



Making spirits bright

Russellville High School's FBLA held its annual toy drive on December 1, collecting \$275 and numerous toys for needy families.

Fixer-upper

AT&T has tentative plans to introduce fixed wireless to rural Franklin and Colbert County during the first quarter of 2018. See page 3 for details.

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12.13.17

West receives Inspiration Award

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When you hear how she's described by others, it's no surprise Annie B. West received the Foster Grandparent Program's Inspiration Award at their annual banquet.

West, a Foster Grandparent volunteer for the Franklin County SPAN program, received the award at the 43rd annual banquet held last Thursday at the A.W. Todd Centre.

"She has a heart of gold and truly loves the children she works with," Latham said of West, a Foster Grandparent volunteer for the Franklin County SPAN program. "She inspires them to reach for the stars and to never give up. She is such an inspiration for our program."

"She is a woman that includes all things beautiful—a beautiful smile, heart, presence and a love for her students," said Allison Hayes with SPAN. "She represents her title of Foster Grandmother with diligence, motivation and compassion."

West is one of approximately 80 foster grandparents who work in day care facilities, schools, afterschool programs and Head Start. The program covers five counties, including Franklin, Colbert, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston.

Jessica Latham, Foster Grandparent Program director, said West was a

See 'WEST,' Page 3



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI
Annie B. West, seated, with Foster Grandparent Program director Jessica Latham.

Have an opinion?
Story idea?



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Borden: 'Time to take the next step'

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education accepted the retirement of assistant superintendent Donald Borden at a short meeting last Tuesday evening.

Borden's retirement will take effect December 31, 2017.

An assistant superintendent the last eight years for Franklin County Schools, Borden has more than 38 years in education and 27 years of experience in Franklin County's school system. He ran for the office of superintendent in 2016 as the Democratic nominee, an election won by current superintendent Greg Hamilton.

Borden said the decision to retire wasn't easy, and he knows he'll miss the relationships he's built with his co-workers through the years.

"I will miss everybody in this system," Borden said. "They're like family to me, especially the people in the central office and the bus shop. I'll miss all of you, but it's just time for me to take the next step."

At what may be his final board meeting, Borden saw the board approve the purchase of 44 new propane school buses for Franklin County Schools. The board followed his recommendation of purchasing International buses due to their reliability in the past.

"I appreciate each of you working with us on this bus issue," Borden told board members. "This is a good thing for Franklin County Schools."

Along with each board member in attendance at Tuesday's meeting, Hamilton expressed his appreciation to Borden for the work he's done to make Franklin County Schools the best it can be for its students.

"I appreciate your years of service to the Franklin



Donald Borden

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OB/GYN



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Dr. Sledge is now seeing patients every Wednesday at the Littleville clinic.

An Alabama native, Dr. Sledge completed his OB/GYN residency at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, TX (top 10 national medical residency programs). He is able to communicate with both his English and Spanish-speaking patients.



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Mrs. Avery K. Coats,
Russellville, age 84
Died Tuesday, December 5, 2017.
Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Dorothy "Dot" Louise Montgomery, Russellville, age 89
Died Wednesday, December 6, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

James Dale Nix,
Russellville, age 55
Died Thursday, December 7, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Shady Grove Cemetery.

Doug Smith, Jr.,
Russellville, age 57
Died Wednesday, December 6, 2017.
Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in McWright Cemetery.

Eleanore A. Turbyfill,
Russellville, age 77
Died Sunday, December 10, 2017.
Visitation will be held Thursday, December 14, 2017 from 12-2 p.m. at Pinkard Funeral Home, with funeral service to follow. Interment will be in Macedonia Cemetery.

Derek Lee Parks of Springfield, Illinois passed away at home on November 29, 2017. He was born in Kirkwood, Missouri on May 19, 1981 to Jack and Carolyn Parks.



Derek graduated from Williamsville High School in 2000. Throughout the years he enjoyed running into his classmates for a visit. His family and friends enjoyed his sense of humor. Derek was afflicted with muscular dystrophy but especially enjoyed going to karaoke with his dad. Derek was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Victor and Helen Parks of Rockwell, Iowa, and maternal grandmother, Peggy Sue Wilson of Russellville, Alabama, and several aunts and uncles.

He is survived by his father, Jack Parks of Rockwell, Iowa; mother, Carolyn Parks of Springfield, Illinois; brother, Justin Parks of Chicago; half-sister Michelle (Kevin) Ames and niece, Emma, of Dallas, TX; grandfather, Melvin Wilson of Russellville, Alabama; and aunts, uncles and cousins.

There will be a graveside service held in Mason City, Iowa at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorials in Derek's name may be sent to Muscular Dystrophy Association, 222 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60606.

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AT&T planning fixed wireless in Franklin County

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

There may be an option on the horizon for rural Franklin and Colbert County residents looking for affordable broadband wireless internet service.

AT&T has tentative plans to introduce fixed wireless to rural Franklin and Colbert County during the first quarter of 2018.

When contacted by the *Free Press* in July, an AT&T spokesman did not reveal specific details of the range, cost and location of two base stations that are to be installed in Franklin County, but the spokesman said additional details would be released this fall.

AT&T's plans were revealed this summer by Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay), who heard about a similar announcement in Greene County. Morrow contacted AT&T officials to see what plans had been made for his legislative district.

Morrow is part of the Franklin County Broadband Task Force, which has been working to bring

affordable broadband for several years.

AT&T fixed wireless internet works through an antenna installed on the user's home and an indoor Wi-Fi Gateway router. That antenna communicates with the nearest cell tower to ensure the strongest, most reliable signal, according to the website <https://www.att.com/internet/fixed-wireless.html>.

Plans call for the company to install two such towers "west of Russellville," with two additional locations "east of Russellville" targeted for 2018.

The company promises download speeds of at least 10Mbps, at least 1Mbps for uploading and 160GB of internet usage per month.

Interested users can log onto AT&T's web site to find out if they qualify in their area for AT&T Fixed Wireless Internet. Once the company brings fixed wireless to Franklin County, it would be available to locations that can receive an AT&T cell signal.

