



4-H agent

Janet Lovelady began her tenure as Franklin County's first full-time 4-H agent November 1. See story page 11.

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12.20.17

Local officials enlist students to trim tree at county courthouse

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When it comes to decorating a Christmas tree, Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore is far from an expert. But you wouldn't know it from looking at the tree standing in the foyer of the Franklin County Courthouse.

Moore reached out to his Christmas 'elves,' Katernia Cole-Coffey and Cassie Medley, and the end result is a beautiful centerpiece that greets visitors to the building.

Several weeks ago, Moore contacted Cole-Coffey, the Franklin County Extension coordinator, and asked for her help in contacting Franklin County students about making ornaments for the courthouse Christmas tree.

The response from students in both Franklin County and Russellville City Schools was overwhelming, as ornaments began pouring in daily. Students and teachers were asked to leave the

See 'TREE,' Page 9



Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore, Extension coordinator Katernia Cole-Coffey and Chamber of Commerce director Cassie Medley next to the Franklin County Courthouse Christmas tree.

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Story idea?



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RCS steps up to help Santa once again



COURTESY PHOTO

The RES Student Council is pictured above with members of the Russellville Fire and Police departments who accepted toy donations collected from students for the city's annual "Helping Santa" toy drive.

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The annual "Helping Santa" toy drive may be sponsored by the Russellville Fire Department, but it's truly a community effort.

And the students and employees of Russellville City Schools were once again a big part of making the toy drive a success this year.

Russellville City Schools' Child Nutrition employees decided several years ago to bring toys for children at Christmas instead of the usual gift exchange among co-workers. The employees reached out to the Russellville Fire Department and decided to donate the toys to the "Helping Santa" program.

"Everyone really enjoys shopping and bringing toys," said Child Nutrition director Elaine Vaughn.

See 'SANTA,' Page 9

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Janet Lovelady 4-H Foundation Regional Extension Agent	Jake Ward 4-H STEM Agent

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Jewel Dean Poston Hallman, Russellville, age 76
Died Thursday, December 14, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in East Franklin Cemetery.

Soni Carol Hargett, formerly of Talladega, age 46
Died Saturday, December 16, 2017. Memorial service held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Laronda Parker Manginelli, Russellville, age 63
Died Wednesday, December 13, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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Franklin County Probate Judge **BARRY MOORE**



Road Gear expanding, moving to new facility

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Work is expected to begin soon on a new 172,000-square-foot building for Road Gear Truck Equipment, LLC, at the Mike Green Industrial Park on Highway 243.

Due to business growth, Road Gear is expanding to a larger location, although the company will continue to operate at its current location on Highway 43 in Russellville.

Sherye Price with the Franklin County Development Authority attended last Monday's work session for the Franklin County Commission and updated commissioners on the progress of the project.

Price was also planning to attend this Monday's commission meeting,

at which commissioners were expected to approve tax abatements for Road Gear for the next 10 years.

Those abatements will include ad valorem taxes and sales and use tax on construction materials, Price said. Road Gear will still be responsible for payment of education taxes even if the abatement is approved.

Road Gear will make a \$3.5 million capital investment in its new building and is expected to add 130 employees over the next two years from its current 54 employees, Price said.

The Mike Green Industrial Park is a 172-acre-facility located near the Russellville Airport on Highway 243. The facility is owned by the Franklin County Industrial Development Board, which has already deeded 27

See 'FACILITY,' Page 9

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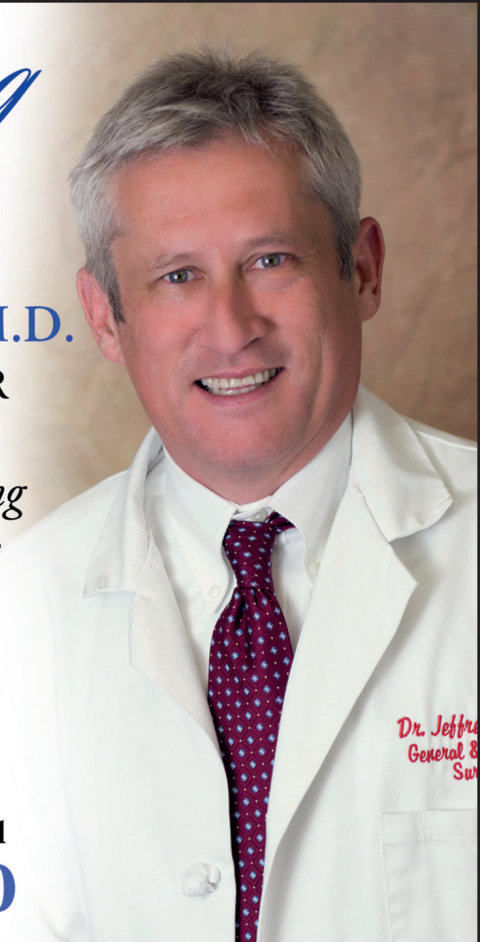
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Franklin, Colbert voters remain solidly with Moore

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

While Doug Jones' victory in the special election for U.S. Senate sent shock waves across Alabama, voters in Franklin County were solidly behind Roy Moore in last Tuesday's race.

Moore received 4,214 votes in Franklin County, compared to Jones 1,770. That was a margin of 69.86 percent to 29.34 percent. There were 48 write-in votes cast in Franklin County.

Moore won all but two of Franklin County's 25 precincts, including absentee votes. Jones won handily at the Chucky Mullins Center, 203 to 50, and in Newburg, where he had a 71-34 advantage over Moore.

Total voter turnout in Franklin County was 6,036. With 18,018 registered voters, that represents a 33.50-percent turnout.

