



Halfway Home

MS Industries II reps are pleased with the progress on the new plant.

Safety First

Winners of the Russellville Fire Department's annual Fire Safety Poster Contest were recognized at last week's city council meeting.



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Gist honored as Citizen of the Year

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When he thought about a possible recipient of the 2017 Farm-City Banquet Franklin County Citizen of the Year, Bret Gist said he could compile a long list of deserving honorees.

Although Gist didn't have his own name on the list, his fellow citizens in Franklin County did, as he received the honor at last Monday's Farm-City Banquet held at the A.W. Todd Centre.

Franklin County Extension coordinator Katernia Cole-Coffey presented Gist with the honor last Monday as the final award of the evening.

"This year's winner is co-owner of a successful home-grown business in Franklin County and someone dedicated to seeing his hometown and county provide opportunities for today's young people to become tomorrow's leaders," Cole-Coffey said.

Gist is co-owner and vice-president of G&G Steel, Inc. and Franklin Manufacturing, and owner of Road Gear Truck Equipment, LLC.

Gist serves on the Russellville City Schools Board of Education. See 'GIST,' Page 9



County Extension coordinator Katernia Cole-Coffey presents Bret Gist with the Franklin County Citizen of the Year Award at last week's Farm-City Banquet.

Have an opinion?
Story idea?



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Grimes pleased with progress at RCS

Superintendent receives contract extension through June of 2021

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville City Schools superintendent Heath Grimes is a planner.

He firmly believes in the system's five-year strategic plan, and it's clear his board of education believes in Grimes.

The Russellville City Schools Board of Education unanimously approved a three-and-one-half year extension of Grimes' contract at its November 15 meeting. The new contract runs through June 30, 2021.

Grimes is pleased with the progress Russellville City Schools has shown the last two-and-a-half years under his leadership. He credits the dedication from students all the way up to his board.

"A lot of systems have strategic plans," Grimes said. "Ours was written with a lot of input from the community,

teachers, students and parents. We are very much in the process of implementing that plan."

Grimes' contract provides for an annual salary of \$139,000, with a minimum of two-percent increase each year or an amount equivalent to the state-funded pay raise, whichever is greater, for the life of the contract.

"I'm blessed to be able to have my contract extended and continue to work with a group of people so strong at what they do. What they do is truly uncommon."

In addition to his base salary, Grimes will receive a monthly travel allowance of \$500 in lieu of a district automobile. Grimes will also be reimbursed at the state mileage rate for any out-of-district travel he does pursuant to his job.

The contract calls for 15 working days of vacation and

See 'GRIMES,' Page 10

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**Billy E. Britnell,
Russellville, age 75**

Died Saturday, November 18, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**John Edward Chambers,
Russellville, age 81**

Died Tuesday, November 21, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

**Sammy Leon Hatton, Jr.,
Russellville, age 17**

Died Monday, November 20, 2017.
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville.

**Eronda "Teance" Jean Johnson
Harrison, Sheffield (formerly of
Russellville), age 52**

Died Monday, November 20, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in East Franklin Cemetery.

**Billy Eugene Knott,
Hackleburg, age 80**

Died Wednesday, November 22, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville.

**James Edward Russell,
Russellville, age 84**

Funeral arrangements had not been announced at press time. Pinkard Funeral Home was directing.

William Acy Roberson, Jr., age 59

William Acy Roberson, Jr., beloved Columbia, SC actor and artist, died November 19, 2017, unexpectedly. He recently had been diagnosed with cancer.

Mr. Roberson and his wife of 34 years, Hi Bedford Roberson, own and operate Classical Glass on North Main Street near the trestle. They were urban pioneers, establishing their business and living in Earlewood long before its revival.

Mr. Roberson was known statewide, nationally and internationally for Classical Glass, whose stained glass adorned hundreds of churches, residences and businesses. Bill was equally acclaimed for his acting in films and on stage.

He was perhaps best known for his cameo role with Tom Hanks in *Forrest Gump*. Sitting next to Forrest on the park bench, Bill listened while Forrest explained that life is like a box of chocolates.

He performed in other notable movies such as *Patch Adams*, *Radio*, *Leatherhead* and *The Patriot*. He had stage credits in more than 200 productions and commercials, including the starring role in the long-running Riverbanks Zoo commercial, "Wild Things."

He also was well known on stage in Columbia and prior to that in Columbus, Ohio, where he and Hi founded a professional theater, the Columbus Ensemble Theater. He found his passion for acting early in life, and it was his joy throughout his life.

Bill was a gentle person who took great pride in his craft. He started Classical Glass in 1993. Fort Jackson commissioned him for two windows for two soldiers who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. His work adorned churches in almost every county in South Carolina, including many rural and historically black churches. In all, he designed and built more than 4,000 windows.

He was born in Washington, NC, on August 21, 1958, the son of the late Billy Acy Roberson and June Garrett Roberson, who survives him. In addition to his mother and Hi, other survivors include two brothers, Troy Roberson and Kelly Roberson, also of Washington, NC.

He attended East Carolina University and the University of Alabama.

Bill's legacy will live on in the devotion to his wife and family and how he embraced people, his many friendships and his love of pets.

A private ceremony was held with the family. Those who wish to honor Bill can make a donation to Pets, Inc. in his name.

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Council votes to rescind suspension of RPD officer

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A Russellville police officer suspended two weeks ago has returned to work effective immediately after the Russellville City Council voted at its November 20 meeting to rescind a previous 14-working day suspension imposed pending an internal investigation.

Officer Brett Evans' suspension was rescinded by a 5-0 vote of the Russellville City Council and mayor David Grissom. Councilman Arthur Elliott abstained from the vote.

Two weeks earlier on November 6, the council unanimously suspended Evans for 14 working days with pay pending what was described as an internal investigation.

A lengthy executive session ensued that night before the council returned to the meeting. Once the meeting resumed, Elliott made the motion to suspend Evans.

The council held another lengthy executive session last Monday night before voting to reinstate the officer. During that executive session, the council heard from retired Alabama Bureau of Investigation officer Darrell Tatum, who now runs a private investigation agency.

Tatum was hired by the city to conduct an investigation into the allegations that formed the basis of Evans' suspension. Tatum invoiced the City of Russellville \$2,438 for his services the past two weeks.

The allegations that formed the basis of the initial suspension were not disclosed at the council's November 6 meeting. RPD chief Chris Hargett, who was out of town on police business at that meeting, said last Monday night that the investigation into Evans dealt with several allegations, one of which related to a traffic stop he made on November 6, where the individual who was stopped contacted Elliott by telephone and Elliott subsequently spoke with Evans at the scene.

Hargett expressed concern that his officer was suspended prior to any investigation taking place for, at least in part, an incident that occurred the day of the council meeting.

"I did speak to the council about due process. That was a concern of mine at the time," Hargett said. "But I understand they did what they felt was necessary, and I'm not going to second-guess the council."

Since Evans' suspension was with pay, Hargett said there would not be any compensation due for the period of suspension. The remaining seven days of the suspension, which had yet to be served, were set aside by the council.

Evans was not present at the November 6 meeting. He attended last Monday's meeting with a Florence attorney.

After last Monday's meeting, Elliott said he was discouraged and did not feel the council was pre-

sented with an objective, thorough investigation. He expressed concern about Hargett selecting what Elliott described as "a friend" in Tatum to handle the investigation.