Cost is projected at \$60/month (\$50/month if bundled with another AT&T service).

Russellville resident Jamie Kiel, a member of the task force and a candidate for House District 18 in

2018, said that if AT&T delivers on its plans, it would be an important first step toward the goal of countywide coverage.

"It's not the best long-term solution to our broadband issue, but it does provide a bridge for our residents until we are able to get fiber to every home," Kiel said. "Fiber is the ultimate goal for Alabama. Speeds of 100Mbps to 1GB are possible with fiber internet. The discussion about a possible partnership with Tombigbee Electric and freedomFIBER is an exciting move in the right direction."

County officials are working with Tombigbee Electric Cooperative to discuss a possible plan that could bring fiber internet to rural Franklin County and Tishomingo County, MS.

"We were able to get water and electricity to every home in rural Alabama, and broadband internet should be treated the same way," Kiel said. "Healthcare, education, business and quality of life are all impacted by the lack of broadband. I will make every effort to continue to bring solutions to this issue."

Effort underway to prevent return of dog hunting

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A concentrated effort to prevent the return of dog deer hunting in Franklin County is being made by the Alabama Sportsman's and Landowner's Council (ASLC).

The *Free Press* received a copy of a letter mailed to all ASLC members in Franklin and Lauderdale Counties notifying them of "a concerted effort being made to restore deer hunting with dogs in Franklin and Lauderdale Counties."

The November 18, 2017 letter is signed by Sybil Deschaines with the ASLC. She urges members to contact the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to state their objections to any possible return of dog deer hunting.

"If Franklin County is rescinded, other counties will fall," the letter reads.

Dog deer hunting was banned in Franklin County prior to the 2003 hunting season by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Board. Franklin is one of 13 Alabama counties not to have dog seasons at all for antlered bucks.

Norris Duncan, an ASLC member, owns more than 400 acres in Franklin County. Duncan says he's had negative experiences with dog hunters, and he's opposed to any proposed reinstatement of the law.

"I've had a lot of problems with it before and hope it doesn't come back. Not all of them, but a lot of dog hunters, are overbearing about it," Duncan said. "I remember seeing a man on the

highway near my house who let his dogs loose on my land and stood there waiting for the deer to come out."

The letter encourages members to contact the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Board to state their objections. Additionally, members are encouraged to contact their local legislative delegation.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) said he has not been contacted by any residents or members of the Alabama Dog Hunters Association about any movement to return dog deer hunting to Franklin County.

The letter did not include details of any specific coordinated effort to restore dog deer hunting to Franklin County. It describes an "effort to rescind all bans and permit systems in place in Alabama."

The Alabama Sportsman's and Landowner's Council, Inc., was organized in 1996 and has representation in 65 of Alabama's 67 counties. The organization's goal is "to promote hunting as a recreational sport while encouraging ethical hunting, sound game management practices, protection of landowner's rights, promotion of hunter safety and above all—respect for the rights of everyone who enjoys Alabama's great environment," according to the website, www.foa.org.

Lonnie Miller is the president of the Alabama Dog Hunters Association, a 1,500-member association with membership in 17 counties. Miller's organization is working to improve the reputation of dog hunters in Alabama, and his association's efforts have resulted in fewer dog hunting incidents across the state. Miller said he's not aware of any effort to reinstate dog hunting in Franklin

County, and he doesn't think the political climate is ripe for expanding the sport at this time.

"We have a lot of counties who would like to have dog hunting open, but I'm not aware of a concerted, organized effort, and for sure there's not one on our part in Franklin County," Miller said. "We do the best we can to hold on to what we've got. I'd love to see the whole state open up."

Miller said his association has a positive working relationship with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Board, but he believes there is "no way" the DCNR folks will open up anything at this point.

"People in the '80s and '90s did things dog hunting they shouldn't have been doing," Miller said. "There has been a big change, though. We've made a drastic difference in the last year with the number of complaints. If we have a good year this year like last year, we anticipate something may happen, but honestly we're not expecting any county to open up for a while."

"There have been problems in the past. If people would keep their dogs on their property, it wouldn't be an issue. But political pressure is what stopped dog hunting."

The Alabama Dog Hunters Association has approved the dog hunter's 10 Commandments. They include always getting written permission from all landowners before hunting, recognizing the rights of other legal hunters and their legal hunting methods, and not hunting from cars or on public roadways or holding public grouping on public road right-of-ways. For more information on the organization, log onto www.alabamadoghuntersassociation.com.

'WEST,' from page 1

very fitting recipient of the Inspiration Award when you consider her relationship with the students she works with each day.

"She has a heart of gold and truly loves the children she works with," Latham said. "She inspires them to reach for the stars and to never give up. She is such an inspiration for our program."

The Foster Grandparent Program is based in Russellville, with its office at Westside

Apartments. Members work an average of 15-40 hours each week and receive a small, non-taxed stipend twice a month for their time.

Other winners at this year's banquet included:
 •Volunteer of the Year: Corrine White, Brooks Elementary.
 •Fundraising Award: Judy Martin, Hackleburg Elementary.
 •Rookie of the Year Award: Patricia Whitson.

•Most Service Hours Award: Constance Hooks, Touch of Love Daycare.

•Volunteer Rose Awards: Bernice Bolton, Russellville Elementary; Martha Taylor, Vina; Lennis Reams, Vina; Mary Ann Williams, Belgreen; Margaret McGuire, Red Bay; and Hattie Freeman, West Elementary.

For more information on the Foster Grandparent Program, contact Latham at 256-332-6800.

Honey Do: Holiday paws

Christmas and other holidays can certainly be stressful for us, but what about the pets who find their space invaded by strange visitors, trees in the house, funny-looking packages and unfamiliar smells of candles, food and potpourri?

Why, it's enough to send a canine to the crazy-house.