The percentage was higher in Colbert County, where 14,803 voters cast ballots from a total voter pool of 39,217. That represents a 37.75-percent

voter turnout.

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore, the county's chief election official, said turnout was better than anticipated.

"I'm just glad to see a good turnout," Moore said. "It was much better than the primary, obviously. There was greater interest in this election."

Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee chairman Eddie Britton was at the Franklin County Courthouse last Tuesday evening to watch results as they came in. While the county went overwhelmingly for Moore, Britton still feels confident in the electability of Democrats in next year's local races.

"Tonight's results were pretty much true across rural Alabama," Britton said. "There were no surprises here. But I think it will have no impact at all on next year's upcoming local elections."

Statements came last Tuesday night from both the Alabama Republican Party and Alabama Democratic Party on the election results.

"While we are deeply disappointed in the

extremely close U.S. Senate election results, with our candidate Judge Roy Moore, we respect the voting process given to us by our Founding Fathers," said Alabama GOP chair Terry Lathan. "We are grateful to the army of Republican volunteers who sacrificed their time to help during this most important race. We are also thankful to President Trump and RNC chair Ronna McDaniel for their support. Good conservative government and policies are always worth pursuing."

Conversely, Alabama Democratic Party chair Nancy Worley saw last Tuesday's result as a sign that the political tides are turning in Alabama.

"Tonight, the people of Alabama elected Doug Jones, a man of intelligence and character, to the United States Senate. Doug's hard work crisscrossing the state for weeks on end paid off in a great victory for working families and the 'kitchen table' issues that voters care about," Worley said.

"He will continue to work hard to protect jobs for Alabamians, good schools, affordable health care and justice for everyone in our state."

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Honey Do: Greatest gifts

WOW! Only about five days left until Christmas. That's very hard to believe. Hopefully your tree is trimmed, your stockings are hung, and you've just about finished your shopping. Of course, it seems there are always those last-minute gifts to buy.

I'm sure that Santa's workshop is a flurry of activity as the last presents are loaded and the reindeer stretch out their flying muscles (however that works) in preparation for their annual workout. I hope they hit the gym more than I do.

Now that two months of hectic sales and shopping are coming to an end and the Christmas plays and musicals have been practiced and performed and the parties have been partied and the dances have been danced, now, maybe, we can settle in and let the true magic of the season take hold.

That brings me to the greatest gift on Santa's list--time. Time spent with family and friends, old and young, laughing, reminiscing, letting the ghosts of Christmas past roam freely as they attach themselves to new generations and become new memories and traditions.

That brings me to the greatest gift on Santa's list--time. Time spent with family and friends, old and young, laughing, reminiscing, letting the ghosts of Christmas past roam freely as they attach themselves to new generations and become new memories and traditions.



Doug Green

The telling and re-telling of the struggles and hardships, humorous times and difficult times are what make a family a family and what give the next generation the motivation and confidence to endure. After all, look what Grandpa and Grandma went through, and they maintained their integrity, they survived (whether with tears or laughter), and we are here to prove it.

Oh, did I mention the "true magic" of the season? Please don't forget the faith and hope that only comes from keeping "Christ"mas and passing that faith and hope on to the next generation.

The greatest gift on Santa's list may be time, but the greatest gift on God's list is love. It knows no time, and no honey-do list should be without it. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Reeshannon - presents

Our House just got Bigger!

Congratulations Anna, Patrick and 'big sis' Luna Shannon

Reeshannon © 2017

Christmas time is a time for memories

Gail Motes
For the FFP

Every Christmas, I try to give a gift to my boys and grandchildren that will bring back special memories of me after I'm gone. The negative side of this is that it's often something they don't need or don't want. That would in turn become a memory they wouldn't want to live twice.

Besides, when we get together, my boys always share memories they have of me. I've told them time and time again they had to be wrong. It just didn't sound like something I would do. That would bring on a chorus of laughter, because the stuff they told could not have been made up.

I always end up giving them money. They can add that to money they will get from someone else and buy a hamburger. Hey, don't laugh! Hamburgers are expensive! Besides, we all know it's the thought that counts, right?

There have been times I wish more thought would have gone into some Christmas presents. Take for instance the gifts that require batteries. I can never think to buy batteries. Even then, it can be considered a positive. If it turns out to be a collectible, I will have more money in mine.

After all, it will still be in the box it came in. When I take my artificial tree from its box, my mind always goes back to my childhood, when we got our tree. We would load up in the old Chevrolet pick-up truck. My mother, daddy, brother and our family dog (Trixie) would head toward the woods to pick out a Christmas tree.

We'd find the perfect tree, so Daddy would cut it down, load it up, and off we'd go, heading back home. Well, guess what? It would never fit in the

door, or, if it did, it would be too tall. They just never looked that big in the woods. So, the bottom would be cut two or three times, and then it always seemed to look more bare. Then Mother would come to the rescue and find the prettiest side, and the barest side would face the wall.

More times than not, it would then have to be attached to the wall by a nail and string. Mission accomplished.

As I got older, I'd notice my brother's and my friends' trees and realize I had never seen such a beautiful tree with all the different variety of lights and the prettiest ornaments. I didn't know such beauty existed until that moment.

The crazy thing about all this was I still felt my tree was "right" for me.

I can't say I miss the tree tied to the wall. I don't miss having to keep the tree watered and the shedding of pine needles all through the Christmas holiday.

I even have prettier ornaments now. Most of them were made in school. My oldest son is now 40 years old, and I'm still putting his homemade ornaments on the tree. My youngest son has his, and I've even got a few my grandkids have contributed.

My brothers and friends still have trees much prettier, and I'm proud they buy what they enjoy. But, for my house, all I can say is, it's perfect!

