

# Have a Safe and Happy New Year!



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Russellville, AL 35663

FranklinFreePress.net

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## Local resident uses artistic ability to promote patriotism

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

With so much national focus on the Star Spangled Banner and the refusal of some prominent athletes to stand when it's played, Russellville resident Brenda Hopson decided to put her artistic talents toward bringing attention to our national anthem. Hopson, who lives on Marlin Street, painted her wood fence with the music and words of the Star Spangled Banner next to another painting of the American flag waving in the wind. "There's been so much news about



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI  
Brenda Hopson, who lives on Marlin Street, painted her wood fence with the Star Spangled Banner and the American flag.

See 'ARTISTIC,' Page 8

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## Collection fees drive solid waste budget

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

An overview of the FY 2017-18 budget for the Franklin County Solid Waste Department shows total revenue of \$2,604,900 and total expenditures in the amount of \$2,471,921.25. The Franklin Free Press obtained a copy of the FY 2017-18 Franklin County Solid Waste Department budget, and the primary revenue and expenditures are outlined below. The largest revenue source for the department comes from solid waste collection fees, which account for 46 percent of revenues, or \$1.2 million dollars. The next largest revenue source is the \$540,000 that comes from the City of Russellville for garbage collection fees. Dumpster fees are expected to bring in \$395,000 in revenue, and landfill fees an additional \$200,000, according to budget projections. Other revenue sources include: State grants (\$6,000);

municipality solid waste fees (\$65,000); medical solid waste disposal fees (\$25,000); delinquent account penalties (\$42,000); bad debt accounts (\$10,000); ADEM fees (\$10,000); lease/rental revenue (\$22,800); sale of county property (\$50,000) and reimbursement for worker's compensation, insurance claims and phone calls totaling \$6,100. On the expenditure side, the largest expense is salaries and wages, totaling \$790,505.80. That expense is followed by contract services at the Franklin County Landfill (\$490,000), diesel fuel (\$170,000), health insurance, repairs to road equipment (\$145,000), (\$144,674), billing and collections for the department (\$80,000), equipment (\$72,000), worker's compensation premiums (\$65,000), Social Security (\$63,151.19), solid waste containers (\$50,000), land improvement (\$40,000) and repairs to building and land (\$40,000). After all listed expenses, there is a carryover of \$132,978.75, if no additional expenditures are required during the fiscal year.

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**George Hollis "Bud" Fuller**, Russellville, age 90  
Died Saturday, December 23, 2017. Funeral held at First Baptist Church of Russellville. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

**Maria Lara**, Russellville  
Died Saturday, December 23, 2017. Funeral arrangements were not known at press time. Pinkard Funeral Home was assisting the family.

**Micaela Manuel**, Russellville, age 57  
Died Monday, December 25, 2017. All-night visitation and Mass held at Good Shepherd Catholic Church. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

**Billy "Bill" Norris Scott**, Russellville, age 80  
Died Tuesday, December 26, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Belgreen Cemetery.

**Owen Donald "Don" Suddith**, Russellville, age 86  
Died Saturday, December 23, 2017. Funeral held at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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# Board gets good news on THS cafeteria project

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

After a series of problems and delays, the Franklin County Board of Education received some good news last week on the cafeteria and classroom project at Tharptown High School.

Work is expected to begin in mid-January on the long-awaited project that has seen a series of setbacks. A new contractor, First Team Construction, Inc. from Auburn is now the contractor for the project after the original contractor was held in default after repeated notices of cure, which are legal demands for the contractor to correct conditions causing it to be in default.

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton said the original contractor was

seriously behind on its time schedule to start the project, and as a result the system had to take legal action.

The system made demand on the bonding company to take over the job and move to the next highest bidder. Hamilton said he received notification that construction would start in the next two to three weeks.

The project, which calls for a new cafeteria and classroom building as well as a renovation of the existing cafeteria into four classrooms, also faced a setback last year when the Alabama Building Commission ordered that in order to renovate the existing cafeteria, the cafeteria would have to be converted into a safety shelter with a safe room. The cost of that would have grounded the project.

That was resolved when, through a \$1.4 million

leverage bond, another six-classroom facility was to be constructed that will meet the parameters for a safety shelter, giving Tharptown 10 new classrooms and a new cafeteria as well as a tornado room that will fit the entire elementary school enrollment.

Total cost for both projects is expected to near \$2.5 million.

Tharptown has seen meteoric growth in enrollment in recent years, particularly after Russellville City Schools imposed a \$600 annual tuition on all non-city resident students beginning last year. The school has 828 students, with 546 of those in the elementary school.

The original time frame for completion of the project was April of 2018, but that has been moved back to the start of the 2018 fall school year.

# Losing weight is No. 1 New Year's resolution for 2018

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Each January as the New Year rolls around and the effects of multiple holiday brunches, lunches and extravagant dinners begin to take their toll, millions of Americans make promises (also known as resolutions) to lose weight and get fit.

In fact, according to statisticbrain.com, losing weight is the No. 1 resolution for 2018, responsible for more than 20 percent of Americans' New Year's promises. Unfortunately, more than 90 percent of resolution-makers say they infrequently or never succeed in attaining the desired outcome.

Despite the pessimistic numbers, it is not impossible to break this trend and succeed in keeping a healthy resolution. United Healthcare recently released a few tips for individuals seeking to trim weight and maintain a healthy lifestyle in 2018. Most of the tips center around self-discipline and willingness to devote time to exercise, but all are simple and can be done by people of all ages.

The first tip from United Healthcare is to set realistic goals.

Evonne Freemon, who owns and operates Freemon's Fitness with her husband Randy, says clients who expect to achieve unrealistic goals are usually the ones that throw in the towel first.

"You didn't put on the weight overnight, and you're not going to lose it overnight either," she said. "Most people want to see results right away, and, if they don't, frustration sets in."

According to Freemon, a good tip for beginners and those that have not exercised recently is to start slow.

"If you've never been in the gym or haven't been active in a while, it's important not to overdo it when you get started," she said. "Some folks try to use everything in here, and you can hurt your body and end up so sore you don't want to come back."

In order to avoid this pitfall, when new members come to Freemon's Fitness, Freemon familiarizes them with the facility and equipment and helps them determine suitable fitness goals.

"On your first visit, we fill out the paperwork and take a tour of the gym to show what we have to offer," she said. "I show them how to use every

piece of equipment and make sure our members know that if they need additional help they can just come ask me any time I'm here and I'll help them."

Another tip from United Healthcare is to find the fun in fitness. This can be achieved by finding a certain enjoyable exercise or by working out with a friend.

"Some members work out with a buddy system," said Freemon. "It can be an effective way to stay motivated by being accountable to someone else to stay with it and push and motivate each other."

The use of technology can also be a fun way to keep up and track daily exercises and caloric intake. Freemon says there are many apps that can help track daily exercise and caloric intake.

Tips and technology are valuable, and Freemon's Fitness and smartphone apps can help, but nothing happens until the individual finds the motivation and makes the decision to begin a new, healthy lifestyle in the new year.

Memberships at Freemon's are available in six- and 12-month durations, and student discounts are available. Contact Evonne Freemon at 256-331-9003.

# Franklin County student earns \$1,750 scholarship

Submitted to the FFP

The state's largest farm organization expects investments of over \$150,000 in scholarships to return high yields for 87 Auburn University students pursuing agricultural and forestry degrees.

Students were honored at the Alabama Farmers Federation's 2017 Scholarship Recipients Luncheon in August at Ham Wilson Arena in Auburn. Scholarships were funded by the Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation (AFAF) and county Farmers Federations.