"I think it should have been done differently," Elliott said. "I don't agree with the chief getting a friend of his to do the investigation, but I think Darrell did what he could with what he had."

"A lot of stuff was swept under the rug," said Elliott, the councilman who made the motion to suspend Evans. "People say I accused this guy of doing something and I was unwarranted in my actions. It's nothing personal with Brett. I wouldn't have done anything if my constituents hadn't come to me...The actions he previously took should have gotten him fired. This is just a smokescreen. And they're accusing me of trying to destroy this guy. I didn't. I just asked them to investigate him."

Elliott said he wanted people to understand he had nothing personal against Evans and that he was acting in his capacity as a councilman by following up on concerns brought to him by constituents.

"I had several people complain about this officer to me," Elliott said. "Some who complained wouldn't do anything about it because the investigator out there was picked by the chief and they were worried about being picked on or retaliated against."

Hargett said that he had received prior complaints against Evans, but there was no complaint filed over any of the alleged incidents that formed the basis of the investigation.

"For us to investigate, we need a formal complaint filed with us," Hargett said. "There have been some in the past against him, but nothing was pending or filed in this case."

"As far as I'm concerned, it's over with, behind us," said Hargett, Russellville's police chief. "Moving forward, we all need to work together with the mayor and council members to make Russellville a better place. It's time to move on."

"We had a retired ABI agent come in and handle this, mainly so we could have an unbiased person come in and investigate the allegations. We didn't want to do anything that would be seen as covering up for him. I have disciplined officers in the past, but I'm not going to discipline one just because someone complains. It has to be investigated."

Hargett said that with such a young department, where many officers have limited or no law enforcement experience before coming to RPD, he realizes that professionalism in dealing with the public is something that must be stressed to them.

"That's one down side of such a young depart-

ment. It's something we're already working on," Hargett said. "We give sensitivity training to the entire department. We're in the process of seeking more training for our officers. We hired two more officers tonight who will have to go to the academy."

"When you have officers with no real-time experience with the public, certain people may try to take advantage of that officer because he or she is young and try to intimidate them."

Now that the investigation is complete, Evans has returned to work and the matter is closed, Hargett hopes the entire situation can be a learning experience for his department.

"The investigation worked itself out," Hargett said. "But it's an experience that can be a good learning opportunity. He can reflect back on the situation and see if he could have done or said something differently."

For Elliott, though, he believes the public hasn't seen the real story and facts of why he initially requested an investigation.

"A lot of stuff was swept under the rug," Elliott said. "People say I accused this guy of doing something and I was unwarranted in my actions. It's nothing personal with Brett. I wouldn't have done anything if my constituents hadn't come to me."

"Why is it such a big problem when the lone black man on the council makes a motion to have an officer investigated? The chief has sent him home three times. He should have been fired already. You don't have the right to talk about people that way, and it doesn't matter what color you are."

"The actions he previously took should have gotten him fired. This is just a smokescreen. And they're accusing me of trying to destroy this guy. I didn't. I just asked them to investigate him."

Elliott worries about possible repercussions against him for having requested the investigation.

"I can't go through life looking over my shoulder because people think I'm targeting a police officer," Elliott said. "This is a shame. This is not personal against Brett Evans. People bring things to me, and they felt they weren't going to be fairly represented by this investigation so they bagged up and they ran. If you don't have the right people to support you, you're going to get crucified. They ran like a bunch of quails today."

"They couldn't get him back to work fast enough."

Hargett said he had no animosity toward Elliott, and he hopes to continue having a positive working relationship with him and all members of the city council.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's over with, behind us," Hargett said. "Moving forward, we all need to work together with the mayor and council members to make Russellville a better place. It's time to move on."

Christmas Tour of Homes set for Sunday, December 10

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The annual "Home for the Holidays" Christmas Tour of Homes is set for Sunday, December 10.

The event is sponsored by the GFWC Book Lover's Study Club. This year's tour will feature four homes, along with a stop at the newly remodeled North Highlands Church of Christ and the Roxy Theatre.

The tour is from 1-4:30 p.m. Admission is \$10.

North Highlands Church of Christ will be the first stop on the tour. Visitors can see the remodeled and decorated church, which includes floor-to-ceiling paintings along the classroom hallways that depict stories of the Bible. A map and brochure of the homes will be available as you leave the church for the rest of the tour.

The three Russellville homes on the tour are the home of Don and Patricia Cox, 2006 Wilson

Avenue; the home of Brian and Amy Hamilton, 701 Garnett Drive; and the home of Gerald and Betty Kiel, 605 North Jackson Avenue.

A fourth home on the tour is that of Brian and Jennifer Pace, located at 2281 Highway 124 in Vina. Visitors to that home should take Hwy. 24 West and turn right across from Burnout Baptist Church. Maps and brochures will be available here for those who start the tour from this end of the county.

Honey Do List: It's a trap!

There is probably no greater icon for mankind's ingenuity and creativity than the mouse trap. The U.S. Patent Office has issued thousands of mousetrap patents over the years and still gets applications for about 400 each year.

Since this is the time of year when the little critters are looking for food and warmth to tide them over the winter, here are a few things to consider should they invade your home.

The presence of these visitors will often be discovered in the form of droppings in cabinets and drawers. If these are found, you should take quick action to get rid of these disease-carrying varmints. That means it's time to choose a rodent-control method. Place rodent-control measures in locations where you noticed droppings. You may also want to place them near your hot water heater, furnace or anywhere else that might provide warmth.

There are many kinds of products available for purchase. Most traps kill rats and mice, but there are also "live" traps available. While "live" traps may seem most humane, there is the problem of letting rats and mice go. Where do you release them once you've caught them? What will happen once they're

released? They'll most likely find another place to inhabit, causing headaches and potential health problems for other people.

The safest and most effective way of eliminating rodents is to kill them. Try snap traps or poisons.

Old-fashioned wood traps are probably most economical, but they can cause injury if they are accessible to pets or children. When using this type of trap, make sure they're set up where kids or the family dog can't reach them. Wood traps are not designed to be reused. Rodents often urinate when caught in wood traps. The urine is then absorbed into the wood, making it unlikely that other rodents will come into contact with the traps in the future.

Plastic snap traps, while more costly, are reusable and often designed to be placed in areas where pets and children have access. They can provide a quick and final solution to your rodent problem. Bait traps with peanut butter, which rodents find irresistible.

Next, we'll look at poison baits. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

OUR HOUSE By: Ree SHANNON

Ree Shannon © 2017

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My take Change is never wanted on this... but sometimes needed

It's been very difficult for me to put into words the reactions to two major changes that took place at our annual Spruce Pine Day on Saturday, October 21.

Emotions of sadness and disbelief overtook any thoughts of those two moves even being logical at that time. You see, I knew even before Spruce Pine Day about the changes that would take place, but the feelings that came over me when I could actually see what they looked like were like a knife to my heart.

After all, it was just an empty spot where the stage used to be and the bands played for years, right? To add to my misery were friends leaving early because they were so upset. I had been somewhat skeptical about this change myself, but the hurt and the sadness of others was so overwhelming. How could this small move create the feelings we were experiencing? It sounds impossible, but I not only felt it but also saw what it did. So, yes! It was very possible.

Some were even asking me why we weren't having music this year. I told them about it being relocated behind the community center and told them Buford Parker would be playing first and the band KREEK would play the remainder of the day. Everyone had become accustomed to seven or eight different bands playing a variety of music at Spruce Pine Day, including country, country rock, oldies, gospel and bluegrass.