As I close this article, I would like to thank you for the compliments. I hope to continue sharing my thoughts with you in 2018. I hope you have a Christmas full of laughter, kindness and lots of love. Remember to hug the ones you care about and respect and love the ones who matter most to you!

Merry Christmas!

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Interview follow-up

Dear Dave,
What is the proper etiquette after the job interview process? I recently interviewed for a sales management position. I've sent a couple of follow-up emails in the last few weeks, and I know I'm still under consideration, but I'm not sure what to do now.

Krista

Dear Krista
Next time, since you obviously have a sales background, how about treating it like a sales call? If you're on a sales call, and the customer needs to perform some due diligence before deciding, a smart salesperson will ask to schedule a follow-up. Ask if checking back on a certain day in the next week or two will work. You don't want to be obnoxious, but you want a time frame so you'll know when to follow up without being pushy.

I'd recommend sending another email. You want to walk right up to that fine line that separates bold from obnoxious, because that's one of things a good sales manager should be able to do. Respectfully tell them you understand the decision-making process takes time, but you need to know when you can expect an answer.

Use the idea that you're a great sales person, and you're treating this as a professional sales call. And don't be afraid to have a little fun with it. If you're still under consideration, that means they like you. You could even hint at the fact they don't want to hire a sales manager who doesn't know how to follow 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.*

Gift cards for grandkids?

Dear Dave,
What's an appropriate amount for gift cards to send each of our five grandchildren for Christmas?

Liz

Dear Liz,
How much do you spend on your grandchildren? Enough to make their parents nervous! Seriously, I think it depends on two things.

First, are you two debt-free, or at least able to provide gifts without going into debt? There's nothing wrong with spoiling the grandbabies once in a while. But don't use Christmas as an excuse to lose your minds, blow your budget or go into debt every December.

The amount you spend on gifts? I would suggest making it reasonable, not over the top, and relative to your income and that of the household in which the kiddos live.

The second thing I wonder about is the ages of all the grandchildren. I can't imagine a four-year-old getting excited over a gift card. So, if that's the general age range we're talking about, have some fun with it! Head down to the store, and really put some thought into these decisions.

On the other hand, it might be just the thing for a teenager—especially if you know where they like to shop and hang out. Older kids want to make their own decisions, so depending on the personality of the grandchild, a gift card might be the way to go. But if your grandkids are still little, *please* don't give them gift cards. No, grandma. No!

Dave



Merry Christmas!

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Bessie is our 2017 Grand Prize Winner of Santa's Sleigh and is pictured here receiving a gift card from Jessica Pickle, manager of Big Star. Bessie was one of over 7,000 entries that were received.

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Pd. Pol. Adv. by Jamie Kiel Campaign, Russellville, Ala.

- 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.
- 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.
- New Life Ministries Church will hold a special New Year's Eve service on Sunday, December 31 at 7 p.m. with the Grace Way singers, the Cooper family and other singers. Church is located five miles west of Russellville and four miles east of Belgreen on Hwy. 24. Everyone is welcome!

Commission honors Baggett

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission formally recognized corrections officer Tim Baggett for his recent completion of the Alabama Jail Training Academy at the commission's December 18 meeting.

Baggett received his academy certificate from sheriff Shannon Oliver at Monday's meeting. The academy is sponsored by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

The program includes a total of four classes. The curriculum was developed by the National Institute for Jail Operations, with advice and assistance

See 'HONORS,' Page 10

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Sheriff Shannon Oliver

'FACILITY,' from page 3

acres to Road Gear.

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore said last week that he expected the abatement to be approved by the commission at Monday's meeting and that he's looking forward to the company's expansion.

"It's great to hear something's going to be located in the Mike Green Industrial Park," Moore said.

'SANTA,' from page 1

"They have the opportunity to feed these children all school year, and they realize so many of the children in Russellville need extra help, especially during the holiday season."

The reason the employees chose the "Helping Santa" toy drive is precisely because it benefits children right here in Russellville and Franklin County, Vaughn said.

Employees participating in the toy drive included Rebekah Quaintance, Pamela Waldrep, Shae Mansell, Judy Miller and Angela Franks, along with Vaughn.

The fire department also received support from the Russellville

"This is a good day for Franklin County."

Road Gear is owned by the Danny Gist family. The Gists also own and operate G&G Steel and Franklin Manufacturing, Inc.

Road Gear produces equipment for trucks, including aluminum racks, tool and storage boxes, bulkheads, step and saddle boxes and deck plates.

Elementary School student council. Students collected toys and presented them to members of the RFD and Russellville Police Department last week.

"The students really enjoyed getting involved and were so glad to help their community this holiday season," said RCS superintendent of education Heath Grimes.

The fire department accepts donations of new and gently used toys as well as monetary donations for the "Helping Santa" effort each year. For more information on the toy drive, contact the fire department at 256-332-8761.

Don't forget to visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

'TREE,' from page 1

ornaments with the courthouse security officers, and there were quickly more than enough to decorate the tree.

"We have access to all the schools in Franklin County through 4-H, and we sent the information to all schools," Cole-Coffey said. "We had a great response, and the teachers did a great job delivering the ornaments to the security guards."

"It was definitely a group effort among the Franklin County probate judge's office, the Franklin County Extension office, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the courthouse security officers and the courthouse maintenance crew."

Once the ornaments were received, Moore called Medley, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce executive director, to ask if her Junior Leadership students would decorate the tree.

The answer was yes, and the result was a beautiful tree with a local flavor. Medley said her Junior Leadership students take part in community and civic events year-round, including several projects during the holiday season.

"They helped with the Russellville Fire Department toy drive, helped at the Russellville Christmas Parade and also had a canned food and coat drive through 1st Cash Express," Medley said.