Federation president Jimmy Parnell said as agriculture and technology evolve, the organization's most important task is investing in the future.

"These young people have answers to questions producers haven't even thought of yet," said Parnell, an Auburn ag graduate. "These days, it takes an education to

be able to farm and do it correctly."

Senior agricultural communications student Ellie Isbell promised county and state Federation leaders a return on their investment.

"I want to make a commitment on behalf of all the students—we will be the next generation of ag leaders," said Isbell, a Colbert County native and former Federation intern. "You have equipped us, and when it's time for you to retire, we will be ready. We will step up, lead this industry and represent the farmers of our state."

Clay County Farmers Federation president Michael Dick said that though his county organization is small, it recognizes the importance of scholarships.

"As a teacher and high school principal, I spent a lot of time helping graduating seniors choose where they would go in life," said Dick, who is now retired. "This is

See 'STUDENT,' Page 8



COURTESY PHOTO

Auburn University student and scholarship recipient Ethan Mobley was recognized during the Alabama Farmers Federation 2017 Scholarship Recipients Luncheon in August at the Ham Wilson Arena in Auburn. Mobley studies pre-biosystems engineering. The \$1,750 scholarship was funded by the Franklin County Farmers Federation and the Federation's Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation. From left are Federation president Jimmy Parnell and Mobley.

# Honey Do List: Bird feeding

Nothing is prettier than a red cardinal sitting on a tree branch in a fresh snow. Soon we may be treated to sights like these as we head into our traditionally winter-weather months. Here are a few tips from [www.truevalue.com](http://www.truevalue.com) on what to put in those bird feeders to promote visits from different species.

Creating a bird-friendly habitat in your yard all year-round is essential for bird watching. It is especially important during winter. It can also be a little tricky, since birds are attracted to natural, dense growth, a lot of which has probably died off for the cold months. Evergreens can provide year-long shelter from the elements and predators.

Consider planting more evergreens in your yard, whether shrubbery or individual trees, in a location near where you will also place bird houses, feeders and a birdbath. Or create your habitat close to existing evergreens. Shelter from wind is important. Placed near structures like your house or garage, feeders and birdhouses are protected from strong winter winds and can give great vantage points from an inside window.

What you put in your feeders is important. Particular bird species prefer specific types of food. Grains

(seeds) and suet (seeds and fruits imbedded in fat) are popular with a wide variety of bird species. Seeds include sunflower seeds, corn and millet. Black sunflower seeds and millet, in

particular, are very popular among many common types of birds, such as cardinals, finches, blue jays and goldfinches. Blue jays, sparrows and starlings enjoy corn.

Suet is a nutritious, high-energy "cake" that attracts woodpeckers and other birds. Installing a few bird feeders, each stocked with different types of food, is the best way to attract the greatest variety of bird types.

Note that feeding birds won't prevent those who migrate from leaving your area. This is instinctual and has nothing to do with whether or not there is food available. For those birds that do stay throughout the winter, remember that once you start feeding them, you must continue to do so or they will leave to find food elsewhere. Often, they will not come back.

Stay warm, enjoy the season and remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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## New Year offers chance to refocus

Taylor Dawson  
Alabama Policy Institute

Thinking back on the last year, a few things stick out in my mind: The words "fake news," Alabama's epic comeback to get a spot in the college football playoff (Roll Tide), and political ads from Alabama's senate election haunting me in my waking and sleeping hours.

With news cycle after news cycle over the last year dominated by this race, the memory of Alabama politics in 2017 is going to have me cringing for years to come. But here we are, in 2018, and we made it through the special election. I honestly never thought this day would come. In fact, when the election ended, I started to panic a little bit about it all being over. What were the news outlets going to talk about now?

Here's one thing: The Alabama legislature convenes on January 9—only six days away. Now is the time for Alabamians—both lawmakers and voters—to refocus.

While keeping an eye on Montgomery might not be as interesting as D.C. politics, it's no less important. Just like in D.C., your elected officials are deciding how to spend *your* tax dollars (well, around seven percent of your tax dollars, but I'll get to that). They're making decisions that impact *your* life, *your* family and *your* business. It's our votes that elect them, and it's our tax dollars that we send and allow them to appropriate each year to keep the lights on in Alabama. And we have some serious issues that our lawmakers should feel encouraged to tackle this year.

For example, did you know that 93 percent of Alabama's budget is earmarked? That's right: When lawmakers go to Montgomery to create the

budget, they only have discretion over seven percent of tax revenues that come in each year. Lawmakers should take a look at those earmarks, eliminate those that don't directly align with Alabama's needs and priorities, and shoot for trying to get that number down to 25 percent, which would be more on par with the level of earmarking in other states.

Or, how about this: Did you know that Alabama is the fourth most federally dependent state? According to recent polling, an overwhelming majority of Alabama voters are concerned about this level of dependency and would like the legislature to hold a recorded up-or-down vote before accepting more federal funds. That's not so difficult.

Going into an election year in 2018, it's a given that legislators won't want to do anything too controversial out of fear of losing their seat. But bringing responsibility back to budgeting, cutting a number of ties with the federal government and restoring individual rights are goals that are far from controversial.

In fact, if my representatives go to Montgomery on January 9 with those goals in mind, I can not wait to vote for them in November.

When lawmakers return to Montgomery in less than a week, they ought to make it clear that they intend to protect their voters—Alabama taxpayers. And voters ought to shift our attention to Montgomery and hold them to that.

Taylor Dawson is Director of Communications for the Alabama Policy Institute (API). API is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to strengthening free enterprise, defending limited government, and championing strong families.



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by Dave Ramsey

**Business issues and family**

Dear Dave,  
My father-in-law started a business as an LLC few years ago. He named all his daughters owners, with him owning the majority share. The business failed, and now he is being sued by creditors. He told the family these creditors can't come after us and the other siblings, because he is the majority owner. Is this true, or should we get a lawyer?

Caleb

Dear Caleb,  
Your wife is probably not in danger, unless she signed paperwork making her liable for a loan or liable with a creditor. If she signed official, legal paperwork—like if she went down to the bank and signed on a loan—then she's liable. It's that simple. That would make her, or any of her siblings who did this, co-makers on the loan.

Your wife, and any of her sisters, who signed on trade accounts taking supplies from a supplier and paying them could also be liable. But they are not automatically liable simply because they were listed as minority owners in an LLC, or even a sub-S corporation. If it were a general partnership, there's a possibility they could be liable. That's one of the reasons I hate general partnerships. I hate partnerships in general, but I hate general partnerships, too!

In other words, I think you're okay. I would still advise speaking with an attorney and giving him or her all the details of this situation, to be absolutely certain.

Dave

**Be there for each other, and don't give up!**

Dear Dave,  
My wife and I both lost our jobs a few weeks ago. She began a training course for a new job last week, and I've been interviewing. We cashed in an annuity the other day because things have been tight, and we were wondering if we should use it to help continue paying down debt, or simply live on it until things get better.

Vernon

Dear Vernon,  
You need to be honorable and pay your debts, but that may have to be put on hold for a while. Right now, it's more important to have food in the house and keep the heat on.

If you haven't done so already, contact your creditors and explain the situation. Let them know you'll make things right with them as soon as possible. I know this is a scary situation, especially around the holidays, so make sure you two pull together and keep the lines of communication wide open. A few extra hugs wouldn't hurt, either.

The good news is it sounds like things may be looking up. Support your wife all you can in her new job, and make sure *you* continue looking for work, too. A little extra money is better than none, so take on something part-time while you're looking for a permanent position.