More than 79 million U.S. households (65 percent) have at least one pet. More than 54 million have a dog, and more than 42 million have a cat. This information is easily found at www.humanesociety.org, along with quite a few other amazing facts concerning pets.

These statistics are why we need to look at some holiday safety tips for the four-legged members of the family who don't understand that they shouldn't play with shiny glass balls, chew on electrical cords and eat chocolate candy dropped by the kids. You can't watch them constantly, so use caution and everyone can have a happier holiday.

Dogs and cats should never be allowed to eat or chew on batteries, snow globes (may contain anti-freeze), styrofoam, plastic wrap, twist ties, ribbon, children's toys, medicine or medicine bottles. People food such as table scraps

can cause a pet to gain weight. Chicken bones can splinter and do terrible damage to gums and digestive systems. Never give a pet chocolate, as it can be toxic to dogs and cats. Plants such as holly, poinsettia and mistletoe are also toxic and should be kept out of reach. If you notice diarrhea or vomiting, a trip to the vet is in order.



Doug Green

When decorating your tree, place breakable ornaments higher up and out of reach. Cats love to climb, so make your tree stable and secure, even if you have to tie it off to the wall. Real food decorations (strung popcorn) can be a real attraction and could result in a toppled tree.

If your pet is nervous around strangers, it's a good idea to invest in an indoor kennel that can be kept in an unused room. Familiarize your pet with these arrangements ahead of time and provide plenty of water and favorite toys or blankets.

It's very easy to get busy this time of year and forget little things that can have a huge impact. Always be safety-minded, and remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



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Show those stockings a little love

Courtesy of DaveRamsey.com

Stocking stuffers at Christmas are kind of like cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving. It's there every year, but it's usually an afterthought. It's the opening band for the big concert.

But don't you think the Christmas stocking deserves a little more love? After all, those stockings—hung delicately over the fireplace—are the first to greet Santa as he belly-flops into your living room, and the first to bid him farewell when he climbs back up.

Because we think stockings deserve a little more attention this Christmas, we thought we'd share our five rules for stocking stuffers.

•Set a dollar limit.

This is top priority! How much are you going to spend on each stocking?

Some people like to keep the stocking stuffers cheap, while other people use the stockings to go all-out with smaller gifts like jewelry or watches. Either way is fine, but make sure you budget for the stocking just like everything else.

•Put some thought into it.

The stocking isn't an afterthought. It's a gift, like any other gift under the tree. Ask yourself this question: Am I filling the stocking just to say I've filled it, or am I buying stuff the other person will appreciate?

Maybe your spouse would like a Starbucks gift card and some chocolate more than a 10-pack of socks!

•Think outside the stocking.

Do you give the same stocking stuffers every year—a gift card, maybe a pack or two of gum and some candy? What could you do that's completely different this year?

You might consider giving coupons for acts of kindness (like watching the kids one night while your wife goes out for a girls' night), or giving details about a special summer vacation you're saving for. Sometimes an experience is more memorable than a physical gift, so what type of experience can you provide with the stocking?

The stocking isn't an afterthought. It's a gift, like any other gift under the tree. Ask yourself this question: Am I filling the stocking just to say I've filled it, or am I buying stuff the other person will appreciate? Maybe your spouse would like a Starbucks gift card and some chocolate more than a 10-pack of socks!

•Consider a theme.

Rather than just a hodgepodge of different stuff, you might want to consider creating a theme for each stocking. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, but that little bit of extra effort could make someone's Christmas morning even more special.

•Don't force it.

There's nothing wrong with simply using the stockings as decorations and saving all your money for the gifts under the tree.

If your family has never done the stocking thing, there's no need to start now—unless you truly feel like the change will be worth it. Your traditions are *your* traditions. Own them, and be proud!

But if you find yourself trying to spice up your stocking-stuffer game this year, take these ideas to heart. We think your family and friends will appreciate the extra effort!

—Used with permission from DaveRamsey.com



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Stay intense!

Dear Dave,
I just accepted a new job that will pay me \$30,000 a year more than my old position. I've got about \$55,000 in debt I've been working hard to pay off, and I know now I need to adjust my budget. Do you have any advice?

Mitch

Dear Mitch,
The first thing I'd say is don't go crazy on any big-ticket items while you're paying off debt. Keep it simple, and go out to celebrate with a nice dinner after you get your first paycheck. Remember, the more you put toward debt, the faster it goes away.

For the time being, I want you to remain passionate about getting out of debt. Your thought process needs to be, "Wow, I got a new job making more money. I can get out of debt even quicker!"

Again, I'm okay with you adjusting a bit that first month and having a little fun to celebrate your good fortune. But after that, I want you to turn around and attack that debt with even more intensity than before. Then, once you're out of debt, you can celebrate that with something a lot nicer.

Congratulations, Mitch!

Dave

No electronic access!

Dear Dave,
You say to never give collectors access to your checking account. Does that include debit cards, too?

Sue

Dear Sue,
Yes, it does! Collectors are looking to get as much as they can on a bad, late debt. I've seen numerous situations where collectors have taken more than the agreed upon amount from someone's account once they gained access. To be fair, the collection business does have a few good people in it. But it also has those who will lie and make threats.

If you're doing something like scheduling utility payments to come through your debit card or out of your personal checking account, that's perfectly fine. But there are much safer ways to handle situations with debt collectors. You can send a money order overnight or wire the cash to them. You can also send a cashier's check. Some folks have even used pre-paid debit cards that aren't attached to any of their accounts.

The pre-paid debit card isn't my favorite way to handle these things, but it's a lot better than giving a dishonest collector the opportunity to really mess you up!

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.*

For news updates throughout the week, don't forget to check us out on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

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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.


 Second Missionary Baptist Church (14001 Hwy. 43 South in Russellville) cordially invites you to worship with them this Sunday, December 17 at 3 p.m. to celebrate Christmas. Their special guests for the celebration will be YOU and Antioch C.M.E. Church of Tharptown, with their pastor Kristi Gills. Come praying that you will walk away with extra blessings. Dinner, as always, is blessed and served at 2 p.m. All are welcome. All food left from the 2 p.m. service will be served after worship. Carry-outs are welcome. For more information, call 256-332-7450.