The absence of County Line Band and the Fairlanes affected many. After all, they had become like family to us, and you all know how much you miss family members who aren't at

get-togethers. Well, I was deeply affected, along with others, by their absence. As a matter of fact, my insides hurt for days after. I just hope they have found out by now how much they were missed by so many, myself included!

On that note, I do want to mention that there was never a negative remark made about the band KREEK. In fact, I heard many compliments throughout the day. They were really good! So it had nothing at all to do with the band itself; having *only* one band play the entire day was the reason for people's disappointment.

I had been in charge of the band scheduling for the past few years, but that was simply because no one else wanted to do it. There was finally someone this year who wanted the opportunity. Our newly elected president brought new ideas, and there is only way to see if they work. So he put his plans into action. The two major changes were the relocation of the stage and only having one band play all day.

I have to admit, as long as I allowed my heart to carry these changes, I just couldn't accept them. It was so mind-blowing to me. [I know. I can hear most of you saying how it wouldn't take much to blow *my* mind, but we are not discussing how my mind works at this time, so I'll press on.] It was not until I removed my emotions from the changes that part of them became clearer. Relocating the stage was a good move.



Gail Motes



It's a dream, not a plan

Dear Dave,
I've been trying to save cash to buy a home, but things always seem to come up that eat away at my savings. I have \$130,000 set aside, plus an emergency fund, and I make \$120,000 a year. I'm debt-free and renting right now, but eventually I'd like to buy a house in the \$300,000 range. I really hate the idea of owing the bank money, so would you advise continuing to save and pay cash, or is it okay to make a big down payment and take out a small mortgage?

Megan

Dear Megan,
I love your idea, but right now you have more of a dream than a plan. You'll need \$170,000 to go from \$130,000 in savings to \$300,000, right? So, let's start planning.

If you save \$60,000 a year, it would take you a little less than three years to get there. If you set aside \$40,000 a year, it would take a little more than four years. A little division—just divide \$170,000 by the amount you want to save each year—and you've got the beginnings of plan.

I see three ways to achieve this home ownership goal. One, you do the long division math and save like crazy for however many years it takes to save up \$170,000. The second is to put \$130,000 down on a \$300,000 home and take out a \$170,000, 15-year fixed rate mortgage. This is the only kind of debt I don't beat up people for having. The good news is, with your income, you

'CHANGE,' from page 4

There is a small rental house that sits behind the former stage location. When the bands were changing, it blocked the driveway. Those renters would have to wait to get in or out of their own driveway. Logic tells us how selfish we were being. The band needed more room. Thus, moving the stage makes sense.

Another reason was to solve the complaints of the food vendors near the stage. It was difficult to communicate between the buyers and sellers. They can't move because of the power sources required, but the band stage could be moved.

Doesn't that make sense? Well, of course! Should we not be putting the bands' needs above our own wants? Besides, they are providing

could pay it off in half that time.

A third possibility is to buy a \$130,000 house. Write a check for a nice, modest home now, and in five years—saving wildly the whole time, since you'll have no house payments—move up and pay cash for a \$300,000 home. If I'm in your shoes, that's what I'm doing!

Dave

Get it now!

Dear Dave,
I've noticed that the younger you are, the less expensive life insurance can be. I'm 32, and I'm still paying off my student loans. With this in mind, what's the best age to get term life insurance, and what does it cover?

Kalina

Dear Kalina,
Simply put, term life insurance covers death. Having student loans doesn't really matter when it comes to life insurance, either. If you have a family—or someone who is dependent on your income—you need 10 to 12 times your yearly income in a good, level term insurance policy. If you make \$50,000 a year, that means you need a term life insurance policy with \$500,000 to \$600,000 worth of coverage. If you don't have a family or dependents, I'd recommend a simple burial policy of \$10,000 to \$20,000 to cover any final expenses.

Either of these would be very inexpensive for someone your age. Keep in mind that life insurance becomes costlier as you get older.

Life insurance, or at least a burial policy if you're single and have no dependents, isn't one of the Baby Steps in my plan. But in your case, it's a go-get-it-now adult responsibility kind of thing!

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

our entertainment free of charge.

I only hope you will see that the relocation of the stage makes sense and was long overdue. Changes that affect the heart aren't easy to accept. They require a new mindset and letting go of our selfish ways.

Now, as for the idea of having only one band play all day—I didn't like it, and neither did many others. I really suggest we bring back County Line Band, the Fairlanes and KREEK. As for the rest, I suggest the person in charge next year can choose the others. We really need our family back with us, please!

I know we will never make everyone happy, but our common goal is to get as close as we can. And, yes, change can be good!

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What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling hams for Christmas. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, December 23 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore is asking teachers and students across Franklin County to help decorate the 2017 Franklin County Courthouse Christmas Tree. The ornament theme is Santa's Toyland. Ornaments should be sturdy and non-breakable, approximately 4-6 inches in size. They are due by December 1 and can be delivered to the first floor of the Franklin County Courthouse. Security guards will accept your ornaments. The 2017 courthouse tree will be ready for public viewing on Wednesday, December 6 through January 2, 2018, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. For more information, call 256-332-8880.

The Roxy's *Legend of Toyland*, a much-loved musical written and directed by Lanny McAlister, will premiere at the historic Roxy Theatre this Wednesday, November 29 and run through Sunday, December 3, with 12 performances. For ticket info, visit the Facebook page, The Legend of Toyland.

Isbell United Methodist Church will have a chicken stew fundraiser this Saturday, December 2 starting at 10 a.m. Stew will be \$18/gallon or \$5/quart. Thanks for your support!

The Foster Grandparent Program will host its 43rd annual Recognition Banquet on Thursday, December 7 at 9:30 a.m. at the A.W. Todd Centre. Lunch and entertainment will be provided. Please join us in honoring these special volunteers. RSVP by this Friday, December 1 at 256-332-6800.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris, Jr., Camp #1833, will meet Thursday, December 7 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more info, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces auditions for its second production of the 2017-2018 season, "One Toe in the Grave," by Jack Sharkey. Auditions will be held at Community Spirit Bank's Weatherford Centre on Sunday, December 10 at 2 p.m. and Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m. The play, directed by Emily Edmonson, has three adult male and three adult female parts, with older teens being able to play young adults. The play will be performed February 15-18, 2018, with practices beginning the first week in January. This will be the dinner theatre for the season, and groups that are interested in coming can contact Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286. For more info, call 256-356-8758.



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Council recognizes Fire Safety Poster Contest winners

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville Elementary School fifth-grader Bianca Santamaria was the overall winner of the fifth annual Russellville Fire Department Fire Safety Poster Contest. Santamaria and the other students who were honored as winners were recognized at the Russellville City Council's November 20 meeting.

The contest was developed to promote the message of fire safety and prevention for third-fifth-grade students. Students were given three weeks to prepare a poster and turn it into their teacher for judging. The entries were judged by students from the Russellville High School art class.

This year's theme was "Every Second Counts—Plan 2 Ways Out." The theme stresses the importance of ensuring you have two ways out of your residence in the event of a fire and that each member of the household knows them.

Finishing as the second overall winner was third-grader Wendy Barrientos. The third-place overall winner was fourth-grader Lilliana Figueroa.

Winners by grade were:

•Third Grade—Barrientos, first place; Madi Willis, second place; Gavin Willis, third place.