God bless you two!

Dave

*\*Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 13 million listeners each week on 585 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*



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# What's Happening

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

**R**ussellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling Boston Butts during Super Bowl weekend. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, February 3 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.

**M**embers of the Shoals Area Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will be available to pray for you in the meeting room at the Rock Christian Bookstore, 310 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield, this Thursday, January 4 from 4-5:30 p.m. Our monthly meeting will follow in the Sheffield Room at Park Place, 501 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield, at 6:30 p.m. Teaching on "Jesus - name above every name." We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. All prayer is confidential. All are welcome.

**G**ateway Church (formerly Russellville Church of God) will hold revival services with evangelist Floyd Lawhon on January 5-7, with Friday and Saturday services at 7 p.m. and Sunday services at 10:45 a.m. and 5 p.m. Bro. Lawhon has been around the world preaching the gospel and has seen many miracles. Everyone is welcome!

**N**ew Ground will kick off their 2018 singing ministry for Christ at North Russellville Baptist Church (1401 Waterloo Road) this Sunday, January 7 at 10:30 a.m. For more information, please call 256-577-0135. Pastor Bro. Mark Daniel and congregation invite everyone to attend.

**K**ids 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.

**A**merican Legion Post 64 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Chamber of Commerce office on Jackson Avenue. Meal served around 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m. Next meeting will be Thursday, January 11.

**T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests Danika and Jeb at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, January 13 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. Group discounts available! Call 256-335-4356.

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

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

**T**OPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weight loss support group meets each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center. Weigh-ins being at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more information.

**I**f you are interested in the study of the Civil War and have an ancestor who was in the Confederate Army, join the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month (except January and July) at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center. Next meeting will be February 1. The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized at Richmond, VA in 1896, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the period from 1861-1865 is preserved. Membership in the SCV is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate Armed Forces. Membership can be obtained through either direct or collateral family lines, and kinship to a veteran must be documented genealogically. Join us for the celebration of our heritage! The minimum age for membership is 12. Call 1-800-MYDIXIE or 256-324-2317.

**M**ountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Friday and Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Karaoke at 7 p.m. on Thursday nights. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on left. Call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

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

Don't forget to visit us online at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)!

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**Investigation underway**  
The Probate Office is looking into seven alleged instances of crossover voting in Franklin County.

**Senior Fair a big hit**  
Area seniors enjoy complimentary luncheon at week's event while about important

**Funding still primary broadband**  
Haleyville and Fayette next year. Last Thursday's meeting was Aaron, executive director of the Service Authority, which is chair managing countywide broadband citizens approved a Constitu

**Green's Dependable ce...**  
When Doug Green purchased Dependable Hardware in 2007, he had a great business plan. Green had more than 23 years of experience working for the Batchelor family as manager of the store. His brother Darryl was also an employee, so it would be a family venture. The only thing Green didn't count on was the economy collapsing. But that's exactly what happened soon after his purchase was complete. "Six months after we bought the store, the economy just blew up," Green said. "So there have been lots of struggles the last ten years, but we made it through thanks to our cus-

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### 'ARTISTIC' from page 1

people disrespecting our flag and national anthem, so I decided it needed painting, and that's what I did," Hopson said. "Now, people who drive by can see our flag and be reminded about our national anthem. I just thought that was important."

Hopson and her husband Larry have five children, 15 grandchildren and six step-grandchildren, so you might not think she has much time to paint, but it's actually her passion. Her home is filled with paintings of scenes Hopson painted from pictures and some she just envisioned in her mind.

After one look at her beautiful artwork, you might think Hopson was born with her talent, but she actually started painting as a hobby 34 years ago. She has served as substitute teacher for Melissa Grissom, the art teacher at Russellville High

School. And Hopson credits Waco resident Doris Bowling for helping her hone her skills. Hopson took art classes from Bowling for several years at her home.

**"There's been so much news about people disrespecting our flag and national anthem, so I decided it needed painting, and that's what I did," Hopson said. "Now, people who drive by can see our flag and be reminded about our national anthem. I just thought that was important."**

"Now, my house is like an art gallery," Hopson said. "I just love painting."

Hopson has another painting of an American flag on a storage building in her yard. That flag commemorates the military service of three of her sons. Keith and Terrance served in the United

States Air Force, and Joshua recently completed a tour with the United States Army.

When Hopson painted the flag and words to the national anthem several months ago, she said it drew a lot of attention.

"There were people who stopped when they were driving by, and one of my neighbors watched me paint the flag," Hopson said.

In addition to being a wife, mom, grandmother, great-grandmother and artist, Hopson is a fixture at most Russellville City Council meetings.

"I want to know what's going on with our city government," Hopson said. "If others felt that way, we'd all have a better understanding of what goes on in our community."

"And I'm still working on a leash law in Russellville."

### 'STUDENT' from page 3

a wonderful way we help students pursue an ag or ag-related field. We're proud of these students and the way they're committed to hard work."

At the reception, Kim Slay wore two hats—wife of Chambers County Farmers Federation (CCFF) president Phil Slay and parent to scholarship recipient and AU senior, Zach. Thanks to the Federation, CCFF and Alfa Insurance, almost half the forestry student's tuition is paid.

"When I married into my farm family, I didn't realize I was marrying into the Farmers Federation," said Slay, an AU animal science graduate whose children grew up attending Federation events. "Because of our Alfa family and like-minded individuals and organizations, when Zach graduates next spring, he will not walk off with a crippling load of student debt."

Fifty-nine \$1,750 scholarships were awarded through a county Federation match of \$500. The AFAF contributed \$1,250, along with support from the Federation and Alfa Insurance.

Another 27 students received county Federation scholarships from Autauga, Baldwin, Chambers, Chilton, Covington, Dale, Henry, Houston, Jefferson, Lee and Madison counties. Other county Farmers Federations awarded scholarships directly to students during county ceremonies.

Earlier in 2017, Alfa® awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 100 students pursuing various careers at Alabama colleges, universities and technical schools.

Additionally, Cullman County's Nathan Duke received the R.W. Donaldson Endowed Scholarship from the Cullman County Farmers Federation and Cattlemen's Association.

The Alabama Farmers Federation is the state's largest farm organization with nearly 360,000 members in 67 counties.

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# Northwest-Shoals hosts forum on free speech

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

What does free speech mean, and what are the specific First Amendment issues relevant to a college campus and community?

Those were among the topics at a public forum hosted by Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society in November at the Northwest-Shoals Community College Phil Campbell campus.

Panelists included Dr. Timmy James, associate dean of Instructional Programs; Kenneth Brackins, psychology instructor; Brad Pool, history instructor; Kym Robinson, speech instructor; and Michael McClung, English instructor at NW-SCC.

Members of Phi Theta Kappa's Alpha Zeta Iota Chapter posed questions to the panelists that dealt with First Amendment and free speech issues and how they specifically relate to college campuses.

The panel first dealt with the question of how to define free speech.

"You must look at the context and reason for that particular speech," Brackins said. "When does it start to impact other folks? If it causes you or someone else harm, that is not free. You do not have the right to do that."

"Society allows individuals to express themselves in ways that do not put others at risk. That comes back to the context and purpose of the speech."

Robinson agreed that when defining free speech, context was of paramount consideration.

"Context is the main issue," Robinson said. "Free speech is our right, but we also must look at the context where the free speech takes place and whether it's doing harm. Where are you? Who are you addressing and why are you addressing them, and what is your intention?"

"Those are all considerations in defining free speech."