 Gentiva 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. You are invited to attend.

 The 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.

 First Presbyterian Church of Russellville (201 N. Green Avenue) will host its annual Christmas Eve candlelight service on December 24 at 5 p.m. Join us for this special time of worship at this special time of year.

 Hawkins Church on Railroad Avenue in Phil Campbell will hold a New Year's Eve service on Sunday, December 31, starting at 7 p.m. Bring a covered dish. Everyone is welcome! For more information, call 256-324-5288.

 Kids and Kin dates for January through March in Franklin County are as follows and will be held at the Franklin County Baptist Association Building, 128 Guard Street NE, Russellville, AL: Thursday, January 11 at 5 p.m.—"Tips Relative Child Care Providers Can Use to Guide Children's Behavior," Elysia Ergle, Southern Wellness; Thursday, January 25 at 5 p.m.—"Sensory Processing Disorder Signs in Infants and Toddlers," Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama; Thursday, February 8 at 5 p.m.—"Teaching Children Tolerance," Rebecca Richmond, Child Care Central; Thursday, February 22 at 5 p.m.—"Healthy Habits," Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama; Thursday, March 8 at 5 p.m.—"Ready or Not, Here I Come," Dee McNalley, UCP; Thursday, March 22 at 5 p.m.—"Ways Babies Learn When You Sing to Them," Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama.



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 Matthew 25:35

Hodges FD denied share of Marion tax revenue

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Marion County voters approved a Constitutional amendment calling for a three mill property tax to benefit fire protection in their county, it seemed to be a good thing for both the citizens and the fire departments.

One year after its passage, the bill has proven controversial both in its application and the question of which departments it will benefit.

At the center of that controversy is the Hodges Volunteer Fire Department, which has served residents in both Franklin and Marion counties for decades. Hodges FD has its main building in Franklin County and a substation with a 1,250-per-minute pumper, located 2.5 miles into Marion County.

Hodges was one of the Franklin County volunteer fire departments whose residents approved an annual fee of \$36 to support the department each year, so the department will benefit from that revenue.

Since Hodges FD also serves Marion County though, the members of the department also expected to benefit from revenue through the Marion County tax. But that expectation hit a major roadblock in the form of the Marion County Firefighters Association.

Hodges chief Leslie Cantrell said when his department inquired about its share of the Marion County tax revenue, he was told that the law stated the department had to be a member of the Marion County Firefighters Association to benefit

from it.

"We serve Marion County, and 911 and the ISO ratings developed over the years reflect and recognize we serve Franklin and Marion counties," Cantrell said. "We have an opinion from the Alabama Attorney General [in another case] where a judge ruled in the fire department's favor and considered the department to be in both counties. That applies to us.

"Since we've served Marion County forty years, and at one time all our paging came out of Marion County, we consider ourselves a Marion County fire department."

Cantrell said he and fellow Hodges FD members have attended five Marion County Firefighters Association meetings, and they have been turned down in their request for their share of tax revenue each time.

"We went on a Thursday night to the association meeting at Twin and gave them the attorney general opinion and asked for our share. We've tried to do everything right," Cantrell said. "We've helped departments including Sulligent, Haleyville during tornado season, Winfield in looking for a missing drowning victim.

"All of a sudden since the tax passed, we're not part of Marion County."

Cantrell said his department's share of the Marion County tax would be at least \$60,000-\$70,000 per year. That amount stands to increase significantly if officials in Marion County apply the tax to property beyond real property, including vehicles and business inventory.

That remains another source of debate with the

new law. The amendment's language called for a three mill tax to be based on "the value of real and personal property assessed by affected property owners..."

Some residents say they were told by Marion County officials who were urging them to support the tax that it would only apply to land.

"Right now, this year, they're just collecting it on property tax. But if they include all taxable personal property in Marion County, that could include car tags, boat tags and anything you go to the courthouse and pay taxes on," Cantrell said. "That could get the department's amount to \$100,000 a year."

As for who benefits from the tax, the amendment's language states "the amount collected each year from assessment of the fire protection tax shall be paid to the Marion County Firefighters Association, to be distributed equally among the paid and volunteer fire departments in the county."

Cantrell said Hodges FD was previously invited to join Marion County Firefighters Association years ago, but when the state tobacco tax passed, the Hodges chief at the time said his department was already receiving the tax on the Franklin County side so Hodges didn't join, even though it served a large portion of Marion County.

"But they won't let us join now. It got nasty the other night," Cantrell said. "They got mad and told us to leave the meeting. One guy grabbed me by the arm and told me to leave, and they were going into executive session. We left because we didn't

See 'HODGES,' Page 11

County Board of Education buys 44 new buses

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education approved the purchase of 44 new buses at the board's December 5 meeting. The buses will be purchased from International at a cost of \$84,703.18 per bus after a \$5,000 rebate per bus is applied. The propane school buses will replace 44 aging buses in the system's inventory, according to assistant superintendent Donald Borden.

Franklin County Schools will keep 12 of those buses to be used for substitute buses, Borden said, and the others will be sold.

Borden recommended to the board the purchase of International buses

because of the past reliability of the brand.

"We have had success with the Allison transmission in those buses, and I strongly encourage you to go with International," Borden said.

The system receives state funding for each bus that is less than 10 years into service. The buses being replaced are nearing that cutoff, Borden said.

'BORDEN,' from page 1

County School System. And on a personal note, I appreciate what you've done for me the last year in the transition in my new position," Hamilton said.

Hamilton said there would be no immediate action to appoint a successor as assistant superintendent and that decision would be made at a later time.

"I've known you most of my life, and I know you love this system and the kids, and I appreciate all you've done for us," board member Terry Welborn told Borden.

Borden is a 1974 Phil Campbell High School graduate who began his teaching career in Dekalb County at Ider High School in 1978. He's also worked for Winston County Schools and Haleyville City Schools. Borden served as assistant principal at Phil Campbell and Haleyville High School and principal at Tharptown Junior High, Phil Campbell and Haleyville. He has eight years of central office experience.