"This was a wonderful project that displayed the talents and creativity of our area students," Moore said. "We thank them and their teachers for helping us get into the Christmas spirit."

Moore was overwhelmed with the end product, so much so that he wants to make this a holiday tradition at the courthouse.

"We'd like this to be an ongoing thing with new ornaments each year," Moore said. "We'll give these ornaments to the families of the students who made them so they can enjoy them in future years."

Parents and/or grandparents of students who made ornaments are encouraged to come by the Franklin County Courthouse the first of 2018 and pick up their child's ornament. Ornaments not picked up will be placed in a box and left with the security guards to be picked up at a later time, Moore said.

Moore expressed his appreciation to Bill Cheatham and Loretta Sykes for their assistance in putting up the courthouse Christmas tree and to the security officers for collecting the ornaments.

"This was a wonderful project that displayed the talents and creativity of our area students," Moore said. "We thank them and their teachers for helping us get into the Christmas spirit."

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'BAGGETT,' from page 8

from the Alabama Sheriffs Association and the ACCA Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance Funds.

Completion of the academy by its jailers also helps the county save costs on liability insurance.

"There is limited training out there for jailers, so this is great training for our employees," Oliver said. "I'm very pleased to see Tim complete the Jail Training Academy and hope at some point in time we can get every employee through the course."

The commission also approved Tuesday, December 26 as a holiday for Franklin County employees. The Franklin County Courthouse will be closed that day as well. Solid waste pick-up will take place on December 26 but will run one day behind schedule next week due to the Christmas holiday on Monday.

In other action at Monday's meeting, the commission:

- Authorized probate judge Barry Moore to solicit quotes from local banks for a \$500,000 line of credit for the Franklin County Commission. The funds are limited in their use to be spent only on reimbursable grants that the county has to pay for up front. Franklin County currently has \$260,000 out in fully reimbursable grants and is awaiting reimbursement from the State of Alabama for those funds.

Moore said the county will soon

have to pay nearly \$500,000 on an industrial access project for Mar-Jac's new Spruce Pine facility. These funds will be fully reimbursed to Franklin County, but the county must pay the monies up front.

- Approved the hiring of Jason Tyson (effective 12/18/17) as a permanent employee and Stewart Wright (effective 12/11/17) as a temporary employee in the Franklin County Solid Waste Department.

- Approved the termination of Debbie Devaney, the resignation of Brenda Rocha (effective 12/19/17), and the hiring of temporary employees Holly Phillips (effective 11/20/17), Renee Finley (effective 12/18/17) and Dustin Hargett (effective 12/18/17) in the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.

- Approved the promotion of Jordan Seahorn to sergeant in the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.

- Approved a resolution authorizing Franklin County engineer David Palmer to apply through the North Alabama Council of Local Governments for a vegetation management grant in the amount of \$90,000. The grant will require the Highway Department to match \$18,000 in funds.

- Heard an update from Palmer regarding a damaged bridge on County Road 44, between AL 24 and Hwy. 243, that the bridge will remain closed indefinitely.



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Lovelady enjoys new challenges as Franklin 4-H agent

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

After years of effort and extensive preparation in writing a grant, the Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office finally has a full-time 4-H agent in Janet Lovelady.

Lovelady began November 1 after 14 years of service as the 4-H agent in Lauderdale County. She is Franklin County's first full-time 4-H agent. Previously, the 4-H agent worked both Franklin and Colbert counties.

Franklin Extension director Katernia Cole-Coffey said her office had applied twice before for a grant before finally being approved this year.

"The third time was a charm. We made sure we had covered all the bases and worked with Dr. Susan Hargett on writing the grant," Cole-Coffey said. "We were able to show them our programs like the Hispanic community liaison, our summer program, shooting sports, Robotics and animal science program. We showed them those programs were working and we needed an extra body to help them grow.

"Persistence paid off, and we're ecstatic to have Janet."

Lovelady met last Tuesday with her 4-H Youth Council to discuss monthly service projects for the upcoming year. 4-H students do a service project each month to benefit their community. Projects include making no-sew blankets, making goodie bags for children who are hospitalized, making homemade cards for hospice care patients and taking part in a pet food collection drive for shelter and foster pets.

Lauderdale County has a much larger and more established 4-H program, but Lovelady said she was looking forward to the challenge of seeing the program continue to grow in Franklin County.

"I just like building and growing," Lovelady said. "We built a successful program in Lauderdale County, so the prospect of doing that here in Franklin County appealed to me.

"Our goal is to help the kids involved in 4-H become great kids, great teenagers and great adults, and help give them life skills that are important."

Lovelady said most all 4-H programs, even though they may not seem like it to the kids, are designed toward that goal.

"They may not realize that when they're building a robot that are learning teamwork skills, engineering skills and life skills they can use later in life. They just know they're having fun doing it," Lovelady said.

Lovelady said there is a focus now in 4-H on STEM programming to help students build science, technology, engineering and math skills. Those STEM programs include robotics, rocketry, computer programming, GPS/GIS and drones.

Although she's only been in her new position six weeks, Lovelady has already built working relationships with teachers and administrators in local schools.

"So far, they have been great," Lovelady said. "The administrators and teachers have both been very receptive, and they recognize how we enrich what they do in the classroom and are pleased to see our programs coming into their schools."

The 4-H program is open to all students in Franklin County from the ages of 9-18. For more information on Franklin County 4-H, contact Lovelady at 256-332-8880.



COURTESY PHOTO

Janet Lovelady began her tenure as Franklin County's first full-time 4-H agent on November 1.

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Russellville's boys are one of three Franklin County teams going to Deshler next week for the Bracy Invitational. See Page 17 for the bracket.