COURTESY PHOTO

At the free speech forum held on the Phil Campbell campus in November, members of Phi Theta Kappa's Alpha Zeta Iota Chapter posed questions to the panelists (above) that dealt with First Amendment and free speech issues and how they specifically relate to college campuses.

James was asked about how a college should respond when it schedules a speaker whose viewpoint is opposed by a majority of students.

"A college has the responsibility to keep its campus safe. If there's a potential for violence, the college has the right to control that situation," James said. "Northwest-Shoals Community College's policy is that the president may cancel any speaking engagement if it presents a clear and present danger to the order of the campus."

When it comes to controversial topics in the classroom, like abortion or gun rights legislation, two of the panelists differed in their teaching philosophy.

As an instructor, McClung invites differing opinions on those and other controversial topics and encourages expression on those subjects.

Robinson, a public speaking instructor, said she

has certain topics that are off limits on her syllabus, including abortion and gun rights. She explained that students often base speech on those topics out of consideration of their personal beliefs and not facts.

"I won't put a student in a position where he or she is going to be subject to hate speech," Robinson said.

Phi Theta Kappa hosts an annual Honors Forum with a timely topic of discussion. This year's honors study topic is "How the World Works: Global Perspectives."

Phi Theta Kappa was established in 1918 as an organization to recognize and encourage academic success for two-year college students. More than 2.5 million members are part of PTK, with 1,275 chapters across the United States and the world.

# Great news for winter sellers on the house market

Courtesy of DaveRamsey.com

Thinking of selling your home sometime later this year? Why wait? Existing home sales have increased from November to December an average of 4.5 percent in the past three winters. That means that even though there are less homes on the market, buyers are out there buying at a steady, if not increased, pace. That's great news for you winter sellers!

If you've got a home on the market right now, you might feel like the Grinch stole your Christmas. Everyone knows winter is the season of giving, and spring is the season of selling. Plus, working home showings into a busy holiday schedule is like trying to shove a 20-foot tree into your living room.

But selling your home during the winter months doesn't have to spell disaster. You may be surprised that there are advantages to selling your home in the winter. Here are some of our favorites.

## The internet has no seasons

Traditional home buying and selling seasons have evolved as a result of instant internet access to property listings. While spring is still the hottest home-buying season, serious home buyers are always on the lookout, checking out the latest listings on their tablet before bed or

while waiting for their kid's basketball game to end.

Today's buyers do the bulk of their home searches online, and that's especially true when the weather outside is not so cheerful. This means your online listing and photos are especially important. Make sure you use high-quality photos that show off your home's selling points. Photos of the exterior in all seasons can help, as can including a video tour and night shots of the exterior with all the lights on.

Make sure you work with an experienced real estate agent to get your listing up-to-snuff for online house hunters. An expert agent can help you know how to show off your home's best features.

## Competition dries up

Come spring, sellers will flood the market and your home will be just another fish in a great big pond. But right now, you've practically got the market to yourself.

Since 2014, existing home inventory has fallen an average of 15 percent from November to December. That's 15 percent less competition on the market if you list your home during the winter. Buyers have fewer homes to choose from, which means you could sell your house faster.

## Buyers mean business

Most folks want to curl up under a blanket next

to a warm fire on a cold winter day. If a buyer is trudging around in freezing weather to look at your home, they must be serious. That's because many winter buyers are working against a deadline, whether it's an expiring lease, relocation or a contract on their current home.

## Getting tax breaks before year's end

Winter home buyers may also be motivated to capture the tax benefits of buying a home before year-end.

Home buyers can write off some of the expenses of their home purchase on their taxes. There are usually multiple tax benefits of owning a home they can take advantage of, too. Typically, a homeowner can count on the following being tax-deductible:

- Mortgage interest
- Private mortgage insurance (PMI) premiums
- Real estate taxes

These tax benefits could make a potential home buyer want to get a house bought and closed before the new year. And if you're selling your home and buying another, you could ring in the new year with more tax breaks, too.

Remember that selling or buying a house can complicate your tax situation, which is why it's always a great idea to lean on a tax expert's knowledge. They can make sure you get every



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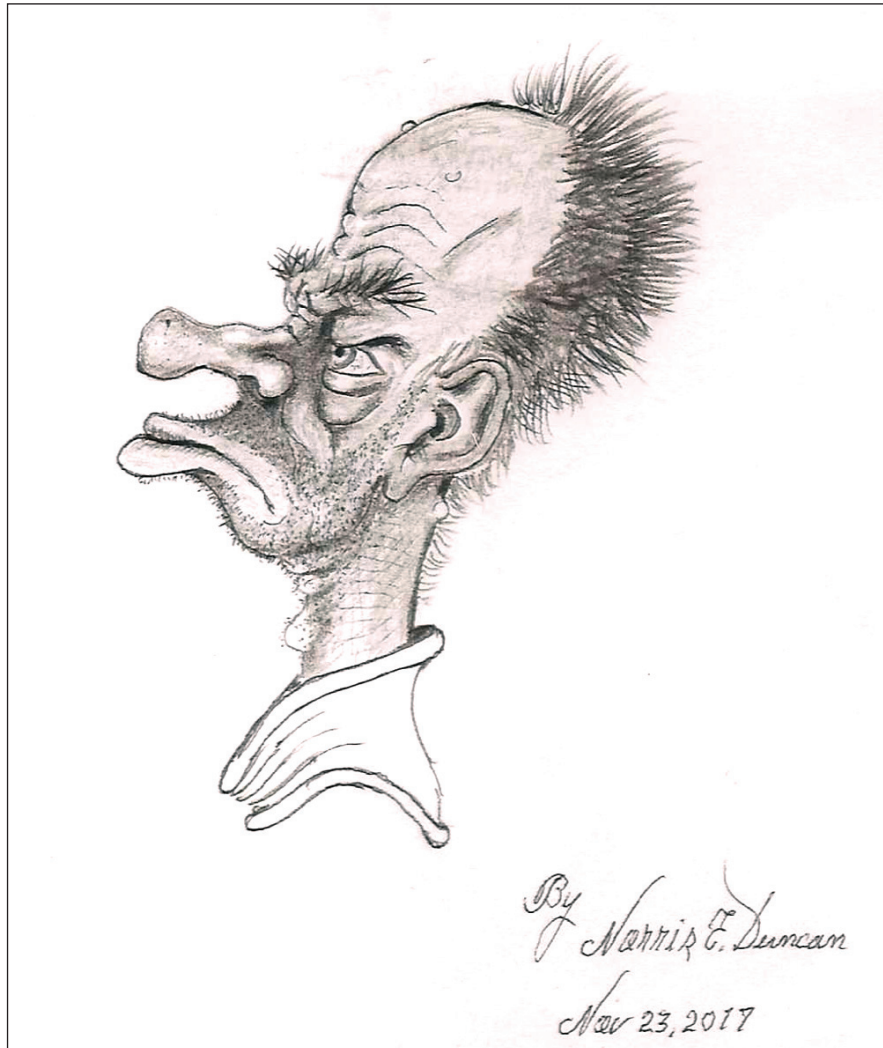
**COURTESY PHOTO**

The Russellville High School Future Business Leaders of America Chapter (FBLA) wants to extend a special thank you to Tiffany Borden. During the chapter's annual scholarship Krispy Kreme Doughnut fundraiser, she was the top seller. Tiffany (above, right) sold 30 dozen doughnuts. She is shown here with FBLA president Ashton Moore, receiving her prize money. FBLA sponsors are Dr. AnnaKay Holland and Mrs. Deedra Moore.

**Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com).**

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# New Year, New You?