Borden serves as supervisor of Franklin County Schools' Maintenance and Facilities Department. His other responsibilities include transportation supervisor and textbook coordinator.

Borden and his wife Jean have three children and six grandchildren. They live in the Spruce Pine community.

As with all Franklin County Schools administrators, Borden has been forced to deal with proration and the ensuing tight budgets in recent years.

"It's been a financial struggle at times, but we made it through," Borden said. "You just always try to do the best you can with what you've got."

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'HODGES,' from page 9

want to cause any problems.”
Cantrell hoped to meet with Marion County commissioners, but that hasn't happened yet. So far, the commission has not offered to help the Hodges FD.

Repeated efforts to contact Jeff Williams, president of the Marion County Firefighters Association, to get comment for this article were unsuccessful.

Cantrell said he doesn't want to pull out of Marion County because there are many residents who would be out of the five-mile circle if they do. That would put those residents seven to nine miles from a fire department, and their ISO ratings would soar, Cantrell said.

“We offered to keep covering the people of Marion County for only \$10,000 of the tax revenue each year, and they even refused that,” Cantrell said. “They wouldn't even consider it. We decided since they were not going to work with us and help the people in their county, we'd just go for the whole equal share for Hodges.

“Half of our service area and half our revenue will be gone if they force us out of Marion County. It's not fair, and it's not right. People will be unprotected. I live on the Marion County side right on the edge of the five-mile circle, and I think we do a great job of responding and taking care of Marion County people through the years.”

Making spirits bright



RHS FBLA held its annual toy drive on December 1.

Members collected toys and donations to be given to families in the community who are in need this Christmas. Rev.

Richard Parker spoke to the club on the topic of compassion and a giving heart. FBLA was able to collect \$275 and numerous toys. Pictured at left are FBLA officers: Back row - Noah Gist, reporter; Landon Ezzell, parliamentarian; Richard Parker; Ashton Moore, president; Preston Goad, treasurer. Front row - Ellyse Strickland, projects chairperson; Peyton Reynolds, vice president; Kaydee Holland, historian; and Ellie Kerby, secretary. FBLA sponsors are Dr. AnnaKay Holland and Mrs. Deedra Moore.

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Fighting like 'Cats and 'Dogs

Phil Campbell and Belgreen will renew their rivalry on the court this Friday night when the Bulldogs travel to PCHS for a county clash.

TimesDaily Classic

See Page 15 for details on where and when Russellville's boys and girls will play next week.



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1,000-point club gaining members



Mike Self
Sports Editor

In the world of sporting achievement, we like nice, round numbers, and they don't get much nicer or rounder than 1,000.

The 1,000-point threshold has long been the benchmark of choice to measure the most prolific of scorers in high school basketball. Reaching 1,000 career points at the varsity level requires sustained production over a period of multiple seasons (two at an absolute minimum, and often three or four).

Just within the last two to three years, a handful of local luminaries on the high school hoops scene in Franklin County have finished their prep careers with more—a *lot* more, in some cases—than 1,000 career points: Allyson Bragwell at Belgreen, Ashley Dunstan and Bailey Motes at Russellville, Jessica Wilson and Max Nolen at Tharptown, and Allie Kennedy and Darby Madden at Red Bay. The departure of so many accomplished players in such a short window of time left a huge void, but a new wave of prolific scorers have quickly emerged to—quite literally—fill it up.

This season is only a month old, but, through Sunday, three local players had already gained membership in the 1,000-point club. Phil Campbell senior forward Peyton Thomas scored his 1,000th career point in the Bobcats' third game of the season at a Thanksgiving tournament in Hanceville. Abby Davis, a junior post player for the Lady Bobcats, followed suit on December 4 in a game at Lamar County, reaching the mark on a three-point basket in the first quarter. Just three days earlier, Belgreen senior sharp-shooter Jasmine Martin likewise hit 1,000 in a homecoming win over Sheffield.

Those three joined Vina senior guard Abby Hester, who surpassed the mark last January in a rout of Hubbertville; through Sunday, Hester—the county's active career scoring leader—had piled on 261 more points (20.1 per game) this season, giving her 1,328 as a varsity player.

Hester, Thomas, Davis (1,040 career points, 14.6 per game this season) and Martin (1,018 career points, 9.6 per game this season) will soon have company in the 1,000-point club. At least three other local players are poised to hit the mark this season, with a handful more on track to accomplish the feat before their careers are finished.

Junior forward Emma Humphres, a teammate of Hester's with the Lady Red Devils, was sitting on 998 career points heading into Tuesday night's game against Hubbertville. Odds are good that Humphres (averaging 10.3 points per game through Sunday) will

See 'CLUB,' Page 18

Golden Tigers hit their stride in timely win

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - After nearly two full weeks of frustrating finishes, missed opportunities and five consecutive losses, Russellville coach Patrick Odom finally caught a glimpse of what he'd been searching for late in the third quarter of Saturday's home game against Central.

The visiting Wildcats had whittled a 17-point deficit down to 10 with less than two minutes left in the third when Golden Tiger senior Houston Kitterman scored to halt a 6-0 spurt by Central.

Jaden Carter answered with a three to get the Wildcats within single-digits, but Devin Buckhalter came right back with a three of his own to push the

See 'STRIDE,' Page 14



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Buckhalter, whose previous season-high had been 21 points at Winfield (above), dropped 24 in Saturday's 76-63 victory over Central.

'Cats add three new non-region foes

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Colbert Heights head coach Taylor Leathers compares schedule-making day in high school football to another slightly more glamorous—but, perhaps, no more hectic—event in the larger football world.

"When you're making those calls, man, it's like the NFL Draft," Leathers said with a laugh. "You're on the phone with a guy on the other line, and you're getting a text message from somebody else at the same time. A lot of coaches say it's the worst day of the year, just because of all that goes into it."

