9 forward Johnna Oliver, who sat out last season after transferring from Belgreen, and Xaria Holingsworth, who played on the jayvee last year.

"Johnna will primarily play as a small forward facing the basket for us," Thomaston said. "She's got some scoring instincts, and she's learning to play at the pace we want to play at. She can bring a toughness on the court to what we're trying to do. Xaria has a good work ethic. She's one of those kids that can help from a maturity standpoint in the locker room."

Sophomores Autumn Logan and Lexie Glass are both back in the post after playing significant roles

as freshmen a year ago.

"Autumn has a lot better understanding of how to execute her role within our offense," Thomaston said. "We're not asking her to score as much in the half-court set, but rather to be there to clean things up with her ability to get to the offensive glass and help set the tone for our style of play. She can also help us from a defensive standpoint."

"Lexie played a lot of minutes last year and has really turned a corner from the standpoint of how hard she works. She's been giving us great effort the last couple of weeks since volleyball ended. She's still learning the nuances of the game, as far as how she can fit in offensively, but her effort has been great and she's extremely coachable. We have a lot of expectations for her as well."

Thomaston said freshman guard Fallin Cox will see time with the varsity early in the season and perhaps longer, depending on when injured junior forward Jamie Hill is cleared to return to action.

Russellville will open the season with a trip to Hartselle High School for the Danville Thanksgiving Invitational. The Lady Golden Tigers will face Hartselle on November 18. Russellville is scheduled to play a regular season game against Colbert County on Monday, November 20, before resuming tournament play on the 21st.

Area play will begin in December, and Thomaston expects another competitive race.

"Off the top, I'd say Lawrence County has a little advantage based on the fact that they finished on top last year and didn't lose a whole lot," he said. "They had some young kids who contributed well last year. They have the most seasoned interior presence and some players in the backcourt with a lot of games under their belt as well."

"Brooks will be substantially better this year, with some of the girls they'll bring up from the jayvee team. East Limestone was really young last year, like us, and really talented in spots, especially in the post. It's just gonna come down to which team can grind it out and handle pressure and handle the basketball late in the game. Which kids can make plays, and which teams have the most play-makers? I'd like to think it's us."

'SEC' from page 13

includes (for example) Notre Dame, Clemson, Alabama and Georgia is not that difficult—and it could get easier with each passing week.

Of course, a Georgia loss at Jordan-Hare Stadium changes the whole discussion. Which brings us to our Week 11 picks.

Last week's record: 3-1

Record this season: 30-10

Saturday, November 11

Georgia (9-0, 6-0) at Auburn (7-2, 5-1)

Both defenses are elite, ranking Top 10 in the country in yards allowed per play and points allowed per game. So, which offense—and, in particular, which passing game—will rise to the challenge and make enough key plays?

Jake Fromm and Jarrett Stidham have both been highly efficient for the most part, but both have had the luxury of picking their spots in ground-centric offenses. Given how good both defenses are up front and how stout they are against the run, this feels like a game where the quarterbacks may have to carry a heavier load.

Georgia has had Auburn's number lately, winning three straight meetings and seven of the last nine. Kerryon Johnson is a beast, but the Bulldogs have superior depth in the backfield and more weapons to choose from. Plus, I've felt all year that Auburn is a notch below Georgia and a

couple of notches below Alabama.

The Pick: Georgia 23 Auburn 20

Alabama (9-0, 6-0) at Mississippi State (7-2, 3-2)

Alabama is beat up on defense, but blowout losses to Georgia and Auburn—not to mention last week's close call with UMass—don't exactly paint the Bulldogs as true contenders.

The Pick: Alabama 31 Mississippi State 13

Tennessee (4-5, 0-5) at Missouri (4-5, 1-4)
Has Missouri finally figured out how to translate its success on offense into conference play, or is the rest of the SEC just that bad? Either way, Drew Lock now leads the nation with 31 touch-down passes. Can he keep it rolling against a Tennessee pass defense that—somehow—ranks first in the SEC?

The winner of this game takes a big step toward bowl eligibility.

The Pick: Missouri 35 Tennessee 27

Florida (3-5, 3-4) at South Carolina (6-3, 4-3)
In a surprise to no one, the Gators looked disinterested and unprepared in last week's blowout loss to Missouri, six days after their head coach was fired. South Carolina, meanwhile, has a chance to secure its first above-.500 season in SEC play since 2013.

The Pick: South Carolina 24 Florida 17

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