**CARTOON BY NORRIS DUNCAN**

With the start of a new year come New Year's resolutions for almost half of Americans. This fella vows to smile more in 2018. Have you made a New Year's resolution? Happy New Year, from the Franklin Free Press!

## 'WINTER,' from page 9

deduction and credit you've earned.

### Time off

You may think people are less likely to see your home during their hectic holiday schedules. That can be true, but keep in mind most people have more time off around the holidays. That means more time for browsing their favorite home apps, dreaming about their future decor, and even scheduling home showings.

### Three tips to set the buying mood

Nothing says welcome home quite like walking out of the cold into a nice, warm house that's dressed up for the holidays. Admit it: Your home looks great this time of year!

It's easier to make a house feel like home in the wintertime. Here are a few tips to help you set the buying mood.

**Remember, the nicer your home presents itself the more likely it is to sell—and for more money. With all these advantages on your side, hopefully selling your home in the winter won't feel so daunting!**

Keep it simple. Decorations should accent—not overpower—a room. Less is more. You don't want your Christmas tree to take up half the living room.

Crank up the cozy. Light a fire in the hearth, play soft holiday music in the background, and prepare fresh-baked goods or mulled cider for guests.

Shine a light outside. Winter days get dark early. Brighten your home's exterior with outdoor spotlights. A few holiday lights are okay. Just save the Clark Griswold light show for next year.

Remember, the nicer your home presents itself the more likely it is to sell—and for more money.

With all these advantages on your side, hopefully selling your home in the winter won't feel so daunting!

—Used with permission from DaveRamsey.com

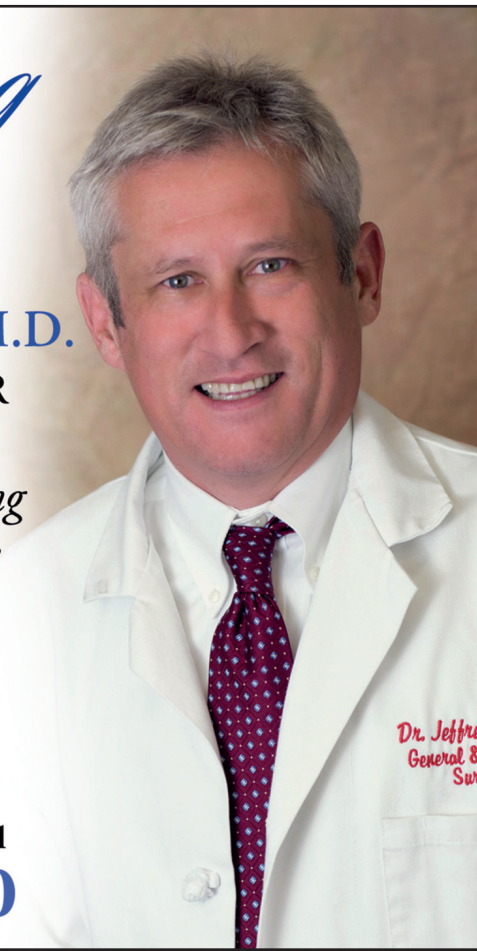
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SPORTS

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## Top five sports stories of 2017

The New Year has already begun, but before we turn the page to 2018, let's take a look back at five of the biggest sports stories the Franklin Free Press covered in 2017.



Mike Self  
Sports Editor

### (1) Russellville baseball goes back-to-back-to-back

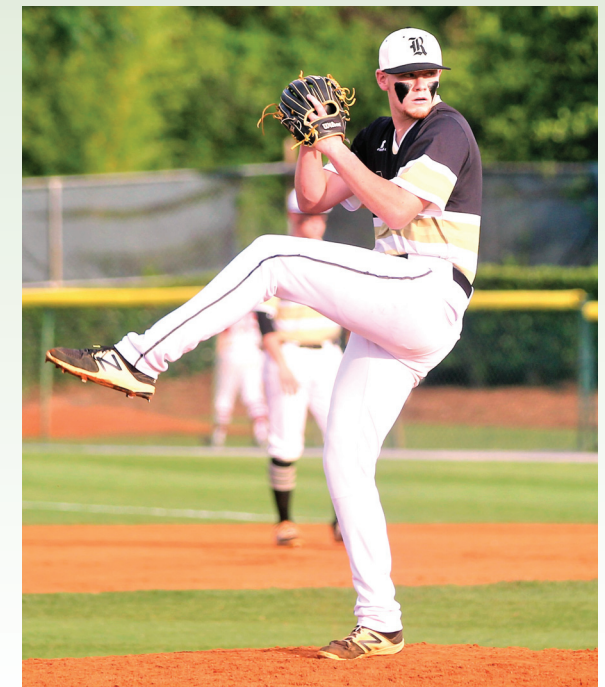
Despite having to replace four of their top five hitters and two of their top three pitchers from the previous season, the Golden Tigers returned to Montgomery and took two out of three games from Faith Academy to join Hartselle (1990-92) and Spanish Fort (2010-12) as the only baseball programs in AHSAA history to win three consecutive Class 5A state titles.

"That means a lot to be in the mix with Spanish Fort and Hartselle, with the teams they had," head coach Chris Heaps said back in May. "I think these teams we've had are as good as any of those. We've had a lot of talent, but the biggest thing is we've had a lot of guys that believed in us. They loved the team."

"On a daily basis, I wake up every day, and I've never, ever, ever been one to accept mediocre. I've never wanted to be around mediocre. I've always believed that if I can bring a high level of enthusiasm and convince young men that mediocre is our enemy, we could do great things."

The Golden Tigers have done great things over the past three seasons, winning 121 games and posting a mind-boggling playoff record of 30-3. Ace Cody Greenhill (below) capped off his brilliant Russellville career with an 11-strikeout, two-hit masterpiece in Game

See 'STORIES,' Page 15



# Tiger turnaround

## Coming off a two-win season, Red Bay's boys are 11-5 and poised to make noise in 2018

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

When John Torisky took the Red Bay boys basketball job in 2015, he inherited a program in need of an extreme makeover. There would be no quick fix, and he knew it.

"When I started here, I told our guys that it was gonna take some time to turn things around," said Torisky, now 36. "It was gonna be tough."

There's tough, and then there's 2-24. That was Red Bay's record last season, following a five-win campaign in Torisky's first year. Despite all the losses, Torisky genuinely felt as though his young team was closer to turning the corner than it appeared.

"Last year, we played well at times," he said. "We were in a lot of games, but we just couldn't finish. We didn't know how to close games out. We didn't have the mental and physical toughness it takes to do that."

"Now, we're a year older. A lot of our guys are eleventh-graders, and they have some experience. We're growing up."

There are growth spurts, and then there's 11-5. That's Red Bay's record this season heading into the New Year, already a nine-win improvement

See 'TIGER,' Page 18



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Weatherford (15) scored a season-high 27 points in the Tigers' win over Russellville and is now averaging 16.8 points per game.

# RHS senior named All-State

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

There are only so many positives you can take away from a 54-21 defeat at the hands of a region rival, but Russellville's Week 7 loss to Brooks this past season was unusually significant.

The Golden Tigers, desperate to revive a dormant ground game and rescue a season on the brink, debuted their Wildcat offense that week, with senior back Bernard Phinizee taking direct shotgun snaps from center. Phinizee rushed for 56 yards on nine carries (all out of the Wildcat) in the first half, helping Russellville put together two of its better drives of the season. He got banged up at the end of a 25-yard reception late in the half and did not return to the game, but head coach Mark Heaton had seen enough of Phinizee in the Wildcat to know that the Golden Tigers had found something.