Leathers, who led the Wildcats to a school-record 11 wins and their first-ever quarterfinal berth in 2017, had a little extra work to do this scheduling season following the latest round of reclassification and realignment by the AHSAA. Class 3A, Region 8 dropped from eight teams to seven teams, which meant Leathers had to find four non-region opponents to play rather than the usual three.

"Going from an eight-team region to a seven-team region has been different for me," Leathers said. "It was a little bit difficult to find non-region games. When you choose those non-region games, you're trying to give your team the best opportunity to be successful while also looking at the financial side of things [travel expenses, gate money, etc.] and trying to make the dates match up."

Colbert Heights will kick off a fifth consecutive season with a game against Red Bay on August 24, 2018, when the Wildcats travel to Fred Bostick Jr. Memorial Stadium, but the rest of their non-

region schedule has changed. Colbert Heights will face Class 4A Wilson on August 31 (likely at Wilson, though Leathers said Sunday that the site for that game had yet to be finalized), county rival Cherokee at home on September 28, and another Class 1A opponent, Decatur Heritage, away on October 5.

"I can't tell you how many people have brought up that Cherokee game with me since I've been here," said Leathers, who took over as head coach prior to the 2016 season. "I know both communities will be glad to have that game back on the schedule again. It's our number one longest-standing rivalry, and it's a game that all of Colbert County will be excited about."

The Wildcats will not face traditional rivals Colbert County (which left Region 8 and will be dropping down to Class 2A) or Sheffield for at least the next two years, but Leathers was pleased to get Cherokee back on the schedule. Colbert Heights and Cherokee did not meet in 2016 or 2017 after facing off every year from 1984 through 2015.

The Wildcats and the Indians (who advanced to the Class 1A quarterfinals and finished 9-4) were the last two teams standing in the Shoals area this past season.

"I can't tell you how many people have brought up that Cherokee game with me since I've been here," said Leathers, who took over as head coach prior to the 2016 season. "I know both communities will be glad to have that game back on the schedule again. It's our number one longest-standing rivalry, and it's a game that all of Colbert

See 'NEW,' Page 17

'STRIDE' from page 13

lead back to 12. Carter connected from deep again, but Russellville was starting to find a familiar rhythm—one that was virtually constant throughout last year's 18-win season but fleeting at best during this year's 1-5 start.

Kitterman assisted on a corner three by Lucas McNutt, and senior reserve Logan Jones converted a steal into a layup to make it 53-39. Kitterman then rebounded a Central miss and pushed the ball up the left side of the floor to Buckhalter, who buried another left-wing three with just two seconds on the clock to restore the lead to 17 and send Russellville rolling into the fourth quarter.

Just like that, the Golden Tigers had their groove back.

"It was great to see what we're capable of when we have fun and just let loose and play," Odom said after his team snapped a five-game skid. "Honestly, that's the first time since Colbert County that we've looked like the team I know we can be and played the way we need to play."

"That stretch at the end of the third quarter, we needed that as a team," Odom said after Russellville finished off a 76-63 win, its first since an opening-night victory over Colbert County on November 20. "It was great to see what we're capable of when we have fun and just let loose and play. Honestly, that's the first time since Colbert County that we've looked like the team I know we can be and played the way we need to play. So much of that has to do with number two [McNutt] and number five [Buckhalter] and getting those guys going."

Buckhalter bounced back from a tough outing in last Friday night's gut-wrenching area loss at Lawrence County, pouring in a season-high 24 points on Saturday. McNutt shook off a scoreless first half against Central to finish with 13 points, and he also handed out four assists. The two junior guards—and two leading returning scorers from a year ago—knocked down three threes apiece on Saturday and combined for 37 points, their most since accounting for 47 in that 62-55 win in Leighton almost three weeks prior.

They had plenty of help, too, mostly from a second unit (made up of Kitterman, Jones, senior guard Brock Malone and freshman post player Brooks Scott) that scored 23 points on 9-for-13 shooting from the field and 4-for-6 from the line while also handing out nine assists.

"That group came in and gave us a great spark," Odom said. "A lot of that comes from them understanding their roles. That's really what I envisioned before the season started—having nine guys who are capable of coming in and changing the direction of the game. That's what we had tonight. We had a lot of other guys contribute in a lot of different ways."

Buckhalter, on his way to topping the 20-point mark for the third time this season, scored Russellville's first nine points of the game, drilling a three from the top of the key to make it 9-7 midway through the first quarter. Scott scored off a nifty feed from Kitterman, and then the freshman grabbed an offensive rebound off a Buckhalter miss and converted a three-point play to make it 14-7.

Following a Central turnover, Malone assisted on back-to-back buckets by Jones, the second of which came with one second on the clock and capped off a 16-0 run that made it 18-7 at the end of one.

The Golden Tigers shot 50 percent from the floor in the first quarter and recorded an assist on six of their seven made field goals. It was exactly the start they needed following Friday's trip to Moulton, where missed shots and untimely mistakes—including a handful in the final few seconds alone—cost them dearly in a 47-44 loss.

See 'STRIDE,' Page 15



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'STRIDE' from page 14

"When you face adversity and things get hard, that's when you find out about yourselves," Odom said after Saturday's win. "I thought our guys showed tremendous character in leaving a very frustrating night behind them and coming out and playing probably the best thirty-two minutes of basketball we've played all year.

"We knew it was gonna be a battle tonight. Central's a good basketball team, and they've got a couple guys who cause matchup problems. They made a run at us a couple of times, but our guys were able to answer every time."

2017 TimesDaily Classic - Boys

- First-Round Games on Monday, Dec. 18 (at Florence High School)
 - Wilson vs. Sheffield - 3:30 PM (winner faces Lauderdale County)
 - Mars Hill vs. Tharptown - 5:00 PM (winner faces Deshler)
 - Belgreen vs. Colbert County - 6:30 PM (winner faces Haleyville)
 - Russellville vs. Colbert Heights - 8:00 PM (winner faces Florence)

*Second-round games will be played at Florence on Tuesday, Dec. 19, with semifinal games Thursday and championship game Friday at UNA.