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Bracket set for Bracy Invitational

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Three Franklin County teams will travel to Deshler High School next week to take part in the 2017 Helen Keller Hospital Bracy Invitational Tournament.

Red Bay, Russellville and Belgreen are all scheduled to play first-round games next Tuesday, December 26 at the Deshler Dome.

Coach John Torisky's Tigers (who were 8-3 through Sunday after winning only two games all of last season) will tip off the tournament at 10 a.m. the day after Christmas with a game against Wilson. With a win, Red Bay would play a quarterfinal game at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, December 27 against the winner between Athens and Clements. If the Tigers lose to Wilson, they'll drop into the consolation bracket and face the Athens/Clements loser at

See 'BRACY,' Page 17

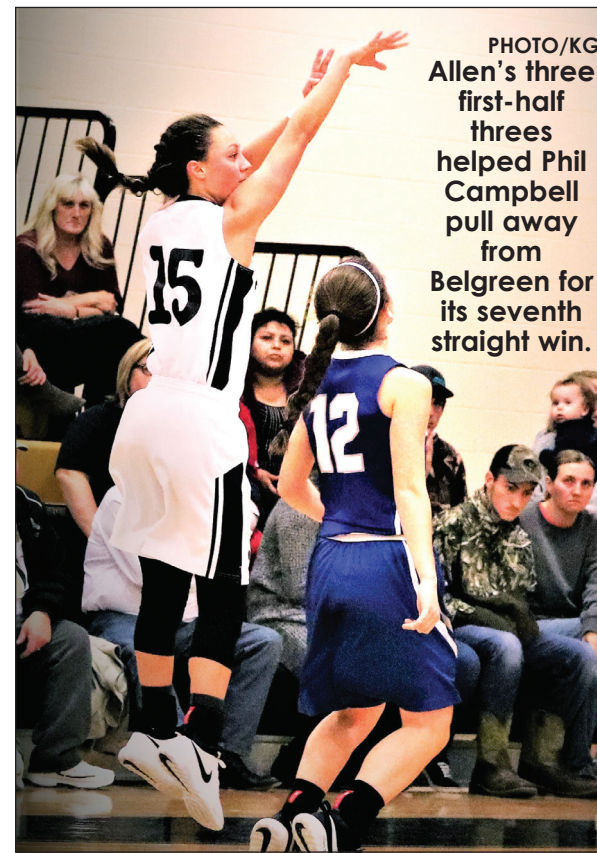
Lady 'Cats roll into Christmas on a hot streak

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - As players from Phil Campbell and Belgreen took the floor for the start of the fourth quarter of last Friday night's county clash, a quick head count revealed one too many white shirts.

The Lady Bobcats had inadvertently broken the huddle with six players, an error that was quickly set straight by the officiating crew. Senior guard Chloe Roberson returned to the Phil Campbell bench, with no harm done. [As the officials explained to Belgreen head coach Chad Green, *they*—and not the teams themselves—are responsible for counting the players on the court coming out of a quarter break; hence, no technical

See 'STREAK,' Page 18



PHOTO/KG
Allen's three first-half threes helped Phil Campbell pull away from Belgreen for its seventh straight win.

Bulldogs cap busy week with win at Phil Campbell

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - As fans made their way out of the PCHS gym and into the cold December night last Friday, Belgreen boys coach Clint Isbell sounded like a man who had just finished running a marathon.

"I'm glad this week is over," Isbell said with a weary sigh that only a tax accountant on April 16 or a pre-med student at the conclusion of exams could identify with.

The Bulldogs' busiest week of the season—four games in five nights, three of them on the road—may have ended on Friday at Phil Campbell, but their win streak did not. After slogging through the first half like, well, like a team playing its fourth game in five nights, Belgreen dug deep and summoned the mental and physical toughness to dominate the second half, pulling away from a gritty, undermanned Bobcat team for a 68-52 win.

"It's been a long week," said Isbell, whose team won at home over Carbon Hill last Monday, at area rival Hackleburg last Tuesday, at Class 4A Fayette County on Thursday and then at Phil Campbell Friday to improve to 9-0. "Four games in five nights is rough, and we played four tough opponents, too. There weren't any scrubs on the list. It was tough on our guys, but they love to compete, they love to play, and they love to play together."

The Bulldogs, ranked No. 7 in Class 1A by the ASWA, shot just 12-for-33 from the field in Friday's first half and were uncharacteristically loose with the basketball, turning it over 11 times. Phil Campbell, meanwhile, knocked down six first-half threes (including three from senior guard Rhett

Benford) and shot 7-for-10 from the foul line, taking a surprising 29-27 lead into the locker room.

Surprising, that is, to most observers—but not to Isbell.

"I knew it would be a battle tonight," he said. "Phil Campbell was missing a couple of guys, but they're a well coached team. Their guys play hard, and they play smart. This is a tough place to play, too. I knew we were in for a good game."

"It's been a long week," said Isbell. "Four games in five nights is rough, and we played four tough opponents, too. There weren't any scrubs on the list. It was tough on our guys, but they love to compete, they love to play, and they love to play together."

The Bobcats have been playing short-handed virtually all season, and Friday was no exception. They were without the services of senior guard Joe Hardy—due back from meniscus surgery this week—and freshman Luke Garrison, who had provided an offensive lift after moving up from the jayvee team but is currently out with an injury.

Then there's Benford, who more closely resembles the Bionic Man than he does the rabbit-quick combo guard he is when healthy. Playing with braces on both knees [he has a surgically repaired ACL in one, a recently torn ACL in the other], Benford came off the bench Friday to bury three second-quarter threes, helping Phil Campbell open up a 23-18 lead with 4:00 left in the first half.