•Fourth Grade: Figueroa, first place; Noah Fretwell, second place.

•Fifth Grade: Santamaria, first place; Kimberly Cano, second place; Khalid Perez, third place.

Santamaria received an iPad Pro and a gift card from Walmart. Barrientos was awarded an iPad Air and a Walmart gift card. Figueroa received a Walmart gift card. Each of the three overall winners also won their teachers a \$25 Walmart gift card for classroom supplies.

Sponsors for the prizes included the Russellville Electric, Water & Sewer and Gas Boards;

Russellville Pharmacy; Wooten Chiropractic; Farmers Insurance; mayor David Grissom; Morgan Chiropractic; Miller's Affordable Furniture; Artistic Jewelry and Repair; G&G Steel; Hometown Pharmacy; ALFA Insurance; Green's Dependable Hardware; 43 Grill; Walmart; Listerhill Credit Union and Murray's Tire & Alignment.

In other business, the council approved a resolution to enter into an agreement with Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners to conduct a historic district survey and prepare a National Register of Historic Places registry in Russellville. This is a step toward allowing developers of businesses in the historic downtown district to be eligible for a 20 percent federal and state tax credit.

In other action, the council:

•Approved a resolution urging residents to spend at least \$22 with Russellville businesses on December 22, 2017.

•Declared two 1987 Ford Econoline vans as surplus property.

•Hired Michael James and Skylar Deaton as Russellville police officers.

•Accepted a letter of resignation from RPD officer Cody McCullar.

•Declared a vacancy for patrol officer in the RPD and authorized advertisement to solicit job applications.

•Approved a resolution removing the training coordinator and EMS officer from the city's Grade 8 pay scale and approved proposed incentive pay for the positions meaning there would be the same across-the-board compensation for the position whether it was filled by a firefighter or a lieutenant.

•Approved a service agreement with Physio Control, Inc., for the maintenance of LUCAS devices. The devices are used to deliver consistent, automated chest compressions to improve blood flow in victims of cardiac arrest.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Russellville fire chief Joe Mansell with poster winners Bianca Santamaria and Wendy Barrientos. Santamaria, a fifth-grader at RES, was the overall winner. Barrientos, an RES third-grader, took second place overall.

'Christmas for Kids' seeking sponsors for needy children

Submitted to the FFP

It's that time again! The organization "Christmas for Kids" is in need of sponsors for children during Christmas.

These children have one or both parents in jail or prison. These are innocent children who have done nothing wrong but are certainly affected because of their parents' wrongdoing.

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one or more of these children who do deserve a beautiful Christmas, or if you would like more information, please contact Debbie Dixon at P.O. Box 2234, Florence, AL 35630 or by calling 256-443-1297.

'GIST,' from page 1

Education as president, and he's on the board of directors of North Alabama Works and Valley State Bank.

Gist partnered with Russellville City Schools to update the football stadium's jumbotron for the athletic department, and he's a sponsor of Liberty Learning Foundation's Super Citizen program for the promotion of financial literacy and social studies. He was chosen this year to participate in Leadership Alabama. Gist has established technical trade and nursing scholarships in honor of his grandparents. Gist and his family are members of North Highlands Church of Christ.

"I thank the Extension Office and the Franklin County community for this award. I can think of a lot of people deserving of this award besides myself," Gist said. "I do appreciate it, and without my parents [Danny and Patsy Gist] I could not do what I do.

"I see a lot of kids growing up here who want to leave Russellville and Franklin County when they graduate. I decided to do all I can to help encourage them to stay. It takes a lot of work to keep jobs in our area, and it takes people pulling in the same

direction. Franklin County is a great place to live and raise a family. I have a grandchild on the way, so I want to do all I can do to make an impact."

Other award winners at the annual banquet included:

•Conservation Farm Family of the Year—Martin Rufus Golden, Jr. (Golden Farms).

•Community Development—Cheri McCain.

•Agriculture Youth Award—Colt Thomas.

"I thank the Extension Office and the community for this award. I can think of a lot of people deserving of this award besides myself," Gist said.

"I do appreciate it, and without my parents [Danny and Patsy Gist] I could not do what I do."

•Service Award—Franklin County Cattlemen's Association.

•Agricultural Business of the Year—Georgia Poultry.

•Farm Family of the Year—Barney and Pamela Ann Nix.

•Farmer of the Year—Joseph Fike.

•Agricultural Lifetime Achievement Award—

Ronnie Glass.

•Humanitarian Award—O'Neal King.

•Humanitarian Award—Sharon Hester.

Franklin County students also competed in the annual Farm-City Poster-Essay-Multimedia contests with the following winners:

•Poster K-3: First place - Anna Norton (Phil Campbell); Second place - Maddox Hoffman (Vina); Third Place - Mikayela Jackson (Red Bay); Fourth Place - Madison Edwards (Vina); Honorable Mention - Levi Miller (Vina), Joseph Beal (Red Bay), Alyssa Bryant (Belgreen) and Olivia Mixon (Belgreen).

•Poster 4th-6th: First place - Alex Quintero (Tharptown); Second Place - Vanessa Piomotor (Tharptown); Third Place - Lindsay Everett (Belgreen); Fourth Place - Maleeha Weaver (Red Bay); Honorable Mention - Lola Mays (Phil Campbell), Haley Abarca (Tharptown), Brasily Barboza (Tharptown) and Anna Kate Burks (Vina).

•Essay: Third Place - Jaidy Vela (Tharptown).

•Multimedia: First Place - Linda Bahena (Tharptown); Second Place - Hannah Hardin (Tharptown); Third Place - J.J. Alfaro (Tharptown).



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'GRIMES,' from page 1

sick leave as provided to other certified personnel. Other benefits under the contract include a cellular telephone provided by Russellville City Schools and family medical, dental and vision insurance. Grimes will be reimbursed for costs incurred in attending institutions of higher education during his tenure as superintendent.

The contract will automatically extend by one year unless the board gives Grimes written notice 12 months in advance of the last day of the contract.

As a condition of employment, Grimes must reside within the city limits of Russellville.

Grimes' original contract was to expire at the end of this school year. Now that his employment is secured through 2021, he's optimistic about again focusing on the five-year strategic plan.

"It will be difficult to accomplish," he said, "but our people have embraced it, and we're doing things better for our kids every day because our system has a plan and we believe in it."

A key component in succeeding with the master plan, Grimes explained, was to regularly gauge progress.

"We talked about a very strong, community-driven, comprehensive and measurable strategic plan that we check monthly for progress," Grimes said. "I'm extremely proud of

our instructional progress K-12. Our classrooms have become much more open [visits from other teachers, coaches, principals]. We have instructional walk-throughs implemented to improve instruction.

"We have changed, scheduled and improved both reading and math instruction, specifically small group instruction. We showed tremendous growth on the ACT Aspire this year for the first time in a long time. We improved in 18 of 23 grade/subject area combinations, with double-digit increases in several grade/subject areas."

During Grimes' tenure as superintendent, Russellville City Schools has received the 2017 School of Excellence award from AP College Ready for AP growth and qualifying scores. Additionally, Russellville High School was named niche.com's number one ranked standout school.

"We have great principals in place as instructional leaders and work well as a strong instructional team," Grimes said. "We also have a board that's very supportive of our school system and an advocate for the system. They have supported me and the needs of our system."