The Golden Tigers shot just 4-for-11 from the field in the second quarter but compensated by going 7-for-10 from the foul line [senior forward Caden Parker went 4-for-4.] Russellville capped the quarter with a 6-0 run, getting two free throws from Parker, a layup from Kitterman and a driving bank shot from Buckhalter just before the buzzer to take a 34-19 lead into the half.

McNutt assisted on a pair of baskets by freshman Chandler Dyas to open the second half, and then Buckhalter scored off a feed from Dyas to make it 40-23. Central responded with a 10-3 run to get back in the game, but the Golden Tigers finished the third quarter with a flourish to reclaim control.

Russellville (2-5 through Sunday) uncharacteristically missed eight free throws (in 17 attempts) in the fourth quarter and also turned the ball over seven times, but the Wildcats never got back within single-digits.

Buckhalter shot 9-for-19 from the floor on Saturday, adding three rebounds and three steals. Senior post player Calen Bragwell tirelessly worked the glass all night, pulling down a team-high 12 rebounds to go with his seven points. Jones scored nine points on 4-for-4 shooting from the field and also had four rebounds and two assists.

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday, December 18 | Tuesday, December 19 |
| Rogers vs. Brooks - 2:30 PM | Rogers vs. Lexington - 2:30 PM |
| Russellville vs. Wilson - 4:00 PM | Wilson vs. Haleyville - 4:00 PM |
| Summertown vs. Lexington - 5:30 PM | Summertown vs. Brooks - 5:30 PM |
| Mars Hill vs. Haleyville - 7:00 PM | Mars Hill vs. Russellville - 7:00 PM |

Thursday, December 21

- Lexington vs. Brooks - 2:30 PM
- Haleyville vs. Russellville - 4:00 PM
- Rogers vs. Summertown - 5:30 PM
- Mars Hill vs. Wilson - 7:00 PM

*Teams with two best records will meet in finals at 6:00 PM on Friday, Dec. 22 at UNA

Kitterman stuffed the stat sheet with nine points, five assists and four rebounds, and Scott finished with five points and five boards. Parker chipped in with five points and four assists. As a team, the Golden Tigers shot 46 percent (25-for-54) from the field with seven three-pointers and went 19-for-30 from the foul line. They finished with 18 assists on their 25 made field goals.

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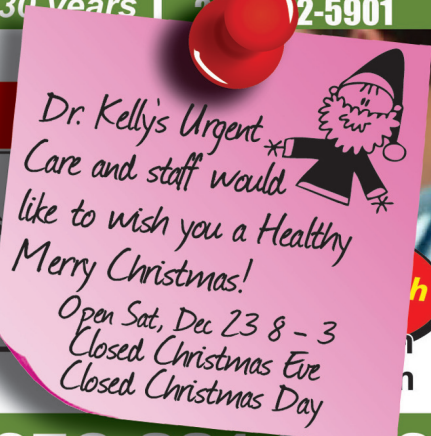
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'NEW' from page 13

County will be excited about. They had a really good run last year, so it's good to get that game back and play them at mid-season."

Leathers said the Wilson game came about when head coach Scott Brown reached out to him about playing. The Warriors went 10-2 this past season, but they'll be going through a transitional year next season following the graduation of several key players—as will the Wildcats, who must replace 18 seniors from a record-setting team.

"We haven't played a 4A school the past two years, so we're excited to get Wilson on there," Leathers said. "Coach Brown is having a really good run over there. They're graduating a lot of seniors this time—almost as many as we are. With the strength of their program and how good a job they've done, that's gonna be good for our kids to experience that kind of competition."

Decatur Heritage, meanwhile, has progressed rapidly from a brand-new program in 2010 to a perennial contender at the 1A level, going 30-7 over the past three seasons and making deep playoff runs in 2015 (semifinals) and 2016 (quarterfinals).

"We contacted them on that game," Leathers said. "We wanted to keep Week 10 [November 2] a bye week, so you're just trying to find games as best you can. Most of the 2A teams had already built their schedules. We had plenty of 4A and 5A schools wanting to play us, I can tell you that."

"I would have taken this past year's team anywhere to play anybody, but we're going to be a lot more inexperienced and a lot younger these next two years. We've got a lot of developing to do, but I think we'll be competitive."

Colbert Heights will see some changes to its region schedule as well. Region 8 champion West Morgan moved up to Class 4A, as did last-place Elkmont. Westminster Christian, a 4A playoff team in 2017, dropped down to 3A and will move into Region 8. So will Phil Campbell, which is moving up from Class 2A. Colbert Heights had faced Phil Campbell in non-region play the last two years; the Bobcats will be a Region 8 opponent in 2018 and 2019.

"I'm probably gonna say it stayed the same as far as difficulty," Leathers said. "You lose Colbert County down to 2A, and they've traditionally been

locked in as the one [seed] or two over the years with the way they've played. West Morgan has had a resurgence and really turned their program around. So you can look at it as a relief to not have a powerhouse like Colbert County, but the more I hear about Westminster coming in, I think we might just be exchanging one powerhouse for the other.

"I know [Westminster] has got a really good quarterback and a really strong tight end who's been offered by Alabama, I believe. I expect them to come in and be a rough team to add to the schedule."

Colbert Heights will open region play at Westminster Christian (in Huntsville) on September 7. Other region games for the Wildcats in 2018 will be vs. Lauderdale County on September 14, vs. East Lawrence on September 21, at Lexington on October 12, vs. Clements on October 19 and at Phil Campbell on October 26.

If the Wilson game on August 31 is finalized as an away game, Colbert Heights will have four home games and six road games on its schedule for 2018.

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'CLUB' from page 13

have crossed the 1,000-point threshold on a shot from beyond the arc; she had made 27 threes in 12 games through Sunday, after making 78 as a freshman two years ago and 54 as a junior last season.