"Rhett is such a competitor. He's one of the toughest kids I've ever coached," head coach Brett Thomas said of Benford, who made two more threes in the second half and finished with a

See 'BUSY,' Page 14



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Bragwell (23) burned the Bobcats for 25 points and averaged 24.8 per game for the week, helping Belgreen win four games in five nights to remain unbeaten. The Bulldogs, 9-0 through Sunday, were scheduled to face Colbert County in the TimesDaily Classic on Monday.



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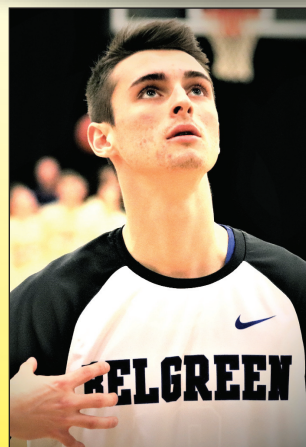
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Eli Hiser

Senior Guard, Belgreen

Hiser delivered in the clutch against Carbon Hill last Monday, scoring 16 of his career-high 20 points in the fourth quarter of Belgreen's 64-63 win. The senior guard made his final six shots of the night and finished 8-for-12 from the floor and 3-for-3 from the foul line.

Hiser had four points and eight rebounds in last Tuesday's win at Hackleburg, then scored 12 points in Thursday's win at Fayette County. He added five boards, three assists and two blocks in a win at Phil Campbell last Friday, helping the Bulldogs wrap up a 4-0 week.




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'BUSY' from page 13

team-high 15 points. "He's out there on two bad knees, with a shredded ACL, and he made five threes tonight. Honestly, he's probably only about twenty-five percent. He's still a good set shooter, and he can handle the ball a little bit, but he used to get ten to twelve points a game just off his defense, and he can't do that right now. But he's still finding ways to help us."

Senior Peyton Thomas hit a three at the 3:00 mark, pushing the Bobcats' lead to 26-20 and prompting a timeout by Belgreen. The Bulldogs got back-to-back buckets from junior guard Brant Bragwell and went into the locker room down by two, looking like a team whose tank was running on empty.

They emerged moments later with a little more pep in their step, holding Phil Campbell to just 3-for-15 shooting in the third quarter and forcing half a dozen turnovers.

"Our intensity was better in the second half," Isbell said. "We didn't do a very good job in the first half of closing out on shooters, and give Phil Campbell credit—they shot the ball well. In the second half, we closed out harder on shooters and even got a couple of tipped balls on three-point shots. We played with more energy on the defensive end."

Offensively, meanwhile, Belgreen's objective was clear—feed the big man. Mason Bragwell, a 6'6 junior who entered the night averaging 20.6 points per game, scored just seven in Friday's first half on only four shot attempts. He took four shots in the opening two minutes of the third quarter on his way to pouring in 18 second-half points on 8-for-12 shooting from the field.

Following their big man's lead, the Bulldogs shot 15-for-29 from the floor and 8-for-11 from the line in the second half, out-scoring Phil Campbell 41-23 to turn a two-point deficit into a runaway win.

"We didn't do a great job of running our offense in the first half," Isbell said. "They were playing us that matchup zone, and we got caught standing outside and holding the ball too often. We talked at halftime about how important ball movement is against a zone. In the second half, we did a much better job with that."

Isbell prefers that Bragwell do the bulk of his damage on the block, but the big man's most effective weapon on Friday was his perimeter stroke. Bragwell got rolling in the third quarter with a jumper from the left baseline and went on to nail four more perimeter shots, including a straight-on three

See 'BUSY,' Page 15



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

SPLASH LANDING - Benford (10) hit five threes Friday, helping the short-handed Bobcats battle Belgreen all the way to the fourth quarter.

'BUSY' from page 14

with 20 seconds left in the third that stretched Belgreen's lead to 45-36. "He has the freedom to do that," Isbell said of Bragwell, who finished with 25 points (his fourth game of the week and sixth of the season with 20-plus) on 10-for-16 shooting. "But like I always tell him, not many teams have a guy who's 6'6 and as athletic as he is. That's why we want him to work from the inside-out."

Phil Campbell continued to fight, trimming the lead to four at 49-45 on Benford's fifth and final trey of the night early in the fourth quarter. Bragwell responded with another make from outside, and then a layup by Jacob Mayberry and a jumper by Payton Scott pushed Belgreen's lead into double-figures at 55-45.

Nate Owens nailed a three—Phil Campbell's ninth of the game—to get the Bobcats back within seven, but a couple of patented drop-step spin moves from Bragwell made it 61-50 with 2:30 remaining and all but sealed the deal. In the end, it was the Bobcats who ran out of gas, scoring just four points over the game's final five minutes, but Thomas was proud of the way his team competed.

"Our guys fought," he said after the game. "We were missing a couple of guys tonight—guys who could have helped us in a game like this—but our guys played hard. We're a no-excuses team. You want your guys to fight and compete, and we did. You demand effort and pride, and you hope and pray to the good Lord for execution."

The Bobcats got that for a while, too, at least on the defensive end, where they're getting more comfortable in the matchup two-three zone Thomas recently installed to help compensate for his team's current lack of size and able bodies.

"The first time we played it, it was a disaster, because it's a hard defense to learn on the fly in the middle of the season," he said. "But when you get guys hurt and you're short-handed, the defenses you worked on all summer go bye-bye, and you have to go to something else. We're too small and not quick enough to play that one-three-one, and Rhett can't play man, so we went to that matchup two-three zone. I thought we did better with it tonight."

"Belgreen's a good team. I knew they get a lot of their points off turnovers and offensive rebounds. I thought if we could eliminate those two, we could hang in there with them. I know we had some turnovers tonight, but a lot of that is just inexperience."