"I'm blessed to be able to have my contract extended and continue to work with a group of people so strong at what they do. What they do is truly uncommon."

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MS Industries II president excited about progress

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As MS Industries II, LLC, approaches the halfway point of what is expected to be a \$50 million investment in its Russellville silica plant and downtown headquarters, the company's president is excited about the progress made and the working relationship MS Industries has with local officials.

The company's plant is located on Walnut Gate Road. It will be a processing and distribution facility producing high-grade industrial silica.

MS Industries II president Steven D. Smith gave an update of the progress at the Walnut Gate Road location.

"Our private rail spur is complete, along with the dryer, screening tower, storage silos and approximately half of the conveyors that will move silica throughout the plant," Smith said.

Construction of the plant is a team effort that involves a number of north Alabama companies.

"CSFCO of Decatur is handling the fabrication and erection of our steel structures and the equipment housed in those structures, while Williams Electric of Sheffield is overseeing and handling all aspects of our electrical installation," Smith said. "In addition, two companies from Muscle Shoals, King & Associates and Keenum Construction, are providing assistance to us in various aspects of the project."

Smith also praised the efforts of the Russellville

Electric Board and the Russellville Gas Board for what he describes as their "timely assistance in establishing electrical power lines and gas lines needed by MSI as part of our operations."



COURTESY PHOTO

The MS Industries II plant on Walnut Gate Road will be a processing and distribution facility producing high-grade industrial silica.

Plans call for the construction to be completed next year, with the finished product a state-of-the-art industrial silica processing and distribution facility, the largest of its kind in the country.

"This plant will have more production and storage capacity for industrial silica than any similar plant across the country," said Dan Sim, manager of MS Industries II's Russellville plant.

Sim said the Russellville facility will be unique with its ability for production and storage of significant tonnages of whole grain and ground silica

flour before shipment by rail or truck.

"The storage capacity at our plant is virtually unheard of in the industrial silica market, and it will enable MSI to consistently meet customer demands in a timely manner," Sim said.

MS Industries II's silica is expected to be used in several industries and manufacturing processes, including thermal oil well cementation, foundries, fiberglass, abrasives, glass, filtration, cement and rubber/plastics.

Construction crews are expected to soon begin building two steel structures at the plant, one serving as the loading station for trucks and rail cars, and the other supporting large conveyors that will supply the storage silos already on site.

The project's final phase will be construction of the building that will house the large mills designed to grind and produce silica flour. Smith said total construction costs for the plant are expected to exceed \$50 million.

The company owns a silica mine at its Wolf Springs location in Lawrence County. Plans call for the silica to go through a wet processing at that site and then be transported to Russellville. Previous projections call for MS Industries II to ship more than one million tons of material, primarily by rail, each year.

Additionally, work continues on MS Industries' corporate headquarters in downtown Russellville. The building recently received an exterior painting, and renovations continue inside the facility, formerly occupied by Bank Independent.

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Ready for a rematch



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Through the first eight years (1992-99) of the SEC Championship Game era, Auburn and Georgia made just one title-game appearance between them (by the Tigers in 1997). Since 2000, however, the two perennial powers have combined for 11 championship-game berths (six by Georgia and five by Auburn, counting this season).

Given the frequency with which each team has made it to Atlanta over the past 18 years, it's surprising that Saturday's showdown will be the first time these two old rivals have met in the championship game. The Bulldogs have faced LSU three times and Arkansas and Alabama once each, posting an overall title-game record of 2-3. Auburn, meanwhile, has played Tennessee twice and Florida, South Carolina and Missouri once apiece, winning its last three trips to get to 3-2.

Saturday's meeting will, of course, be a rematch, something that has happened six times previously since the league adopted a championship-game format in 1992. Of those six occasions, the team that won the regular-season meeting also won the rematch five times. In 25 years, the only team to avenge a regular-season loss in the SEC title game was LSU (against Tennessee) in 2002.

That bodes well for Auburn, which led Georgia by 30 points before winning 40-17 at Jordan-Hare Stadium just three short weeks ago. There are a few reasons, however, to believe that Saturday's rematch will follow a drastically different script.

For starters, there's the neutral-site venue. Auburn went 7-0 this season at Jordan-Hare and has won 12 straight home games overall; during that same stretch, the Tigers are just 5-5 away from home. Secondly, Auburn is extremely banged up at the running back spot. Kam Pettway has been out a month with a shoulder injury, and SEC Offensive Player of the Year candidate Kerryon Johnson left Saturday's Iron Bowl win with a bum shoulder of his own. If neither is able to play this week, that leaves Kam Martin (and his 64 carries this season) as the featured tailback.

Finally, the Bulldogs are bound to play better than they did three weeks ago, when they laid an egg at the worst possible time.

Despite all that, I'll stick with Auburn to win again, for two reasons. Number one, the Tigers are healthy where it counts—along the line of scrimmage, where they dominated Georgia in the first meeting. When Auburn stuffed the run, the Bulldogs had nowhere else to turn on offense. Number two, Jarrett Stidham is playing great football. He outplayed Jalen Hurts last week, and the guess here is he'll do the same against freshman Jake Fromm on Saturday.

Nothing less than a playoff berth is at stake.
The Pick: Auburn 27 Georgia 23

Franklin Free Press 2017 All-Area Football Team



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Palmer (53) and Aycock (56) graded out as Russellville's top two offensive linemen this season. Phil Campbell's Thomas (below) accounted for nearly 2,000 total yards and 16 touchdowns.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

There's no way around it—2017 was not exactly a banner year for Franklin County football.

For the first time since 1997, the county failed to produce a single playoff team. Red Bay (5-5), Russellville (3-7), Phi Campbell (1-9), Tharptown (1-9) and Vina (1-9) combined to win 11 games and lose 39; their collective record was just 7-35 when you exclude all intra-county matchups.

Among them, Franklin County's five teams gave up more than twice as many points (1,692) as they scored (790); that works out to an average score of 34-16, with the good guys on the wrong side.

While Franklin County endured its toughest football season in 20 years, next-door neighbor Colbert Heights salvaged things for the *Free Press* coverage area, putting together the most successful campaign in program history. The Wildcats set a school record with 11 wins (two of which, incidentally, came against Red Bay and Phil Campbell) and made their deepest playoff run ever, losing last week to two-time defending Class 3A champion Piedmont in the state quarterfinals.

Needless to say, several players—and coaches—distinguished themselves for Colbert Heights over the preceding four months. And even amidst all the team struggles in Franklin County were many players whose remarkable individual efforts and achievements are worthy of acclaim.

We strive to recognize those players with our first-ever high school football All-Area team. Enjoy.



Offense
QB: Peyton Thomas (6'1, 200), Senior, Phil Campbell

Thomas capped off his prolific Bobcat career with a strong season, completing 148-of-284 attempts (52 percent) for 1,683 yards and 11 touchdowns. He topped the 280-yard mark twice (against Lamar County and Phillips) and threw multiple TD passes in three of Phil Campbell's



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PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Lewey (22) carried the ball 218 times for Red Bay, rushing for 1,198 yards and 16 scores.

'FOOTBALL' from page 13

final five games. Thomas also led the Bobcats in rushing, finishing the season with 313 yards and five scores on the ground. Over his final three seasons at PCHS, Thomas threw 41 TD passes.