"One thing is, it's really tough trying to find a guy that could run the football and stay between the tackles a little bit," Heaton said on Thursday. "We were getting better up front, and we thought if we

See 'SENIOR,' Page 16



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Phinizee (4) was honored by the Alabama Sports Writers Association after a season in which he gained 1,001 yards from scrimmage and scored 11 total touchdowns.

# Leathers named Class 3A Coach of the Year

## Two Colbert Heights seniors earn All-State honorable mention from ASWA

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Colbert Heights football coach Taylor Leathers was scanning the list of All-State selections by the Alabama Sports Writers Association on Christmas weekend, checking to see which of his players had been honored, when he came across a name he didn't expect to see.

His own.  
"I saw the article had come out on AL.com, and I was scrolling down through there in the hopes that we would have a lot of players selected for any of the All-State accolades," Leathers said. "I got down to the bottom to 3A Coach of the Year, and when I saw my name I was just floored. I was just humbled and very blessed. I wasn't contacted beforehand. I don't know how that usually goes, but I read it in real time online when it came out.

"I'm just so thankful the Lord has blessed me with that. It's a huge honor to be named Coach of the Year. There are so many quality coaches and great coaches in 3A football. To see my name there was very humbling."

In his second year on The Mountain, Leathers led Colbert Heights to the most successful season in the program's 52-year history. After falling 45-25 at West Morgan on September 15, the Wildcats didn't lose again for more than two months, winning eight straight games to reach the state quarterfinals for the first time ever. They lost 34-13 to Piedmont and finished 11-2, setting a new school record for wins in a single season.

"I'm very thankful for receiving such an honor. It's really a tribute to our players and coaches and how well the guys played this year," said Leathers, a Winfield native who served as offensive coordinator at Lexington High School for four seasons prior to taking the Colbert Heights job in 2016. "They were the ones out there working hard every day. They're the ones who played exceptionally well this year. Our coaching staff did a tremendous job, too.

**"It's really a tribute to our players and coaches and how well the guys played this year," said Leathers. "They were the ones out there working hard every day. They're the ones who played exceptionally well this year. Any time you win Coach of the Year, that's an honor you share with your coaching staff, because one man on his own is not very good. You're only as good as the guys around you, and our assistant coaches have done a great job this year, working and putting in the time for us to be as successful as we were."**

"Any time you win Coach of the Year, that's an honor you share with your coaching staff, because one man on his own is not very good. You're only as good as the people around you, and our assistant coaches have done a great job this year, working and putting in the time it takes for us to be as successful as we were."

In taking Colbert Heights from four wins to 11 wins in the span of just one year, Leathers excelled as both a motivator and an X's and O's strategist. After watching his team come up an inch short of a critical first down late in the 2016 season finale at East Lawrence [the Wildcats suffered a gut-wrenching 30-24 loss that extended their playoff drought to five years], Leathers convinced his returning players—including 18 seniors in the Class of 2018—to channel the pain of that



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

In just his second season at Colbert Heights, Leathers (above) guided the Wildcats to a school-record 11 wins and the first quarterfinal berth in program history. Left tackle Cain Phifer (below) anchored an offensive line that paved the way for two 1,000-yard rushers. Senior defensive end Bud Pratt (not pictured) also earned All-State honors for the Wildcats.



failure into fuel for the following season. He had bracelets made sporting the motto "Get That Inch," which became the team's rallying cry throughout summer workouts and preseason practice.

Leathers also worked with coordinator Lonnie Robinson to streamline Colbert Heights' defense, simplifying their coverage schemes and freeing up his players to do less thinking and more play-making. The results were extraordinary, as the Wildcats recorded three shutouts (including a 28-0 whipping of Locust Fork in the first round of the playoffs) and lowered their points-allowed average from 29.5 per game in 2016 to just 13.5 per game in 2017.

The team's transformation has been even more remarkable on offense, where Leathers moved the Wildcats away from the Air Raid spread passing attack that had been a staple on The Mountain for years and implemented an old-school, smash-mouth running game predicated on winning the battle at the line of scrimmage. A veteran offensive line responded to the challenge and paved the way for huge seasons on the ground for both full-back Dylan Chandler (1,212 rushing yards and 23 touchdowns) and quarterback Kevin Shaw (1,110 rushing yards and nine scores).

Suddenly stingy on defense, methodical on offense and physical on both sides of the ball, the highly motivated Wildcats gained confidence and momentum throughout their record-setting season and slowly but surely created a new culture—a winning culture—within the program. From 2011 through 2016, Colbert Heights posted a combined record of 2-25 against Red Bay, Lexington, Sheffield, Colbert County and Lauderdale County. This past season, the Wildcats went 5-0 against those five teams, out-scoring them by a total margin of 139 to 33.

Given Leathers' emphasis on trench play, it's fitting that the two Colbert Heights players who earned All-State accolades this season both played at the line of scrimmage. Left tackle Cain Phifer, a 6'1, 248-pound senior whose leadership and physicality set the tone for a much-improved offensive line, and defensive end Bud Pratt, a 5'10, 170-pound senior who finished third on the team with 79 tackles (including 8.5 for loss), both received All-State honorable mention in Class 3A from the ASWA.

"So proud to see the two linemen, one on offense and one on defense, get accolades there," said Leathers, a former defensive lineman himself at the University of North Alabama. "I'm so proud of that. I know the big guys up front very rarely get any publicity or any awards for their efforts every day in the trenches. It was great to see Cain, our leader on the offensive line, get recognized with All-State honorable mention, and Bud Pratt on the D-line as well. To see a D-lineman make the number of tackles he did was impressive.

"Like anyone else, I would love to have seen more of our guys get recognized. I surely would have liked to see some of them get first-team or second-team honors. We had several players who were very deserving. Unfortunately, there's such exceptional talent in 3A, and there's only so many spots to put people. Just looking at the names we play in playoffs and the names I had heard all year, there were some incredibly talented guys who made the All-State team. It's an honor for us to have two guys there. To make that list, it's a huge deal."

## 'STORIES' from page 13

1 against Faith, edging out fellow senior Skylar Holland (who went 7-for-9 in three games with four RBIs) for series MVP honors.

### (2) Donnie Roberts retires

Roberts (right) coached his final game for Red Bay's girls in February against Cold Springs in the Northwest Regional semifinals. In his 34 years at the helm, the Hall of Famer led the Lady Tigers to 27 Franklin County titles, 20 area championships, 17 regional berths, eight state title game appearances and four state championships (1987, 1993, 2001 and 2015). Including the 11 seasons he spent at Tremont High in Mississippi (his alma mater), Roberts' coaching career spanned 45 seasons.

### (3) Colbert Heights crashes the quarterfinals

In their second year under head coach Taylor Leathers, the Wildcats put together the most successful season in the 52-year history of the football program. They set a school record with 11 wins and advanced all the way to the third round of the state playoffs for the first time ever before falling to Piedmont in a quarterfinal game at Amos Mitchell Stadium.

There were highlights aplenty in 2017 for Colbert Heights, including back-to-back decisive wins over Region 8 rivals Colbert County and Lauderdale County in October, a first-round playoff shutout of Locust Fork and a thrilling 36-35 win at Weaver in round in two, a game that ended when the Wildcats converted a two-point try on a jet-sweep pass from freshman Carson Shaw to senior receiver Devin Holt in overtime.

### (4) Reclassification and realignment shake things up

The advent of a seventh classification drastically altered the prep sports landscape in Alabama four years ago, and the latest round of reclassification and realignment brought more significant changes for schools in Franklin County. Tharptown moved up from Class 1A to Class 2A, where the Wildcats will have their hands full in both football and basketball starting in 2018 with the likes of Colbert County, Tanner and Sheffield.