Turnovers wound up being a wash on Friday, with both teams committing 16. The Bulldogs' big advantage came on the boards, where they out-rebounded the Bobcats 42-25. Bragwell pulled down 10 rebounds, and Scott had eight boards to go along with his eight points. The guards got in on the act, too, with Mayberry grabbing seven rebounds and Brant Bragwell and Eli Hiser pulling down five apiece.

Brant Bragwell shot 4-for-4 from the line and made one three, finishing with 15 points. Mayberry added 13 points on 5-for-10 shooting and had three assists. Hiser had five boards, three assists and two blocks, and Seth Taylor chipped in with three points, three rebounds, two assists and four steals. Jake Taylor scored four points off the bench.

Peyton Thomas had a terrific all-around game for Phil Campbell, finishing with 11 points, eight rebounds and eight assists. Owens added eight points and eight boards, and Brody Nix scored seven points. Daniel Smith had six points and three steals.

The Bobcats will not return to action until after the New Year. There was to be no rest for the weary, however, as Belgreen was set to face Colbert County in the first round of the *TimesDaily* Classic on Monday at Florence.

So, what were Isbell's practice plans for this past weekend? "Two days off," he said with a smile. "We'll have a shootaround on Monday."

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Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

Bowl Season	Brady's Pick	Your Pick
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USC vs. Ohio State	Ohio State	_____
Louisville vs. Mississippi St.	Louisville	_____
Washington vs. Penn State	Penn State	_____
Wisconsin vs. Miami	Wisconsin	_____
Michigan vs. South Carolina	Michigan	_____
Auburn vs. Central Florida	Auburn	_____
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'BRACY' from page 13

12:30 p.m. Wednesday at Deshler Middle School. Coach Patrick Odom and Russellville (2-6 through Sunday) will open play in the Bracy with a first-round game against Sheffield at 1 p.m. next Tuesday. If the Golden Tigers win, they'll play again next Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. in the quarterfinals against the winner between Florence and South Lamar. A loss to Sheffield would drop Russellville into the consolation bracket and set up a meeting with the Florence/South Lamar loser at 2 p.m. Wednesday at Deshler Middle School.

Belgreen (9-0 through Sunday and ranked No. 7 in Class 1A by the ASWA) is scheduled to face Class 6A Cullman in a first-round game at the Bracy next Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. With a win, coach Clint Isbell's Bulldogs would face the Central/Mars Hill winner in a quarterfinal game at 1 p.m. on Wednesday. A loss to Cullman would drop Belgreen into the consolation bracket and set up a meeting with the Central/Mars Hill loser at 4 p.m. next Wednesday at Deshler Middle School.

Other first-round games set for next Tuesday are Hamilton versus East Lawrence at 7 p.m. and host Deshler versus Hackleburg at 8:30 p.m.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW
Calen Bragwell and Russellville will open play in the Bracy Invitational against Sheffield.

2017 Helen Keller Hospital Bracy Invitational (at Deshler High School)

First-round Games (Tuesday, Dec. 26)
10 AM - Red Bay vs. Wilson
11:30 AM - Athens vs. Clements

1 PM - Sheffield vs. Russellville
2:30 PM - South Lamar vs. Florence

4 PM - Central vs. Mars Hill
5:30 PM - Cullman vs. Belgreen

7 PM - Hamilton vs. East Lawrence
8:30 PM - Deshler vs. Hackleburg

*First-round winners will play quarterfinal games in the Deshler Dome on Wednesday, Dec. 26 beginning at 10 a.m. Semifinal games will be played Wednesday night at 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The tournament will conclude with the championship game on Thursday, Dec. 27 at 8:30 p.m.

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'STREAK' from page 13

foul was assessed.]

After the Lady Bobcats finished off an impressive 64-41 win a few minutes later, it was suggested to Green that perhaps they had been playing with six all night long.

"I was wondering the same thing," he said with a rueful smile.

In truth, it only seems like Phil Campbell is playing with an extra defender, particularly when the Lady Bobcats (10-2 and ranked No. 8 in Class 2A) turn up the heat the way they did in Friday's second quarter. Trailing by a point following a putback by Belgreen's Ansley Tate with 7:00 on the clock, Phil Campbell cranked up the pressure a notch or three and closed the half on a 24-7 run, turning that one-point deficit into a commanding 16-point lead.

"Early in the game, we weren't guarding them hard enough out front, and that was allowing them to see over us," said Phil Campbell head coach Craig Thomas, whose team remained unbeaten in December and extended its win streak to seven in a row. "We picked up our pressure out front, and that flipped the game. That's when we started getting those turnovers."

The Lady Bobcats feast on turnovers, and they ate well again on Friday night. That game-turning second-quarter run was fueled by 10 Belgreen turnovers, eight of which came on steals by Phil Campbell. Steals, as Green well knows, are where the Lady Bobcats make their money.

"I told our girls, I would rather we get a ten-second violation in the backcourt or a five-second violation in the frontcourt than turn the ball over and let them get out in transition," Green said, "because that's where they're at their best. When you give them a turnover in a live-ball situation, they know what to do with it."

To Green's point, Phil Campbell shot 9-for-12 from the floor during the run, and four of those buckets came directly off takeaways. To use the common analogy in reverse, the Lady Bobcats are like a defense in football that blitzes the quarterback on every snap, racking up pick-sixes and fumble returns in bunches.

"They pressure you in the full court. They pressure you in the half court. It's constant," Green said after Friday's loss, which ended the Lady Bulldogs' own four-game win streak and dropped them to 6-3 on the season. "That's why it's good for us to play them. They're long and athletic, they put a lot of pressure on the ball, and we need as much experience as we can get against teams like that. It'll be good for us."