Darby Elliott, a senior guard at Phil Campbell, had scored 841 career points through Sunday; at her current rate of 9.7 points per game this season, she would reach 1,000 some time in late January or early February. Belgreen's Mason Bragwell, a 6'5 junior post player with 817 career points through Sunday, will likely get their sooner; he was averaging a career-high 18.2 points per game this season heading into Monday's home date with Carbon Hill.

Assuming Humphres, Elliott and Bragwell all hit the mark by season's end, that would give Franklin County seven active 1,000-point scorers—with, potentially, several more to follow in the coming years. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, but each of the following local players is already on a path that could land them in the 1,000-point club by the time they're done: Vina sophomore guard Kaitlyn King (778 career points through Sunday, 13.4 per game this season), Russellville junior guard Devin Buckhalter (581 career points, 14.3 per game this season), Phil Campbell sophomore guard Kallie Allen (592 career points, 11.8 per game this season), Belgreen junior guard Gabbie Moore (509 career points, 11.4 per game this season), Russellville sophomore guard Madison Murray (508 career points through Sunday, 13.5 per game this season), Belgreen junior guard Brant Bragwell (420 points since the start of last season, 18.4 per game this year) and Belgreen freshman post player Emma Dempsey (355 career points, 9.8 per game this season).

It goes without saying that there are plenty of outstanding high school basketball players who don't score 1,000 career points; it's hardly the only measure—and maybe not even the best one—of excellence on the hardwood. Still, the number of great players who fall short of the mark only serves to further highlight the accomplishment of those who reach it.

One thing's for certain—each of the players listed above has a long way to go to catch Tanna Benford. Now in her first season as head coach for Tharptown's girls, Benford finished her playing career at Phil Campbell in 2006 as Franklin County's all-time leading scorer with 2,201 points. That number would be even higher had she not missed her entire freshman season due to a torn ACL.

Switching gears, let's take a broader view of what's happened so far this season, which is essentially one-third of the way to the finish line. In Franklin County, two teams—Belgreen's boys and Phil Campbell's girls—who were expected to be very, very good have been exactly that.

Coach Clint Isbell's Bulldogs had to reschedule four of their first seven games for later in the season, but when they have been to able to play they've been highly impressive. After rallying to beat much-improved Red Bay in the season opener on November 17, Belgreen dusted Colbert County and Sheffield by 17 points each and then hit the 90-point mark twice in consecutive routs of area opponents Phillips and Vina.

The Bulldogs, boasting a 5-0 record and an average margin of victory of 23.6 points through Sunday, have been led—as expected—by their Big Three of senior point guard Jacob Mayberry and the inside-outside combo of juniors Mason Bragwell and Brant Bragwell. Mayberry was averaging a career-best 13.0 points per game through Sunday while once again keeping the pedal to the metal in Belgreen's up-tempo attack. The 6'5 Mason Bragwell posted back-to-back 23-point outings in the wins over Colbert County and Sheffield and was averaging 18.2 points per game through

See 'CLUB,' Page 19

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'CLUB' from page 18

Sunday, with double-figures in 34 straight dating back to last November.

Brant Bragwell, meanwhile, was leading the team in both scoring (18.4 points per game, a career-high) and threes made (10) while shooting a solid 70 percent from the foul line.

The Bulldogs were scheduled to put their unbeaten record on the line Monday night at home against Carbon Hill before traveling to Hackleburg for a much-anticipated showdown with the Panthers on Tuesday.

Hackleburg dealt Belgreen its only loss in area play last season, and the return of high-scoring guard Collier Cantrell (who had 37 points last week in a 93-56 rout of Tharptown) has made the Panthers even more dangerous.

Speaking of dangerous, Phil Campbell's girls have been laying waste to almost everything in their path of late, winning their last five games through Sunday by an average margin of 39.4 points. Twice already this season, the Lady Bobcats (8-2 overall heading into Monday's trip to Winston County) have held an opponent to one made basket for the entire game; they've also made strides on the offensive end, averaging 65.1 points per contest.

Head coach Craig Thomas's team is more balanced than ever, with Russellville transfer Kallie Allen (11.8 points per game and a team-high 13 threes made through Sunday) and freshman guard Caitlyn Mills (5.8 points per game, including a career-high 16 in a loss to West Point) adding some much-needed perimeter firepower. Junior post player Abby Davis (team-best 14.6 points per game through Sunday) has become a more consistent outside threat as well, knocking down one three-pointer in seven of the first ten games. Factor in veteran guards Darby Elliott (9.7 points per game), Dakota Elliott (8.8 points per game with six threes) and Chloe Roberson (7.4 points per game, 18-for-24 from the foul line), and Phil Campbell has no shortage of weapons.

The Lady Bobcats have beaten area opponents Red Bay, Lamar County and Sulligent by an average score of 65-22, but their most impressive win to date was a 67-59 victory over perennial Class 2A contender Cold Springs at Thanksgiving. Even their losses have been noteworthy; they led Class 6A Florence at the half before falling 67-57, and they lost to Class 5A West Point 80-66 while playing without both of the Elliotts, who are critical to the team's defensive identity.

Coaches met on Monday afternoon to draw up brackets for the county tournament, which will be held at Belgreen High School next month. The Bulldogs will be the top seed on the boys' side and will be prohibitive favorites to win a second straight crown. The Lady Bobcats will be seeded first in the girls' bracket and will be favored to win their first county title in roughly two decades.

It's mid-December, so area races are just beginning to take shape, and Christmas tournaments are right around the corner. This basketball season will soon be half-finished; we best enjoy it before it's gone.

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Pruitt helped the Lady Golden Tigers get off to a good start in area play last Tuesday at Brooks, scoring a game-high 16 points to spark a 42-30 win. She continued her solid work with 12 points in Friday's loss at Lawrence County and 11 points, four rebounds and two assists in Saturday's loss to Central.

For the week, Pruitt averaged 13.0 points per game, knocking down a total of six threes. She was leading Russellville through Sunday with 17 threes made this season and ranked second on the team in scoring at 10.3 points per game.



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