Tharptown wasn't the only county school to bump up in classification; Phil Campbell will make the leap from 2A to 3A starting in the fall of 2018. Russellville remained in Class 5A, but the Golden Tigers saw sweeping changes to their region in football. Lawrence County and West Point are the only familiar faces in the new-look Region 7, where Russellville will now compete with the likes of Jasper, Hayden, Corner, Hamilton and Dora. Factor in the addition of Haleyville and Central-Florence to the non-region schedule, and the Golden Tigers are playing eight new opponents in 2018.

### (5) Belgreen boys return to Hanceville

The Bulldogs enjoyed a big-time breakthrough in their first season under head coach Clint Isbell, winning 22 games and capturing both county and area championships on their way to reaching the Northwest Regional for the first time since 2014. They lost a shootout with eventual state finalist South Lamar in the regional semifinals, but a return trip to Hanceville could certainly be in the cards.



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## 'SENIOR', from page 13

put Bernard back there it would give us a chance to get the ball in his hands a little quicker and get him going downhill quicker. We also felt like we could get the numbers in the box the way we wanted them by taking one guy out.

"We thought it worked very well against a really good Brooks front. He got healthy, and it gave us another piece to our offense."

The following week at East Limestone, Phinizee shook off a slow start to rush for 123 yards and a touchdown on 16 second-half carries, propelling the Golden Tigers to a critical 17-13 win that resuscitated their fading playoff hopes. Then, in the Region 8 finale against Ardmore on October 27, Phinizee put on a dazzling display, rushing 20 times for 205 yards and four touchdowns while also hauling in an 83-yard scoring strike from freshman quarterback Luke Barnwell in a 44-6 rout.

In a span of five offensive snaps starting with Russellville's final play of the first half and going through their fourth play of the second half, Phinizee gained 185 yards from scrimmage and scored four touchdowns, including runs of 45 and 55 yards.

The Golden Tigers' playoff hopes were dashed the following week with a 23-16 loss to Colbert County, but Phinizee—who rushed for 104 yards and a touchdown against the Indians—had left an indelible mark on the season in his newfound role, restoring heart and hope to a team that had stumbled to an 0-5 start.

"He was the epitome of our team this past year," Heaton said of Phinizee, who ran for 515 yards and six touchdowns on 78 carries in three-and-a-half games as the Wildcat quarterback. "He got banged up in the Hartselle game. He wasn't able to finish the Brooks game. But he kept fighting. When were

0-1, 0-2, 0-3, 0-4, 0-5, Bernard was practicing harder than anybody we had. That never changed.

"He's one of those guys who was the foundation of what we've built here as a team, and that's because of his work ethic. Whether it's in the weight room or on the practice field, he's just like he is on the game field, and the other guys fed off him."

**"Bernard is one of those guys who loves his teammates," Heaton said. "He's been with them the last four years and worked his tail off with them, and he'd be the first to tell you that those guys helped him achieve this honor."**

Phinizee finished his senior season with 1,001 yards from scrimmage and 11 total touchdowns, including a pair of kick return scores in a win over St. John Paul II. He was recognized for his efforts by the Alabama Sports Writers Association, who selected him for All-State honorable mention in Class 5A.

Heaton said the honor was well deserved, lauding Phinizee's leadership, production and selflessness.

"It just kind of depicts his attitude ever since he came in," Heaton said. "I remember when he moved here from Mississippi in the ninth grade. I kind of latched onto him. He's grown tremendously since then as a person and a player. Bernard is one of those guys who loves his teammates. He's been with them the last four years and worked his tail off with them, and he'd be the first to tell you that those guys helped him achieve this honor."

Phinizee's late-season work in the Wildcat distinguished him, but he was a consistent presence for Russellville on both sides of the ball all year. A hard-hitting outside linebacker on defense, he finished the season with 53 tackles, two forced fumbles, two pass break-ups and one interception.

"It would have been really easy after we lost five games in a row and started 0-5 to get down and not find a lot of reasons to work hard in practice, but Bernard always did that," Heaton said. "He was one of those guys who carried us through a tough year, and there were a bunch more of them. We've got a bunch of guys who fought like that."

"We called his number and put him in a situation where we needed him to give us a good ground game, and he rose to the occasion."

Even though Phinizee had never taken direct snaps from center before the Brooks game, Heaton had no doubt that he could flourish in the Wildcat—as a runner, that is.

"We felt he could do it. He's a take-charge kind of guy naturally, so he took to that pretty well," Heaton said. "He did everything we asked him to do."

Barely suppressing a grin, the coach added, "The idea was that he would try to throw a couple of passes and maybe we could do some short-game stuff with him, but we found out that didn't work so well."

Phinizee's lone pass attempt in a game fell incomplete, but he excelled in virtually every other way. The 5'8, 180-pounder ran with the strength and physicality of a much larger back, finishing the season with 669 yards and seven touchdowns on 109 attempts (an average of 6.1 yards per carry). He also led the team with 332 receiving yards on 18 catches. His versatility and explosiveness were on full display in Week 6 at St. John Paul, when he had kick return touchdowns of 85 and 90 yards and finished the night with a career-high 332 all-purpose yards (175 on kick returns, 106 rushing and 51 receiving) in the 42-21 win.

Phinizee made his Wildcat debut one week later, and the rest is history.

"We had used Bernard out on the perimeter for the most part," Heaton said, "so we had to guide him through running those inside powers and counters and stuff like that. We just told him, 'Get underneath your pads, run your aiming points tight, and hit it like your 6'2, 225.' That's what he did. He was very coachable. We told him, 'This is what we need you to do,' and then he went and did exactly like we asked him to do it."

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- 10:15 - (4)Phil Campbell vs. (5)Vina (7th-8th Grade Boys)
- 11:30 - (2)Tharptown vs. (3)Vina (7th-8th Grade Girls)
- 12:45 - (4)Red Bay vs. (5)Belgreen (7th-8th Grade Girls)
- 2:00 - (2)Red Bay vs. Belgreen/East Franklin (7th-8th Grade Boys)
- 3:15 - (4)Belgreen vs. (5)Red Bay (9th Grade Girls)
- 4:30 - (2)Tharptown vs. (3)East Franklin (9th Grade Boys)
- 5:45 - (1)Phil Campbell vs. (4)Vina (9th Grade Boys)
- 7:00 - (3)Vina vs. (6)East Franklin (9th Grade Girls)

Thursday, January 11

- 4:00 - (1)Tharptown vs. Phil Campbell/Vina (7th-8th Grade Boys)
- 5:15 - (1)Phil Campbell vs. Red Bay/Belgreen (7th-8th Grade Girls)
- 6:30 - (1)Phil Campbell vs. Belgreen/Red Bay (9th Grade Girls)
- 7:45 - (2)Tharptown vs. Vina/East Franklin (9th Grade Girls)

Saturday, January 13

- 10:00 - 7th-8th Grade Girls Championship
- 11:15 - 7th-8th Grade Boys Championship
- 12:30 - 9th Grade Girls Championship
- 1:45 - 9th Grade Boys Championship

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## 'TIGER', from page 13

over last season. There are many driving forces behind the Tigers' turnaround, but a soft schedule is not one of them. Last Thursday's 61-60 victory over Russellville at the Bracy Invitational was Red Bay's fifth win of the season over a team in Class 4A or above.