RB: Aaron Lewey (5'9, 151), Senior, Red Bay
 Lewey flourished in his first season as the Tigers' featured runner, topping the 100-yard mark in every game but two [he was never held below 68 yards] and scoring multiple touchdowns on five occasions. Lewey was the backbone of Red Bay's run-first offense, toting the rock 218 times for 1,198 yards and 16 touchdowns. He averaged 5.5 yards per carry and 119.8 yards per game. He had a career-high four TD runs against Sheffield in Week 7 and then closed his prep career with a bang, carrying 36 times for 161 yards and two scores in a 22-14 win over Cherokee.

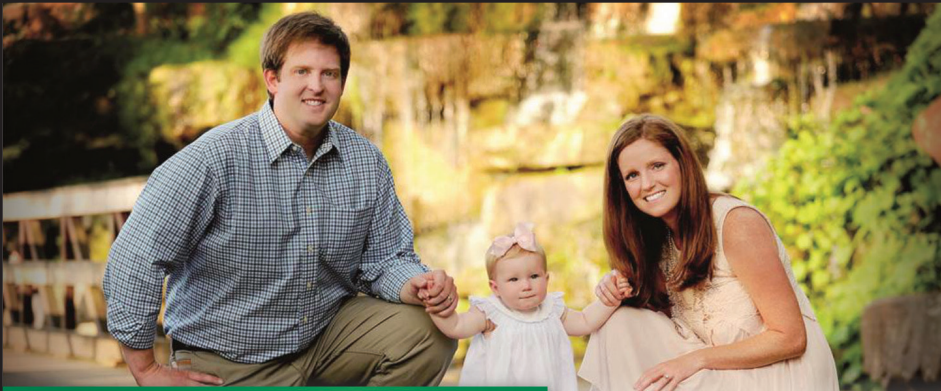
RB: Dylan Chandler (6'2, 188), Senior, Colbert Heights
 Chandler was a scoring machine for the Wildcats, rushing for a whopping 22 touchdowns and also adding a receiving score. He thrived as the featured back in a run-heavy offense, easily surpassing his previous career-highs with 202 car-

ries this season for 1,210 yards. A threat to go the distance at any time [he had a season-long 70-yard scoring run in a 35-7 rout of Colbert County and then a 65-yarder the following week in a win over Lauderdale County], Chandler was downright lethal near the goal line. He found the end zone at least once in 12 of the Wildcats' 13 games, scoring multiple touchdowns on six occasions.

WR: Luke Rooker (5'11, 160), Senior, Red Bay
 The Tigers didn't throw much, but when they did, Rooker was more often than not the intended target. He set career-highs across the board as a senior, catching 30 passes for 565 yards and five touchdowns. Blessed with sticky hands and deceptive speed, Rooker provided a dangerous big-play threat all year, averaging 18.8 yards per catch. He was consistent as well, topping 50 receiving yards in seven out of ten games.

WR: Robert Hamilton (5'8, 153), Senior, Russellville
 The versatile Hamilton lined up in the backfield a lot, but he could also play in the slot or out wide depending on the situation. He led the Golden

See 'FOOTBALL,' Page 15



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'FOOTBALL' from page 14

Tigers with 33 receptions on the season, and he finished the year with 608 yards from scrimmage and five total touchdowns rushing and receiving. Hamilton helped spark Russellville's strong second half, catching a pair of TD passes in a Week 6 win over St. John Paul II and then totaling a season-high 147 yards from scrimmage and two scores the following week against Brooks. He was also a dangerous weapon in the kick return game.

WR: Max Bullen (6'2, 182), Senior, Red Bay

Bullen battled injuries for part of his final season at Red Bay, but he was still one of the Tigers' top big-play threats. He averaged 18.0 yards per catch and was also the team's go-to man on jet sweeps, rushing for 320 yards and two touchdowns on 47 attempts (an average of 6.8 yards per carry). Bullen broke loose for a 27-yard touchdown run against Mars Hill and then had a 66-yarder in Week 6 at Lamar County.

TE: Brody Nix (6'2, 205), Senior, Phil Campbell

Nix technically lined up as a split end most of the time for the Bobcats, but his size and physicality made him more of a tight end—as any defender who tried to tackle him after the catch can attest. Nix led Phil Campbell with 31 receptions for 403 yards and three touchdowns. He caught at least one pass in every game but one, hauling in a season-high seven balls for 83 yards against Phillips in Week 6 and catching six passes for a season-best 93 yards at Red Bay in Week 9.

OL: John David Palmer (5'9, 250), Senior, Russellville

After excelling as a first-year starter at left guard in 2016, Palmer shifted to center as a senior and graded out as the Golden Tigers' top offensive lineman. He graded out at an absurd 96 percent against Brooks in Week 7 and then led a dominant second-half effort by the O-line in a critical win at East Limestone the following week.

OL: Cain Phifer (6'1, 248), Senior, Colbert Heights

Head coach Taylor Leathers described Phifer, the Wildcats' starting left tackle, as "the motor that drove the offensive line and brought that group together." Phifer's physicality and leadership up front helped pave the way for a pair of 1,000-yard rushers this season.

OL: Hunter Tyler (6'2, 300), Senior, Red Bay

Tyler anchored the Tigers' offensive line at right tackle, where he made 44 starts over the course of four varsity seasons. He helped pave the way for a Red Bay rushing attack that averaged 238.2 yards per game and 6.0 yards per carry this season.

OL: Dustin Hamby (6'3, 275), Senior, Phil Campbell

A two-year starter for the Bobcats at center, Hamby earned praise from head coach Ryan Swinney as the team's "most experienced, hardest-working lineman."

OL: John David Aycock (6'4, 215), Senior, Russellville

Aycock, who played almost exclusively on defense as a junior in 2016, took

See 'FOOTBALL,' Page 16



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Hamilton (21) led Russellville with 33 receptions and finished the year with more than 600 yards from scrimmage and five touchdowns.





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ATHLETE of the WEEK


Lucas McNutt

Junior Guard, Russellville

McNutt started the season with a bang last Monday, scoring a career-high 27 points to help the Golden Tigers earn a 62-55 road win at Colbert County. He was clutch down the stretch, hitting the go-ahead three-pointer with three minutes remaining and shooting 8-for-8 from the foul line in the fourth quarter.

McNutt, who led Russellville last season with 39 threes made and also shot a team-best 75 percent from the foul line, picked up right where he left off, knocking down four treys last Monday and making 11-of-12 free throws.





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'FOOTBALL' from page 15

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over the right tackle spot for the Golden Tigers as a senior and excelled. He gave up just one sack the entire season and graded out as Russellville's second-best lineman.

OL: Tyler Tubbs (6'0, 210), Junior, Colbert Heights

A two-way starter for the Wildcats, Tubbs graded out highly week after week at right tackle and drew praise from head coach Taylor Leathers for his consistency up front.

All-Purpose: Bernard Phinizee (5'8, 180), Senior, Russellville

Prior to Week 7 against Brooks, Phinizee had never taken direct snaps from center. Give him credit for being a fast learner. Lining up as Russellville's Wildcat quarterback over the final four games, Phinizee rushed for 515 yards and six touchdowns on 78 carries. For the season, he led the team in rushing (669 yards on 109 attempts) and receiving (332 yards on 18 catches), totaling 1,001 yards from scrimmage and nine TDs.

He also returned a pair of kickoffs for scores in Week 6 at St. John Paul II, finishing the night with 332 all-purpose yards in a 42-21 win. That wasn't even his signature game, though; three weeks later against Ardmore, he ran 20 times for 205 yards and four touchdowns while also catching an 83-yard scoring pass in a 44-6 homecoming win.