Sticking with the football theme [after all, bowl season is officially underway], Phil Campbell has a new weapon in its offensive arsenal—the deep ball, delivered more often than not by Russellville transfer Kallie Allen. The sophomore guard drilled three threes against Belgreen, two of which came on back-to-back possessions in the second quarter and virtually doubled the Lady Bobcats' lead from 27-20 to 33-20 with 3:25 left in the half.

Allen, who finished with a season-high 19 points, has now hit 17 threes on the season—a modest total in 12 games, but only two less than Phil Campbell's team-leading individual total from a year ago.

"They're a good ball team," Green said of the Lady Bobcats, who have won every game during their current streak by no fewer than 19 points. "We knew they had athleticism. We knew they had length and speed. We knew they pressure the ball well. But I think Allen gives them another dimension."

"She's a great player. She really helps them. She's got that outside shot, and it forces you to have to come out and guard the three-point line. And that gives other girls the opportunity to drive it and post up."

The ability of players like Allen (12.6 points per game on the year) and junior guard Dakota Elliott (who hit her seventh three of the season last Friday

See 'STREAK,' Page 19

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'STREAK' from page 18

and finished with seven points) to bust up zone defenses with perimeter shooting will be critical going forward for the Lady Bobcats, who are difficult to defend man-to-man due to the quickness of guards like Allen and senior Darby Elliott (9.4 points per game) and the athleticism of 5'11 junior post player Abby Davis (13.6 points per game).

Even Green, a staunch proponent of man-to-man who views "zone" as a four-letter word (the kind you don't utter in mixed company), compromised a bit last Friday night, clogging the lane with a sagging man defense and occasionally resorting to a two-three [the shame].

"I'll have to go back and watch the film," Thomas said, "but I'd bet just about everybody on the floor for them had one foot in the paint a lot of the time. We hit enough threes to get 'em out of that. Actually, they went to a two-three zone a couple of times down the floor, and that's when Kallie hit those back-to-back threes."

Just because they *can* shoot the three, however, doesn't mean Thomas wants his team making a living from beyond the arc.

"We've really been working on going to the basket," he said. "We don't want to settle for three-point shots. There may come a time when we have to make some threes, but we'd rather shoot layups."

The Lady Bobcats typically shoot plenty of those, most of which are created by their defensive pressure. They came up with 20 steals on Friday night [Allen had eight all by herself] and forced 29 turnovers; all those extra possessions helped them approach their season average of 65.5 points per game despite finishing the night at just 35 percent (24-for-68) from the field.

"Overall, I thought we played a good ball game," Thomas said. "At times we missed some easy shots we probably should have made, but defensively we were right on it. We were right where we're supposed to be."

"We are a little more aggressive this year. That's probably just being a year older, and we're a little more athletic, too. We've been able to move some people around to different spots, and that's helped us."

As impressed as Green was with Phil Campbell last Friday, Thomas said the feeling was mutual.

"They were well coached and disciplined," he said of the Lady Bulldogs. "Coach Green had them ready to play."

Belgreen is scheduled to host Phil Campbell on January 12, and there's a strong possibility the two could meet in the county finals at Belgreen a week later. [The Lady Bulldogs will play in the two-three game against Vina, a team they beat 81-60 on December 8; the Lady Bobcats will be the top seed.]

"We hope to get another opportunity against them in the county championship," Green said on Friday. "We know we've got some things to work on between now and then, but hopefully we'll improve."

Allen shot 7-for-12 from the floor last Friday and 2-for-2 from the line, adding four rebounds to go along with her 19 points and eight steals. Roberson had 15 points on 6-for-11 shooting and also pulled down a team-high nine rebounds. Davis added nine points and seven boards, and Darby Elliott finished with six points, five assists and three steals. Freshman guard Caitlyn Mills grabbed seven rebounds to go along with her two points.

Senior guard Jasmine Martin led Belgreen with nine points and also had seven rebounds. Freshman Emma Dempsey added six points and seven boards, and Tate also scored six points. Gabbie Moore finished with five points, three rebounds and three assists, and Katie Dempsey pulled down a game-high 12 rebounds to go along with her two points.

The Lady Bulldogs were set to play this week in a tournament at Winston County before traveling to Colbert County on Friday. Phil Campbell will have this week off before traveling to Rogersville for a Christmas tournament at Lauderdale County High School next week.

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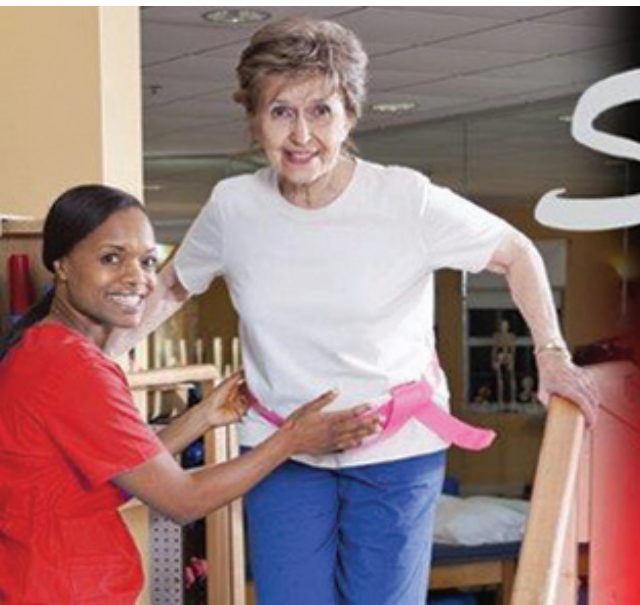
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