"We knew we could play with the teams in this tournament—most of them," said Torisky, whose team opened the Bracy with a 59-49 victory over Class 4A Wilson last Tuesday and also has two wins this season over Class 4A Central and one over Class 4A Hamilton. "We've seen a lot of big schools this year, and our kids have competed. We scheduled Haleyville and Central and Hardin County [Tennessee], which would be like a 6A school here. We've played enough big schools that it doesn't really bother our kids to go up against a bigger school."

So, if not the schedule, then what are the driving forces behind Red Bay's remarkable resurgence—a resurgence, incidentally, that has taken even Torisky somewhat by surprise.

"We're actually ahead of schedule," he said last week. "We're further along right now than I thought we'd be at this point."

For starters, there's the development of 6'3 junior post player Gath Weatherford from a promising young player into a bona fide beast—albeit a slimmed down beast. A year ago, as a sophomore, Weatherford averaged 9.0 points per game, made 26 threes and shot a solid 70 percent from the foul line. This season, he's averaging 16.8 points per game (second in Franklin County) and has already matched his output from all of last season with 26 threes while upping his free throw rate to 85 percent (71-for-84).

"Gath is our leader. He's been that for us since I got here," Torisky said. "We look to him for a lot. The biggest thing with him is how hard he works. A lot of that comes in our practices, but he also does a lot of work on his own. At the end of last

year, he was 240 pounds. Now he's down to 210. He's always been able to shoot, but now he's a step quicker."

Lighter afoot but still strong as an ox, Weatherford can score in the paint on post-ups and offensive rebounds, step out and burn opposing teams from beyond the arc with a picture-perfect stroke, or face up and bust his man to the basket. That entire arsenal was on display at the Bracy last Thursday, when Weatherford knocked down three treys, shot 6-for-6 from the foul line and scored a season-high 27 points to help Red Bay hold off Russellville for its latest signature win.

"That's something about him—he's been our leader all year," Torisky said of Weatherford, who already has six games of 20-plus points this season, his third at the varsity level. "We ask him to do a lot. He usually guards the other team's best post player, and sometimes we even put him on a really good wing. He's capable of handling that. Tonight was one of those games where he took the team on his shoulders and said, 'We're gonna win this game'."

"A lot of that is, he's really been preparing for it. He's never really been ready to step up into the limelight until this year, but he's been preparing for it the last couple of years with his work ethic and things like that. It's good to see it happening now."

Weatherford's exemplary work has been supplemented by solid contributions from fellow juniors and returning players like starting guards Colton Corum (7.3 points per game) and Hunter Bays and sturdy post player Peyton Green (4.6 points per game, including a season-high 13 in last week's win over Wilson). But the rebuilding effort was thrown into overdrive by two other primary factors: The arrival of sophomore point guard Clay Allison, a transfer from Vina; and the promotion this season to the varsity level of freshmen Braden Ray and Jalen Vinson, who have energized a second unit that also includes junior guards Noah



Brewer and Zac Humphries.

"We still don't have great depth," Torisky said, "but I do feel like we go nine-deep. At times the past couple of years, we were probably only about four-deep."

The 5'7 Allison runs the point for Torisky and is tied with Ray for second on the team in scoring at 8.9 points per game while also ranking second in threes made with 19. Allison, who scored 21 points to spark an early-season 62-60 win over Central, provides ball-handling, active defense and another perimeter threat to go along with Weatherford and Corum (who made 35 threes last season as a sophomore and has hit 18 this season).

"At times I feel like we settle for threes, but we've got four kids who can shoot it," Torisky said. "Our focus lately has been on getting easy baskets in transition off pressure defense. We don't want to rely too much on threes, but at the same time we do have some guys who can knock it down."

Ray, who has made eight threes on the season, falls into that category as well, but he's most dangerous when he's getting to the foul line. The 6'2 freshman ranks second on the team in both free throws made (56) and attempted (74), shooting 76 percent. He scored a career-high 16 points in the win over Russellville and went 11-for-12 from the line, including six clutch makes in six tries over the final three minutes.

The Tigers went 46-for-58 from the line in three games at the Bracy and are now hitting 71 percent of their free throws on the season. They also make five threes per game, but they're no offensive juggernaut [they average 51.7 points per contest on the year and are often content to patiently run through their half-court sets]. Red Bay hangs its hat on the other end of the floor, allowing just 49.0 points per game and holding 10 opponents thus far to less than 50.

Allison's ball pressure and Ray's shot-blocking have helped transform the Tigers into a defensive force.

"Defensively, we teach our guys to take it personally," Torisky said. "Their attitude is, 'My man is not gonna beat me.' But at the same time we really emphasize help-side defense. We work on that a lot in practice, and we've done a really good job with our help-side defense. We're also a really



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

The development of Weatherford (15) and the contributions of newcomers Allison (1) and Ray (top of page, 32) have expedited Red Bay's rebuilding process. The Tigers have already won more games this season than they did in each of the previous two years combined.

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**‘TIGER’ from page 18**

good rebounding team. We’ve out-rebounded almost every team we’ve played.  
 “In high school basketball, if you can hold teams to one shot, most teams are not gonna out-shoot you.”  
 Of Red Bay’s five losses this season, two came to ranked opponents Haleyville and Belgreen, two came to out-of-state foes Belmont (MS) and Hardin County (TN), and one came last week at the Bracy to Class 6A contender Athens. The 56-53 loss at Belgreen on November 17 still irks Torisky, even though the Tigers have won 11 of their 14 games since.  
 “We gave that one to them,” Torisky lamented last week. “We were up ten with four minutes left, and two of our guys fouled out. We didn’t finish. And Belgreen—they don’t lose. That’s the point we’re trying to get to.”

“Tonight was one of those games where he took the team on his shoulders and said, ‘We’re gonna win this game,’” Torisky said after Weatherford dropped 27 points on Russellville in a 61-60 win. “A lot of that is, he’s really been preparing for it. He’s never really been ready to step up into the limelight until this year, but he’s been preparing for it the last couple of years with his work ethic and things like that. It’s good to see it happening now.”

The wins over Wilson and Russellville at the Bracy suggest Red Bay is making progress toward that end. The Tigers are off to a 3-0 start in Class 2A, Area 14, with a trip to Sulligent looming on Thursday and area games immediately following against Phil Campbell and Lamar County. Later in January will come the county tournament at Belgreen, where the second-seeded Tigers could get an opportunity for revenge against the top-seeded Bulldogs in the final.  
 For now, though, Torisky’s focus is on finishing strong in area play over the next three games and perhaps earning the right to host the Area 14 tournament at year’s end.  
 “Those three games will determine where we are as far as the area goes,” Torisky said. “Sulligent is gonna be a really difficult game. They’re gonna be coming for us, because we already beat them at our place. We caught them coming right out of football, and I don’t think they were ready for us. They’ll be ready this time.  
 “We like where we are in the area right now, but we’ve still got work to do.”

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Weatherford impressed at last week’s Bracy Invitational, leading the Tigers to wins over Wilson and Russellville. The 6’3 junior put up 17 points and seven rebounds last Tuesday in a 59-49 win over the Warriors, then poured in a career-high 27 points to help Red Bay hold off Russellville 61-60 on Thursday. Weatherford hit three threes and made all six of his free throws against the Golden Tigers, including two with three seconds left to seal the win.  
 He shot 17-for-18 from the line in the tourney and averaged 18.3 points in three games.



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## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Franklin County  
Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 44 • Russellville, AL  
Cassie Medley, Executive Director  
256.332.1760 • 256.332.1740 fax  
info@franklincountychamber.org  
franklincountychamber.org

## HEALTHCARE

**GET NOTICED!**  
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