All-Purpose: Kevin Shaw (6'3, 185), Senior, Colbert Heights

Shaw's passing numbers (40 completions in 86 attempts for 579 yards and eight touchdowns) won't blow you away, but he teamed with fullback Dylan Chandler to form the identity of the Wildcats' prolific rushing offense. Shaw set new career-highs this season with 199 carries for 1,103 yards, adding nine rushing touchdowns.

He was at his dual-threat best in a second-round playoff game at Weaver, rushing for 161 yards on 21 attempts and also throwing for 101 yards and two scores in a 36-35 overtime win.

Kick Returner: Logan Jones (5'9, 170), Senior, Russellville

Jones, who racked up more than 230 yards in kickoff returns (including one run-back of 60-plus yards and another of 80-plus) against Hartselle in Week 5, was a threat to go the distance every time he touched the ball. He also finished his senior season as one of the team's leading receivers with 17 catches for 241 yards and two touchdowns.

Kick Returner: Brendan Borden (5'7, 160), Senior, Colbert Heights



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Kevin Shaw (3) was a dangerous dual threat for the Wildcats, throwing for 579 yards and eight touchdowns while also rushing for 1,103 yards and nine scores.

Borden, a starting linebacker, provided a field-flipping spark to the Wildcat offense all year long with his work on the kickoff return unit. His greatest hits included a 61-yarder to set up the game's first touchdown in a season-opening win over Red Bay and a 74-yarder to open the second half in a scoreless game against Clements, a game Colbert Heights would ultimately win 17-14.

Place Kicker: Blane Howard, Senior, Colbert Heights

In his first season of varsity football, Howard took over kicking duties for the Wildcats and excelled. He was reliable on extra points all season and consistently booted kickoffs down inside the 10-yard line, helping Colbert Heights control the field-position battle.

Defense

DE: Jeff Lloyd (6'2, 215), Senior, Russellville

Lloyd shifted to outside linebacker late in the season as part of the Golden Tigers' effort to crowd the line of scrimmage with more big bodies, but he was a problem for opposing offenses all

See 'FOOTBALL,' Page 17



Bragwell (4) called the shots in the Red Bay secondary, while McKinney (56) led the Tigers with 98 tackles.

'FOOTBALL' from page 16

season no matter where he lined up. Lloyd led Russellville in tackles with 77 (including eight for loss) and in sacks with six. He also forced two fumbles and picked off a pass. His best game came in Week 3 against Lawrence County when he made 14 total tackles, including 12 solo stops.

DT: Isaiah Miller (6'1, 305), Senior, Colbert Heights

Miller made 21 tackles this season and recovered a fumble, but stats alone don't do justice to the impact he made as an interior lineman. Miller's primary task was to occupy multiple blockers at the point of attack, allowing a veteran group of linebackers to fill gaps and make plays. It's a thankless job, but somebody's gotta do it, and few did it better than the massive Miller.

DT: Elijah Ingle (5'10, 235), Junior, Red Bay

A two-year starter on the interior of the line, Ingle drew constant double-teams as a junior this season. In spite of that extra attention from opposing offensive lines, Ingle earned praise from head coach Michael Jackson as Red Bay's "most consistent defensive player." A pulling guard on offense for the Tigers, Ingle rarely left the field.

DE: Bud Pratt (5'10, 170), Senior, Colbert Heights

A former receiver in the Wildcats' spread-offense days, Pratt got bigger and stronger in the weight room and transformed from a scout team player into a menace at defensive end. Through 12 games as a senior, he was third on the team in tackles with 70, including 8.5 for loss. Pratt was unblockable at times, recording 3.5 tackles for loss in a 35-0 shutout of Sheffield in Week 6.

DE: Roman Cortez (5'9, 190), Senior, Russellville

The Golden Tigers' Defensive Lineman of the Year as a junior in 2016, Cortez was limited to eight games in 2017 but still managed to create havoc at (and often behind) the line of scrimmage. One of the team's strongest players, he finished his senior season with 30 tackles (including five for loss) and two forced fumbles.

LB: Dylan Chandler (6'2, 188), Senior, Colbert Heights

Chandler's touchdown-scoring exploits on offense got more attention, but he was outstanding at outside linebacker as well. Through Week 12, he led the Wildcat defense in total tackles (86) and tackles for loss (13) while also picking off two passes and recovering a fumble for a touchdown.

LB: Cam McKinney (6'0, 220), Freshman, Red Bay

Head coach Michael Jackson believes that McKinney could become one of the best linebackers in north Alabama, and he's well on his way after a strong freshman season. McKinney led the Tigers in tackles seven times in ten games and finished the year with 98 total stops. Over the season's final eight weeks, he averaged 10.8 tackles per game, making a career-high 18 stops

against Sheffield and then finishing strong with 11 tackles and his first career interception in the season finale against Cherokee.

LB: Brody Nix (6'2, 205), Senior, Phil Campbell

Nix was a constant in the middle of the Bobcat defense, leading the team in tackles in every game but one. He finished the season with 76 total stops and also had an interception.

LB: Bernard Phinizee (5'8, 180), Senior, Russellville

Due to the heavy load he carried on offense, Phinizee didn't play a full complement of snaps on the other side of the ball. But he more than made his presence felt at outside linebacker, recording 53 tackles (many of the bone-jarring variety). He also picked off one pass, broke up two more and forced two fumbles.

DB: Korey Saint (6'2, 200), Senior, Colbert Heights

The versatile and hard-hitting Saint split his time between linebacker and strong safety—with the emphasis on *strong*. He was in the box more often than not and ranked second on the team through Week 12 with 85 tackles, including 5.5 for loss. He also ranked among team leaders with three interceptions, and he returned a fumble 24 yards to set up a touchdown in the Wildcats' second-round playoff win over Weaver.

DB: Kevin Shaw (6'3, 185), Senior, Colbert Heights

Shaw's collegiate future could be at safety, where he picked off five passes this season and amassed 170 yards in interception returns. That included a 55-yard pick-six to seal the Wildcats' 28-0 first-round playoff win over Locust Fork. Shaw also recovered two fumbles this season and finished the year with 24 tackles, despite playing defense only in certain situations throughout the regular season.

DB: Kolby Bragwell (6'2, 185), Junior, Red Bay

Starting quarterbacks don't often play a full load of snaps on defense, too, but Bragwell was too valuable on the back end of Red Bay's D for head coach Michael Jackson to take him off the field. Surrounded by first-year starters at several other spots, Bragwell called the shots in the secondary and also made more than his share of plays, finishing the season with 51 tackles and one interception.

See 'FOOTBALL,' Page 19

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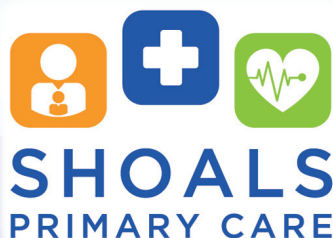
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Congratulations to Week 13 winner JUANITA HOLLAND, who correctly picked nine out of ten games and also picked Auburn to beat Alabama 22-19!

Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

Week 14: December 1-2 **Brady's Pick** **Your Pick**

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Auburn vs. Georgia	Auburn	_____
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Wisconsin vs. Ohio State	Ohio State	_____
Central Florida vs. Memphis	Central Florida	_____
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Lady Red Devils start strong, take tournament title

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Vina's girls got their season off to a strong start, winning six of seven games at the Vina Holiday Invitational in mid-November and taking home the tournament title.

Senior guard Abby Hester led the way for the Lady Red Devils (6-1 through Monday), averaging 20.7 points for the tournament and shooting 70-for-80 from the foul line. Hester handed out double-figure assists in six of the seven games, including a state record 19 in an 80-32 win over Waterloo on Saturday, November 18.

Sophomore guard Kaitlyn King scored a career-high 34 points in that rout of Waterloo, knocking down eight three-pointers. King averaged 15.9 points per game for the tournament and made a team-high 24 threes.

Junior forward Emma Humphres also had a strong tournament, averaging 11.7 points and making 18 threes in six games. Vina averaged 69.4 points per game over the course of three days, earning wins over Whitesburg Christian Academy, Sheffield, Winston County, Fayette County, Paint Rock Valley and Waterloo. The Lady Red Devils lost just once, falling 76-73 to Addison in their second game of the tournament.

"We're a lot better than we were last year," said head coach Richie Hester, whose team finished 22-9 last season. "We're a much stronger team in a lot of different ways. I think the tournament was good for everybody. Every team that came down had a good time and got in some good games. It helped everybody."

Vina 67 Whitesburg Christian 47

Abby Hester had 17 points and 11 assists for the Lady Red Devils in their tournament opener.

Kaitlyn King also scored 17 points for Vina, knocking down three threes. Emma Humphres, Rayleigh Guin and Sarah Johnson each added eight points. Hester shot 8-for-10 from the foul line.

Addison 76 Vina 73

Double-doubles from Abby Hester and Emma Humphres were not enough for the Lady Red Devils in a loss to Addison.

Hester scored 13 of her team-high 25 points in the fourth quarter and also handed out 10 assists. Humphres hit six threes and finished with 24 points and 12 rebounds. Both players fouled out late in the game, along with sophomore guard Kaitlyn King, who scored eight points.

Addison led 56-49 going into the fourth quarter. Vina out-scored the Lady Bulldogs 24-20 in the fourth and had a chance to tie the game in the final seconds, but Rayleigh Guin's three-pointer rimmed off and Addison held on for the win.

"That was a tough one to lose," head coach Richie Hester said. "[Addison] was good. They won twenty-six games last year and have three of their top scorers back. They're ranked seventh in the state. Our girls weren't ready for that, but that's why you play these tournaments.

"I think if we played them again, we could beat them. We finally started playing in the fourth quarter. Emma Humphres had a really good game."

Addison shot 20-for-23 from the line as a team. Abby Hester hit 12-of-13 free throws for Vina and also made three three-pointers.

Vina 69 Sheffield 50

Abby Hester scored 18 points against Sheffield to lead four Vina players in double-figures.

Hester shot 13-for-16 from the foul line and also dished out 10 assists. Kaitlyn King and Emma Humphres each made four threes, finishing with 16 points and 14 points, respectively. Rayleigh Guin added 10 points.

Vina 60 Winston County 50

Trailing by nine points with five minutes remaining, the Lady Red Devils closed the game with a 21-2 run to hand Winston County its only loss of the tournament.

"That was a big win for us," Richie Hester said. "We played good and looked like a championship team in that game. That's what I'm looking for."

Abby Hester finished the game 16-for-17 from the foul line, including 9-for-9 in the fourth quarter. She scored 13 of her team-high 26 points in the fourth.

Kaitlyn King knocked down four threes and scored 14 points, eight of which came in the big fourth quarter. Rayleigh Guin added seven points, and Emma Humphres finished with six points and eight rebounds. Eighth-grader Sarah Scott pulled down a team-leading 10 boards.

Winston County, which had previously beaten Addison, finished the tournament 4-1. Addison finished 3-1.

Vina 68 Fayette County 46

Abby Hester poured in a season-high 29 points, leading the Lady Red Devils to an impressive win over Class 4A Fayette County.

Hester went 15-for-18 from the foul line and also handed out 11 assists. Rayleigh Guin, an eighth-grader, added 11 points, and Kaitlyn King had eight. Emma Humphres, Sarah Johnson and Sarah Scott scored six points apiece. Humphres and Scott each pulled down eight rebounds, and Johnson grabbed six boards.

Vina 69 Paint Rock Valley 24

Abby Hester's triple-double led Vina to an easy victory over Paint Rock on the tournament's final day.

Hester finished with 20 points, 11 assists and 10 steals, knocking down four threes and shooting 4-for-4 from the foul line. Kaitlyn King also made four threes and scored 14 points, and Sarah Johnson and Rayleigh Guin each added 12 points.

Vina 80 Waterloo 32

Sophomore guard Kaitlyn King set new career-highs with eight threes made and 34 points in Vina's final game of the tournament.

Abby Hester scored 10 points and also set a single-game state record with 19 assists. Emma Humphres had 12 points, including a pair of threes. Kaleigh Vandiver knocked down three threes and scored nine points, and Rayleigh Guin added seven points.

'FOOTBALL' from page 17

DB: Carson Shaw (6'1, 170), Freshman, Colbert Heights

Kevin's younger brother made a name for himself this season, holding down a starting corner spot as a freshman for a defense that recorded three shutouts and allowed only 13.5 points per game. Shaw was good in coverage, picking off two passes and breaking up three more, and he wasn't afraid to stick his nose in the pile either. He finished the season with 43 tackles, including 32 solo stops and two tackles for loss.

Punter: Kenner Perez, Junior, Russellville

Perez, a soccer player who began the season on the Golden Tiger jayvee, moved up to the varsity and became the MVP of the kicking game. His skill with directional punting largely prevented Russellville opponents from having the opportunity to return kicks. Perez was also reliable as a place kicker, rarely missing extra points and booting three field goals—including a critical 24-yarder in a 17-13 win at East Limestone in Week 8.

Coach of the Year: Taylor Leathers, Colbert Heights

After leaving his post as offensive coordinator at Lexington, Leathers needed just two years to take the Wildcat program to unprecedented heights (pun intended). At his urging, the Wildcats used the heartache of last year's final-week flameout as

fuel for this season's fire. Dialed in from the start, Leathers' senior-laden team improved steadily from week to week, ultimately announcing their presence as a bona fide Class 3A contender with impressive back-to-back wins over rivals Colbert County and Lauderdale County in mid-October.

Leathers worked with his defensive coaching staff (including coordinator Lonnie Robinson) to simplify the Wildcats' scheme for 2017, and the results were evident. They recorded three shutouts and cut their points-allowed average from 29.5 points per game last year to 13.5 per game this season. Offensively, the Wildcats embraced Leathers' old-school approach and began physically imposing their will on opponents with regularity; quarterback Kevin Shaw and full-back Dylan Chandler each rushed for more than 1,100 yards behind a veteran offensive line.

By year's end, Colbert Heights had set a new school record with 11 wins—including a 36-35 overtime thriller at Weaver in the second round of the Class 3A playoffs that sent the Wildcats to the state quarterfinals for the first time in the 52-year history of the program.

Leathers said it best following his team's loss to two-time state champion Piedmont in last week's third round: "People won't forget the 2017 Wildcats."



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW
Leathers led the Wildcats to a historic season.

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Franklin County District Attorney
256.332.8870 • 256.710.4713
(daytime) (after hours)
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Cassie Medley, Executive Director
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HEALTHCARE

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